

GOD SEES TO WHAT HE SAYS
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

GEN 22:1-18
FEB 22, 2015

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ² 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.” ³ 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. ⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. ⁵ 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.” ⁶ 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. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here am I, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

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. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” ¹² 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.” ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Do as I say, not as you see me do.

Parents may sometimes say this to their children.

Children of parents in Bible, Abraham, Jacob, David, etc.,
would have done well to follow this advice.

because parents didn't always do what they knew right.

But here we have example of parent doing what God says.

v. 1 says it was test. This connection this text to 1st Sun. in Lent
when Gospel is always Jesus' temptation in wilderness.

Bible word for temptation is same as word for test.

James says God doesn't tempt us to do wrong
but he does test with intention that we pass it & do right.
Tests are to be learning experience. Who learns from this test?
God already knows everything & what will happen.
but Abraham can learn from it. And who else can learn?
I think Isaac surely learns from this to trust God completely
to be a loving father even when it doesn't look that way.
And we who read this are to learn to believe God's word
and always do what he says & trust him to do as he says
rather than trusting in what we see in appearances.

ABRAHAM DOES WHAT GOD SAYS
GOD SEES TO WHAT IS NEEDED
GOD HIMSELF SHOWS WHAT HE SAYS

ABRAHAM DOES WHAT GOD SAYS

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him,
"Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ² 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." ³ 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.

This is not first time God asked Abraham to give up security
of his family and to go to an unknown place.

Years before God told him to give up not son but Father
and leaving all behind go to a place he would show him.
But this time, God does say he will show him the place
but that he will tell him the place.

I think it is significant that he is asked to go by God's word
not by anything that he can see.

And this time, in original language, it is in form of question.

Do this, huh? Other times God uses this form of expression
it is a reminder of his promises:

Look at the land I am giving you.

Look at the stars in the sky, so shall your offspring be.

And Abraham rises early in the morning and does it.

Which is Hebrew expression meaning he doesn't hesitate.

It was not always this way. Abraham failed test often before
God repeatedly promised him a homeland, a big family
that would be great nation & being blessing to others.
But when land God led him to was threatened by drought,
he twice abandoned it to go somewhere else.
When he felt threatened, he twice lied about being married
to his wife and risked losing the family God promised.
When it looked like his wife would not have promised son,
he compromised by having son with her servant.
Each time he trusts in his compromise instead of God's promise
ends in disaster for himself & others. He is not blessing.
But each time God reminds him again of his promise.
Finally, when it seems too late for it to come true,
When, as Paul puts it, Abraham himself is as good as dead,
he has the son God has promised him.
and finally, even when God again asks to give up security
of son he waited for so long - to give up past & present,
Abraham puts his trust in God's word, not anything he sees.
From which we, like Isaac can learn a lesson: how to learn from
not just own experience, what we see, but from God's word,
where we are told to walk by faith and not by sight,
because even when we don't see how this makes sense...

GOD SEES TO WHAT IS NEEDED

⁵ 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." ⁶
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. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My
father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire
and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham
said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my
son." So they went both of them together.

God keeps referring to Isaac as Abraham's only son.

He once had another son, Ishmael, but gave him up too,
at insistence of Sarah, and sent him away.

Which was repeat of when Hagar was pregnant with Ishmael
and Sarah was so jealous & mean she ran away into desert
until God's angel told her to go home again.

So she referred to God as the God who sees me.

So, we might wonder, what is point of this story being in Bible?
I think it shows Abraham's first son almost lost before birth,
but he got him back again because of a God who sees.
In v. 5 Abraham tells servant he and Isaac will to worship
and will come back again. He knows what he going to do.
How can he say they will both come back
unless he believes in the resurrection of the dead.
When Isaac asks is father the painfully obvious question,
he says God will provide. What makes him think this?
The Hebrew word translated "provide" is literally "see"
We might say, "God will see to it."
"God sees" is same words Hagar uses in chapter 16.
Why does Abraham have such confident trust in God?
because he has learned no matter how things appear to us,
the God-who-sees sees a way to keep his promises
including giving back a son who is gone.
Still, we might wonder how Isaac, a strong teenage boy
is bound and sacrificed by Abraham, over 100 years old.
apparently, he too willingly submits to God's word,
having learned to do so from his father.
With him, we also learn to trust in God and his word
when it looks like if we obey him
we will not have what we desperately want,
when it looks like what we rely on for the future
is being taken away from us,
when it looks like there is no hope for our children,
when we face the death of loved ones and our own death
when we can't see any way out of what is happening to us
or any good resulting from it,
We need to trust the word of the God who sees
and who provides for us even through death
because of the death and resurrection of son for us.
Like Abraham, we also learn we can trust the God-who-sees
to see the future, so to provide resurrection from the dead
because he himself provides lamb as substitute sacrifice

GOD HIMSELF SHOWS WHAT HE SAYS

¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." ¹²He 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.”¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.”

As you might guess, again in v. 14 “provide” is literally “see” so Abraham says, on the mount of the Lord it will be “seen.” When we trust God’s word that he sees what we don’t see then we too end up seeing revealed what he has promised. So Abraham ends up seeing ahead of time a picture of what God himself provides on this very mountain where later there was city where Solomon built a temple where sacrifices offered by men to God were ended when, just outside this city God’s only son, son he loved, as today’s Gospel reading says, was sacrificed on the cross as a willing lamb who takes the place of all of us. so even when we fail tests & fall into temptation over & over The God who looks ahead & sees, looks back & sees what Jesus has done in our place and he forgives us and gives back our lives and, as for Abraham, when we believe God’s word he credits us with Jesus’ righteousness. which we receive by believing his promises.

¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ 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, ¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

This second time God speaks to Abraham is not first time he has given him this promise and so he is not giving this promise because of Abraham’s willing obedience. He also repeated it each time Abraham failed the test.

God always does what he says he will do no matter what,
but it is true that, like Abraham, we only receive the blessing
and benefit of what God does through faith.

Through Abraham's one descendant, Jesus,
all the nations of the earth are blessed.

Through faith in him we become children of Abraham
who will shine as the stars in heaven,
Because God did not withhold from us his only son
who by his death and resurrection, symbolized here,
took possession of gates of his enemy, the devil
so that through faith in him we can pass through
those gates of death to our own resurrection.

As James says in today's epistle: every good gift is from God
who "Of his own will brought us forth by the word of truth"
God's word or truth is what brings forth our faith
so that we trust in all his word tells us to do
and all his word promises he will do for us.

ABRAHAM DOES WHAT GOD SAYS

because he finally learned to trust God to do what he says.

GOD SEES TO WHAT IS NEEDED

because he sees everything, including the future

GOD HIMSELF SHOWS WHAT HE SAYS

God himself did what he had asked Abraham to do.

Jesus himself does for us all we fail to do perfectly.

And so it is seen that God himself provides for us

all that we need, received through faith
including forgiveness for our failures
and life forever in the resurrection.