

# Abraham's Faith, God's Provision

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm Matthew Capone, and I'm one of the pastors here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. Special welcome if you are new or visiting with us. We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word.

This morning, we're continuing our series in the story of Abraham, which goes from Genesis chapters 11 through 25, and we're studying Abraham for a couple of reasons.

First, to prepare us to return to our series in the book of Romans, we're going to, next month, be back in Romans chapter 4, which is about Abraham. So we're looking at Abraham to prepare us to look at Abraham.

We're also looking at Abraham because it gives us a great chance to ask the question, what does it look like to follow God in faith? Which is an especially important question for the story in front of us this morning.

[ 1 : 13 ] Last week in chapter 21, we saw Isaac's birth, which we had, in a sense, been waiting for all the way since the beginning of the story. And you'll remember that the point was that God did what he said he would do when he said he would do it.

That he's a promise-keeping God. That's the nature of his character. We then get a whiplash in this upcoming story, chapter 22. It's a rich passage. We're only going to be able to skim the surface. It's a whiplash, though, because Isaac is born in 21, and then right away, 22, God asks him to sacrifice Isaac. And so that's our question. Why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice his own son? Now, with that, I invite you to turn with me to Genesis chapter 22. You can turn in your worship guide. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your Bible. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word.

Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5 tells us, Every word of God proves true. He's a shield to those who take refuge in him. So that's why we read now Genesis chapter 22, starting at verse 1.

[ 2 : 30 ] After these things, God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham. And he said, Here I am. He said, Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.

So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went, both of them, together.

And Isaac said to his father Abraham, My father. And he said, Here I am, my son. He said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

[ 3 : 46 ] Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. So they went, both of them, together. Verse 9.

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here I am. He said, Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

[ 4 : 48 ] So Abraham called the name of that place, the Lord will provide. As it is said to this day, on the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.

Verse 15. And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you.

And I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba. Now after these things it was told to Abraham, Behold, Milcah also has born children to your brother Nahor.

Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Chemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pidlash, Jidlath, and Bethuel. Bethuel fathered Rebekah.

[ 6 : 03 ] These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reuma, bore Teba, Gahem, Tahash, and Macha. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you again that you guide us, you instruct us by your word. And even more than that, you show us the way to reconciliation with you, the way of salvation through your son and our Savior, our Lord Jesus.

We thank you that he is the ultimate and final sacrifice, that you did not withhold your son, your only son. We ask that you would be at work by your Holy Spirit this morning in a powerful way, that you would use your word to shape our hearts and our minds and our lives, that we would grow in our love and affection and reverence and awe for you.

We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Oh well, I'm not going to bury the lead. We have a surprising story in front of us, and it's surprising right away in verse 2, where it says, this is God's command, offer him there as a burnt offering.

So we've had last chapter, Isaac. Abraham's waited for him for 25 years, from when he was 75 to when he turns 100.

[ 7 : 31 ] This is the son who is going to fulfill all of God's promises. We have this high at the end of chapter 21, and then chapter 22, God says, oh, by the way, go and sacrifice him.

And so if you've been with us through the story, all the way from chapter 11, there is this weirdness, this surprise, this whiplash that comes as we enter chapter 22. Isaac is the fulfillment of 25 years of waiting.

So God's saying, you know what? Never mind what happened. Give up the miracle that you've longed for. Give up what I have promised. It's not just Abraham's dream that's being given up here. It's actually this greater blessing to the nations, right? Chapter 12, that's what God said. Those who bless you will be blessed. I will use you as a blessing to all the nations.

So Abraham's line and God's promise are all tied up in Isaac. So how do we make sense of all of this? Well, I want you to think for a minute with me about food, specifically eating food.

[ 8 : 39 ] If you are in India or Japan, you're supposed to clean your plate. That's your way of saying, man, this meal was really good.

You took care of me. If you're in China, you're supposed to leave food on your plate. And that's your way of saying, wow, you provided so much food for me that I can't finish.

You've taken such great care of me. Okay. Opposite actions depending on the culture. Okay. In Egypt, it's rude to ask for salt because you're implying that something's wrong with the food.

So there's all these implicit things that happen in a culture, right? That nothing's said out loud, but you have to understand what the true meaning is. You have to know the context.

