

¹ Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² Then He said, "Take now 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 and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. ⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." ⁶ So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. ⁷ But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" ⁸ And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. ⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." ¹² And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." ¹³ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."

Text: Genesis 22:1-14 A Palm Sunday 3-29-26 He. 13:11-16 Mt. 21:1-9 Ps. 48 Resp. Ps.: 67
Hymns: 41, 725, 162, 142 (1-4)

RETURN TO SACRIFICE

1. God's sacrifice for us

2. The sacrifices God wants from us

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

On this Palm Sunday we're going to talk about sacrifice – God's sacrifice for us, and the sacrifices God wants from us.

1

God promised the Old Testament believer, Abraham, that he and his wife, Sara, would have a son. They were childless for a long, long time. Then finally, miraculously, they had a son, Isaac, when they were old. When Isaac was still young, God told Abraham, "Take ... your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him...." God told Abraham to sacrifice his son. How hard it would be for Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, whom he loved dearly. How hard it was for God to sacrifice His only Son, Jesus, Whom He loves dearly.

“Abraham rose early in the morning” with Isaac, two young men to help them, and the wood for the sacrifice. Abraham didn’t ask, “Why?!” or “How am I going to explain this to the boy’s mother?!” and refuse to do what God told him to do. God didn’t refuse to sacrifice His Son for us sinners.

It took three days to reach Moriah, the place God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham had lots of time to think about sacrificing his son. But Abraham didn’t let himself find some excuse to disobey God. From eternity God knew He would have to sacrifice His Son. God knew that that was the only way we could be saved. God didn’t let anything stop Him from sacrificing Jesus.

When they finally reached Moriah, Abraham told the young men, *“Stay here ...; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”* We learn in Hebrews 11:9 that Abraham thought that after he sacrificed Isaac, God would raise Isaac back to life. As far as Abraham knew at the time, he would still have to sacrifice Isaac. God knew that Jesus would rise again three days after He died. But God still had to sacrifice His Son.

We’re told, *“Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ Then he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.”* Abraham was an old man. We’re not told Isaac’s exact age at that time. He was old enough to be able to get away from his father and avoid being sacrificed. But he didn’t. Jesus is God. He had the power to avoid being sacrificed. But He was willing to be sacrificed for us. On the first Palm Sunday, Jesus purposely rode on a lowly donkey to show that He, our Heavenly King, had come to offer Himself up to be sacrificed. Jesus said of Himself, *“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”* (Mk. 10:45)

We’re told, *“But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ So he said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided.’”* It turned out that Abraham didn’t have to actually sacrifice his son! God provided a ram to take Isaac’s place. Abraham sacrificed the ram instead of his son. God says, *“The soul that sins shall die”* (Ezek. 18:4, 20). We deserve eternal death in hell because of our sins. But God provided Jesus as our Substitute. Jesus was punished for our sins in our place. Jesus died on the cross for us. Isaiah 53:11 says, *“He”* (God the Father) *“will see the labor of His”* (of Jesus’) *“soul, and be satisfied.”* We’re saved by what Jesus did for us.

It would be hard to sacrifice our life to save someone else's life. But who of us would be willing to sacrifice someone we love so that someone else can live? It would be hard enough if God had told Abraham to sacrifice his own life. But God told him to sacrifice his son. God was merciful to Abraham, and didn't actually make Abraham sacrifice his son.

God actually had to sacrifice Jesus. Our sins had to be punished. We can't pay for our sins. Only the sinless Son of God could pay for our sins. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "[God] made Him" (Jesus) "who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." God transferred all of our sins to Jesus. Not only did God's Son have to be sacrificed, God the Father had to do the sacrificing. God the Father had to inflict all of His just anger and punishment – the anger and punishment we deserve – on His Son. We sinners deserve to be forsaken by God. Instead, God the Father forsook His Son (Mt. 27:46). God was willing to sacrifice Jesus, and Jesus was willing to be sacrificed, so that we could be saved. John says, "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation" ("the atoning sacrifice") "for our sins." (1 Jn. 4:9-10)

2

David said to God, "You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise" (Ps. 51:16-17). During the time of the Old Testament, God commanded His people to offer animal sacrifices for their sins. At the same time, they were to be sorry for their sins and trust in the coming sacrifice of God's Son. God forgave their sins. We New Testament people of God tell Him we're sorry for our sins. We trust in Jesus, Who died for our sins on the cross, and God forgives us. John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanses us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:7, 9)

We New Testament people of God don't have to offer animal sacrifices. We have Jesus' sacrifice. The Bible says, "I beseech you ... brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Ro. 12:1). "Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (He. 13:15-16). The sacrifice, so to speak, that God wants from us is that we gladly live our lives for Him. In His Word God tells us what He expects of us. We ask God, and He helps us to gladly live the way He tells us to. The Bible says, "You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:20)

On this Palm Sunday we talked about sacrifice. Jesus riding on a lowly donkey – a beast of burden – shows us that He came to serve us – to save us. God sacrificed His Son to save us. Jesus was willing to be sacrificed to save us. May we always be sorry for our sins, and trust in Jesus for our forgiveness. May our lives be 'living sacrifices' for God. Amen.