

Lent 1B (A Sermon by Rev. Ron Friedrich)

[Sermon for March 9, 2003 - please see the chart and notes at the end]

Text: Genesis 22:1-18 [Old Testament Lesson]

This is a story about two fathers and two sons.

The first father - his name is ABRAHAM.

His name means "father of many."

In his old-age, Abraham had a son, as God promised.

The son's name was ISAAC.

His name means, "Laugh."

Abraham had much joy about his son, Isaac.

But the story today is not a happy time. It was a very sad and dark time for Abraham. And Isaac didn't know what Dad planned to do.

God asked Abraham to give Isaac back to HIM.

Abraham loved Isaac very much -- more than his own life. But Abraham knew that his son Isaac was not his own to keep. The boy was a gift from God, and God had the right to take back the boy.

God gives us all many precious gifts. Our lives. Our families. Our homes. Our jobs. Our financial earnings. Our reputation (good name). These are all gifts from God, and HE has the right to take them back at any time.

When something we have becomes very important to us -- and that "good thing" becomes more important than God's plan for us, or that "good thing" interferes [bothers] against our walk with Christ -- God will often ask us to give that "good thing" back to HIM. And we experience the same kind of struggle that Abraham had -- the thing we love the most, we offer back to God. We let-go [disconnect] that thing... as Abraham also must let-go-of Isaac, and give the boy back to God.

Abraham did not yet understand that God does not permit human sacrifice. Abraham would learn that lesson soon. 600 years later, through Moses, God gave strict laws forbidding human sacrifice. And 800 years after that, God punished the nation of Israel, because they ignored God's law, following the religions of other nations. Israel did do human child sacrifice, that God forbid. They knew that was wrong. But Abraham did not-yet know that. God now began to teach him.

God led Abraham to a hill near a place named MORIAH. With Abraham came his son Isaac, and some servants and a donkey. They walked for three days.

When they arrived near the place, Abraham and Isaac went alone. The boy carried the wood. Dad carried the knife and fire.

Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

Abraham answered, "God HIMSELF will give the lamb." Abraham did-not-yet understand his own answer. Abraham did-not-yet fully understand God's plan. Abraham could only (1) trust God, and (2) obey HIM.

Abraham tied his son with ropes and laid him on the altar. At the second Abraham was ready to kill his son, God's angel stopped him. Then Abraham saw the sheep that God gave to die in Isaac's place.

Now jump-ahead 2000 years.
 In that same place
 another Father
 put on HIS Son
 wood to carry
 to that same hill
 to die in sacrifice.

The 2nd Father put His Son on that wood - not with ropes, but with NAILS -
 - crucified.

God did not permit the previous father, Abraham, to kill and burn his son. But now God HIMSELF killed HIS Son, Jesus, for us. God HIMSELF lit the fire of HELL under Jesus.

Jesus became the lamb that God sacrificed in our place.

Abraham did not tell a lie. God did give the lamb, not only for Isaac, but also for us. Jesus is that lamb.

The name JESUS means, "Savior."

Imagine how Isaac felt after God saved his life, and gave a sheep in his place on the altar.

How do we respond, when we learn that God also saved our life - saved us from the eternal fires of hell - by sacrificing HIS own Son Jesus for us?

During this time named LENT, let us remember,
give thanks to God
and trust HIM, as Abraham did.

We pray:

Father in heaven. We can never fully understand YOUR wonderful love. The lesson you taught Abraham, teach us also.

Teach us, if "things" become really important for us, and YOU ask us to give them back to you. Help us to trust YOU and obey YOU, same-as Abraham.

Also teach us how we can appreciate YOUR sacrifice for us. YOUR Son Jesus gave HIS life for us. Thank YOU for forgiving all our sins and giving us eternal life. Now we give ourselves back to YOU.

In Jesus' Name.

Amen.

NOTES

This lesson compares Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac with God's sacrifice of Jesus. When you sign the two stories, you may want to originate the first story from your left side, and the 2nd story from the right side, with the mountain of sacrifice in the middle.

If you prefer to use a marker board, you can write the following chart as you teach the lesson:

FATHER #1	SON #1	FATHER #2	SON #2
ABRAHAM	Isaac	God the Father	Christ Jesus
"Father of Many"	"Laugh"		"Savior"
went to a hill near Moriah		went to Calvary near Moriah	
Carried knife & fire	Carried wood	applied the fire of hell	Carried cross
Did not kill his son	Got a ram to die in his place	Did kill his Son	Became the lamb that died in our place