I say all that because child sacrifice means something very specific in the ancient Near Eastern world. It has a cultural meaning that's implicit, not explicit.

[ 9 : 40 ] If you ask someone, if a God asks someone to sacrifice their child, they are asking for their total loyalty and obedience. Asking for a child sacrifice is asking for total loyalty and obedience.

What is your greatest allegiance? Do you love me more than anything else? So is God being crazy and deranged here?

No, he is speaking to Abraham in a specific cultural form. He is talking to Abraham in a way that he can understand. I'm not sure how you would ask this question of an American, but I think it might go something like this.

Are you willing to go bankrupt? Right? We have the great idol of prosperity and money. This would be a way of saying, man, is your loyalty, is your obedience completely to me?

That's what Jesus is saying to the rich young ruler in Luke chapter 18 when he says, go and sell all that you have and then come back. What he's saying, what he's asking is, hey, are you actually what's most, or am I actually what's most important to you?

[ 11 : 02 ] And so the point is this. God is asking Abraham, Do you love me more than anything else?

Am I still the center of your life? Or now that the promise has been fulfilled, is it Isaac? This is the last time, by the way, that God is going to speak to Abraham.

So there's some significance here. The first time God spoke to Abraham was back in chapter 12, where he said, give up everything and leave your home.

So chapter 12, God says, give it all up. Chapter 22, God comes back for the last time and says, not just give it all up, really give it all up.

So there's a bookend here that's happening with God's speeches. He's saying, you know, where is your greatest hope? Will it turn away from me now that Isaac is here?

[ 12 : 14 ] What is it that you hope in more than anything else? I've been telling you for weeks that the story of Abraham asks us to answer the question, what does it look like to follow God in faith?

One of the answers is this. Following God in faith looks like loving God more than anything else. Following God in faith looks like being willing to give up anything.

We have, over the last several months, had our own sort of living, breathing illustration of this as a congregation.

It's already been mentioned in the announcements and in our congregational prayer. We have our sister Shabnam. Shabnam came to the U.S., gave up life in Iran, and gave up a really good career. You may not know the reason that she first came to the U.S. was that her employer over in Iran sent her to do research with a professor at UCCS, which is a really big deal.

[ 13 : 27 ] In other words, Shabnam was on the fast track. She was headed towards a major promotion. She had been successful in her work. She was recognized for being hardworking and intelligent.

She was rising up through the ranks. Things in Iran were going really well for her. Then she gets to the U.S. She gets baptized. Her father finds out, turns her into the government.

And she knows if she goes back, she's going to have to stand before a court. She's being accused of being an apostate from Islam. And what did Shabnam have to do?

All she had to do was renounce Christ. Simple. Right? She could have just gone back to Iran, showed up before the court, and said, you know what? This is all a big mistake. I love Allah so much.

That's all she had to do. She stays in the U.S. and gives it all up. Right? Shabnam does not have a prestigious career here.

[ 14 : 35 ] No, she started all over again from scratch. Now, that probably won't be as extreme for us in following Jesus, although we never know what the future holds.

We still have places where God asks us, do you love me more than anything else?

Am I still the place of your total loyalty and obedience? Are you willing to choose your integrity and your witness for Christ over success and career advancement?

Are you willing to prioritize your children's godliness and their love of the Lord over academic success?

Are you willing to choose generosity over more and more peak experiences that are larger and better? I haven't mentioned this before, but you know some of you may be called to missions in

another country.

[15:54] God may call you to give up the comforts of living in the U.S. By the way, we are the richest country in the world. We experience a standard of living unprecedented in the history of the world.

And God might call you to leave that behind. Kids, I want you to think about that, by the way. As you think about all the options that are before you, as you think about what you want to be when you grow up, it's possible that God is calling you to go into missions.

Okay, I just want to plant that seed in your mind. Remember, in all of this, it's as we've talked about many times, it is in God's glory that we discover our good.

And so as Christians, we have to settle this question in our hearts. Are we willing to give it all up? Do we really believe that Jesus is worthy and worth it?

Is he actually the source of our total loyalty and obedience? Jim read earlier for us from Hebrews chapter 11, talking about Abraham.

[17:14] Hebrews chapter 11 also talks about Moses. It's another example of this. It tells us this. Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

In other words, it's not just Abraham that gives it all up. Moses gives it all up too. Moses has the opportunity of great success and prosperity in Egypt, right?

