

GOD HIMSELF WILL PROVIDE THE LAMB

Genesis 22:1-14

Maundy Thursday, April 18, 2019

“God himself will provide the lamb,”

I am participating in Session #41 of The Academy for Spiritual Formation. One of the books for the retreat in February is Faith's Freedom by Luke Johnson. He makes the case for faith to be a verb, action, not just passive belief. He uses Abraham's faith extensively in his argument. And one component of faith is obedience. "Obedient faith" is Johnson's phrase. And in today's passage from Genesis is one of the two best examples of obedient faith. Abraham hears God say, "Go and sacrifice your son," and Abraham goes. No questions asked, just preparation and going, faith that this is what God said, what God wants. Action.

When Isaac questions his father "where is the lamb to be sacrificed", his dad answers "God will provide." What must have been going through their minds, especially consider Abraham's dilemma? Try and imagine that you are Abraham. Sit with that thought for a bit. Could I have taken my son Geoff, gone and built an altar of sacrifice, bound him and laid him on top of the wood he had carried, to burn him? That's what Abraham heard God tell him to do, and the journey was made for that very thing. But at the last moment God did provide. There was a ram in the nearby bushes.

Why do we read this on Maundy Thursday? I believe it is to be reminded of the other great example of obedient faith: Jesus, the Lamb of God. On this night Jesus goes to the Garden and prays. He prays to his father to let this "cup" pass him by. It is Passover after all, the night that celebrates God's sparing of the first born of Israel in Egypt, the night of Israel's deliverance. Why can't Jesus be spared as well: he is God's first born son. But in faithful obedience, Jesus says "not my will, but Yours". Obedient faith. Jesus knew that only by living and dying the faith he had in God, could he truly live. So on this night we remember that Passover meal and Jesus' agony of prayer in the garden, and each time we come to the Lord's Table we remember again obedient faith in the Body and Blood, as we eat and drink and so are strengthened and renewed to go and live "obedient faith."

Prayer: Creator God, so strengthen us by the example of your obedient Son, that we too may live lives of obedient faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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