

## Sermon and Service of the Word for June 28<sup>th</sup>

### OPENING WORDS

**L: Praise God! For the Lord our God is King.**

**P: Let us rejoice and be glad; let us praise his greatness.**

**L: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,**

**P: who was, and is, and is to come.**

**L: Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain,**

**P: to receive honour and glory and praise.**

**L: He loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,**

**P: and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.**

**L: To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb,**

**P: be praise and honour and glory and power, forever and ever. Amen.**

### PRAYER

Thank you, loving heavenly Father, for setting us free from sin, so that we can willingly serve you. Open our eyes and hearts to see the needs of others and show them your compassion. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

**SONG: "Before the Throne of God Above" – Selah**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MUNywHsZPU>

### CONFESSION and ABSOLUTION

**L: Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and of each other.**

**P: We confess to you, almighty God, before the whole company of heaven, and to each other, that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed by our**

own fault. Have mercy on us, for Jesus' sake, forgive us all our sins, and bring us to eternal life. Amen.

**L: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us, and has given his only Son to die for us, and for his sake forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in his name he has given the right to become children of God, and has given them his Holy Spirit. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved. Grant this, Lord, to us all.**

### READINGS

Genesis 22:1–14

Psalm 89:1–4, 15–18

Romans 6:12–23

Matthew 10:40–42

SONG: “How deep the Father's love for us”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjDh4yuil9w>



SERMON: Genesis 22:1-18

The story of Abraham and Isaac is one of the great stories of the bible. It is a powerful and moving event that evokes all kinds of emotion in the reader. God permits Abraham to be tested in order to probe his faith and trust in

God. Luther says of this passage, “God wants to find out whether Abraham loves him above all else.” But what a test it was. Think for a moment of your own children or one who is most near and dear to you.

This is an incredible thing the God asks of Abraham. This is what the pagan worshippers of the god Molech did with their children. Molech was a false god to whom children were sacrificed in the Hinnom valley on the southwest boundary of ancient Jerusalem.

Consider what the following three texts say about child sacrifice.

#### **2 Kings 23:10 New Living Translation**

*10 Then the king defiled the altar of Topheth in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, so no one could ever again use it to sacrifice a son or daughter in the fire as an offering to Molech.*

#### **Leviticus 18:21 New Living Translation**

*21 “Do not permit any of your children to be offered as a sacrifice to Molech, for you must not bring shame on the name of your God. I am the Lord.*

#### **Jeremiah 32:35 New Living Translation**

*35 They have built pagan shrines to Baal in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, and there they sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing. What an incredible evil, causing Judah to sin so greatly!*

At this point we need to understand that God had no intention of allowing Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as the end of the Genesis 22 account clearly indicates. However Abraham was not to know that at this juncture.

I think it is interesting that the place God directed Abraham to go too is only a short distance from the Hinnom Valley. God directs Abraham to the region of Moriah i.e. the hill country around Jerusalem.

#### **Read 2 Chronicles 3:1 New Living Translation**

*3 So Solomon began to build the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to David, his father. The Temple was built on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the site that David had selected.*

I find it very interesting that the place Abraham is directed to go to offer Isaac is on or around Mt Moriah. That's the site on which Solomon built the temple. That's where the priests of Israel later offered the daily animal sacrifices to God in the temple. And that practice foreshadowed the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God. Jesus dies in the same geographic space to which Abraham took Isaac.

It is also worth reflecting on what Abraham said to Isaac, *"God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,"* (Genesis 22:8). God did indeed "provide" the sacrifice in the person of his own son?

Reflect also for a moment on Genesis 22:6. The parallelisms keep coming.

*6 So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife.*

Did you catch the significance of that? Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac. Who does that remind you of? Surely it must remind us of our Lord? The wood of the cross - the means of God's own sacrifice - was laid on Jesus shoulders.

If we read again the closing scene of the Abraham/Isaac story we might conclude that Hollywood could not have given a more climactic scene with the words from God, "Don't lay a hand on the boy!"