He's Pharaoh's son. He's been adopted. He gives it all up to lead God's people. And so there's a sense in which we've come full circle all the way from chapter 12.

Chapter 12 and chapter 22, in a sense, we're not to the end of Abraham's story, but they serve these kinds of bookends to say, look, at the beginning and at the end, the question for Abraham is this.

Is God worth it all? And so I'm going to remind you of the same things we talked about back at the beginning of the story. This is on page seven of your worship guide. In the created world, you can only truly enjoy what you do not worship.

[18:28] In the created world, you can only truly enjoy what you do not worship. In other words, the most dangerous thing for Abraham is that he would wrap his heart completely around Isaac.

That's the most dangerous thing. Then there's this from C.S. Lewis. Put first things first, and we get second things thrown in.

Put second things first, and we lose both first things and second things. What are the first things in your life?

Abraham shows us the way here. It's an example of faithful obedience, just like he was in chapter 12. Verses three through 10, he obeys. Three and four, he prepares.

He sets out. Verses five through seven, he goes with Isaac. And then verses seven through eight, he has this conversation that helps us understand where his hope, his faith is. This is verse seven.

[19:49] Isaac asks him, where is the lamb for a burnt offering? Verse eight, Abraham said, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. And in the section that Jim did read for us from Hebrews chapter 11, it tells us, hey, Abraham thought, well, maybe God's gonna raise Isaac up from the dead.

No matter what he does, I know that he's going to be faithful. That's what he's saying in verse eight. God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering.

And he's right. Verse 14, that same word shows up. Abraham called the name of that place, the Lord will provide. And he's able to say that because the angel comes and intervenes.

Verses 10 through 13, provides another sacrifice. And so he receives God's commendation in verse 12. Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him.

For now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me. God requires an offering.

[20:59] God provides an offering. All Abraham has is faith. That's all he has to do. That's all Abraham shows up with.

The point is this. As we follow God in obedience, he will vindicate us and provide for us.

As we follow God in obedience, he will provide for us and vindicate us. It's his promise to Abraham. It's his promise to us as well. God provides for his people in miraculous and unexpected ways. In fact, there's a principle in scripture that God never commands what he does not empower.

God never commands what he does not empower. God commands here of Abraham. He provides the sacrifice. God does this for us in a variety of ways.

[ 21 : 59 ] He provides the power of the Holy Spirit, which comes and changes our desires and our tastes. In the Old Testament, we see that God provides for the people of Israel as they wander in the desert.

Deuteronomy chapter 29 tells us their shoes and their clothes did not wear out. It's a supernatural miracle. They're marching in the desert and their shoes last.

God provides what he empowers through his word. He reminds us of the glory and promises of Jesus Christ. He provides for his people who give us the wisdom and the counsel and the support that we need.

If you think that God is asking the impossible, remember Abraham. God provides everything we need.

Even more than that, verses 15 through 19, we see that it's in God's glory again that we discover our good.

[ 23 : 06 ] What does God do after Abraham's obedience? He reaffirms his blessing and favor.

Verse 17, Our Lord Jesus tells us the same thing in Mark chapter 10.

Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life.

Of course, we have an even greater reason to trust God than Abraham did because God has showed us what Abraham could only look forward to. It is not simply that he provided the sacrifice for Abraham.

He provided an even greater sacrifice in his son. Here, the ram is provided. Then we get to the gospels.

John chapter 1. What is said as Jesus appears, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[ 24 : 56 ] verse 12 here, how does God commend Abraham? I seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son.

But it's God himself, ultimately, who does not withhold his son, his only son. That's why Romans chapter 8 tells us, He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Jesus Christ is the ultimate proof of God's willingness to provide. He is the ultimate proof of God's faithfulness to you and to me.

We have even greater assurance than Abraham. And so we have even greater reason to obey.

We can say with Abraham, verse 14, the Lord will provide. As it is said to this day, on the mount of the Lord, it shall be provided.

[ 26 : 18 ] Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do praise you and thank you again that we can have great confidence and trust in you as we look back to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That we know that you do provide everything that we need, that you empower everything we command, everything you command. We ask that you would remind us of this, that you would cause us to believe it and trust it more and more, that we would follow you in faith and obedience. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I invite you to stand for our closing hymn.