Has it ever crossed your mind that what God would not ask of us is the very thing he required of himself in the sacrifice of his son. The old hymn says it all really, "Love so amazing so divine demands my soul, my life, my all. If ever you are tempted to doubt God's love for you look again at the sacrifice he offers to save you.

Like Abraham, You and I may be tested by God to stretch our faith in Him. Sometimes God will allow us to go to the very brink then step in and pull us back. Have you ever experienced that kind of testing? I'm sure you have.

And I believe God will continue to allow testing to come so that our faith will be stretched and moulded.

We read about it in James 1:2-4 *“2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”*

Thank of it this way. In order to grow Abraham’s faith God asks Abraham to give up his past.

The Lord had said to Abram, *“Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. (Genesis 12:1)*

When Abraham steps forth in faith he finds the blessings of God awaiting him.

*“Sometime later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”*

*2 But Abram replied, “O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since you’ve given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. 3 You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”*

*4 Then the Lord said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” 5 Then the Lord took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That’s how many descendants you will have!”*

*6 And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord counted him as righteous because of his faith.” (Genesis 15:1-6)*

Now God asks Abraham to give up his future.

*“Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.” (Genesis 22:2)*

**Then God responded to Abraham's faith and reaffirms his promise to bless Abraham.**

*15 Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. 16 "This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that 17 I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants[a] beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. 18 And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:15-18)*

**Friend, God's blessing awaits those who step out in faith.**

**One last comment before we close.**

**Listen to what St Paul writes in Romans 4: 1-5**

*"Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God? 2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way. 3 For the Scriptures tell us, 'Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.' 4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. 5 But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners."*

**Friends, God may ask us to let go of some things we hold as important for our security and significance in order to see if we will trust him above all else. When that happens we need not fear because we have a God who loves us with an everlasting love. His returns are far more than we risk. His blessings are far greater than our investment. Abraham named the place where these events took place "Jehovah Jireh" which means "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided". God is still the believer's provider.**

**God's ultimate provision was made with the lamb he himself provided for the sacrifice. It was of course his own dear son, his one and only son whom he loved. If he did this for you and me will he not give everything we need**

according to his riches in glory? And will he not provide the way through any testing he may permit to happen to us?

SONG: "Jehovah Jireh"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCsH\\_TtZReY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCsH_TtZReY)

### PRAYERS

Heavenly Father, we pray for the nations of the world - for an end to war and for peaceful resolutions of conflict; for wise government and for honesty in commerce and industry. Come to those we spend the day with, through our godly work and conversation.

Lord, in your mercy:      hear our prayer.

We pray for your church - for obedient leadership, including in our bishops and pastors, and for faithful discipleship; for unity of teaching and belief among Christians on the basis of your word and for the mission of the church throughout the world. Show us your face in those who speak your word and apply your righteousness to us, and move us to receive them gladly.

Lord, in your mercy:      hear our prayer.

We pray for our community - for loving nurture of children and for care of the vulnerable; for respect for individuals regardless of status or power; and for the well-being of all. Come to those who need the gospel through our words and actions, and move them to receive you through us.

Lord, in your mercy:      hear our prayer.

We pray for all in need or distress - for relief for those suffering from natural disasters; for hope for the despairing. Show us your face in those who suffer, and stay your hand of judgment on the world.

Lord, in your mercy:      hear our prayer.

Protect all those who are travelling for business or for pleasure and bring them home safely. Give health to those struggling with sickness at this time. Show us your face in those we can help, and meet the needs of those we now name silently in our hearts... (brief silence)

**Lord, in your mercy:      hear our prayer.**

**Heavenly Father, in your mercy give us all these things and whatever else we need on our journey to our heavenly home; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

**Amen.**

**SONG: “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”**

**[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4\\_fvFfPqjO4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_fvFfPqjO4)**

**BENEDICTION**

**To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory forever and ever.**

**And the Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favour and give us peace.**

**Amen.**