

Ash Wednesday 2-14-18 God's Will and God's Promise

Dear Believers in the promises of God:

It's hard work struggling with God's will when He is hard to understand.

- Life with God seems comfortable
- We know we are not perfect but we are forgiven
- We feel stable in life but then comes...
 - The car accident
 - The diagnosis
 - A broken relationship

All of a sudden the God of clear promises becomes a God who is hard to understand.

It's hard work struggling with God's will when He is hard to understand.

Abraham agonized over God's command to offer up Isaac, the son of promise. As Abraham took that 3 day journey up to the mountain to sacrifice Isaac as God had commanded him to, it was like Isaac was dead already.

Abraham had a pretty comfortable life with God.

- He had his challenges, but life seemed good
- God called Abraham His friend
- Abraham was chosen by God to be the father of the nation of Israel through whom the Savior would be born into the world
- Abraham was known as a man of faith – the father of all those who believe in the Lord
- He knows what God had promised him and everything seems secure in his life

Then all of a sudden it was like the rug was pulled out from under him.

- Everything he thought he knew changed
- The God of clear promises had become a God who is hard to understand

Going back to Genesis God had told Abraham that his wife Sarah would give birth to a son. When Abraham had heard this he fell on his face and laughed and replied: “Shall a child be born to a man who is 100 and shall my wife, Sarah who is 90 bear a child?” Genesis 17:15ff

God told Abraham Sarah will bear a son and you are to give him the name Isaac which means “He laughs”

The name of his son, Isaac, would remind Abraham of his initial faithless reaction to God’s promise.

You can be confident of this: God’s promise will prevail.

Sarah too laughed when she heard God say she would give birth to a son. Genesis 18:10-15

Isaac was known as the son of promise. Through Isaac God’s promise to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation and the father of all believers would be fulfilled.

So in Genesis 22 when God told Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah to be sacrificed it was a startling command. It was hard to understand God’s will at this point for Abraham.

“Sacrifice my son, Isaac”

Abraham must have thought this goes against everything I believe in about God.” God repeated the command “Sacrifice your only son” 3 times.

This would mean killing the son who was over 20 and ending the promise of God’s word to Abraham. This seems so irrational. Yet, Abraham obeyed God’s command.

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We know the experience of death.

- We know what it’s like to feel a relationship die

- We know what it's like to stand at the graveside of someone we love.
- The wages of sin is death
- We live with the ongoing result of our sin and of the sin in the world.

The God who was hard to understand always remained the God of clear promise. Abraham not only believed God, Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, because Isaac was the son of promise, the son through whom God said he would fulfill his promises.

Abraham trusts that God Himself will provide a lamb for the burnt offering. Abraham knows that on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.

Mount Moriah was about a 2 day journey from where Abraham and Isaac lived. Mount Moriah today is the city of Jerusalem. The spot on which Abraham would prepare the sacrifice of Isaac would later become the place of Solomon's temple. Today that spot is where the Dome of the Rock now stands.

Abraham and Isaac took the 2 day trip from their home to the mountain. Genesis 22:4ff

On the 3rd day Abraham tells his servants who accompanied him to stay behind as he and Isaac would travel to the place of sacrifice. He tells them that both he and Isaac would return after the sacrifice.

In Hebrews 11:17-19 it says that Abraham was confident in God's promise. He trusted that God would either resurrect Isaac or replace him so that the promise would be fulfilled. Genesis 21:12; 22:5

Abraham was willing to trust God. He was willing to give back to God his son of promise.

In Genesis 22:6-10 we see Abraham's obedience and trust in God. Reading the verses that follow we see that Abraham had passed the test that God put before him. Genesis 22:11-12

In the face of our sin and the consequences of our sin, even as we may mourn the end of a relationship or the death of a friend, we can reason like Abraham. The God who is sometimes hard to understand is still for us the God of clear promise.

Jesus is the ultimate Son of Promise, the one through whom God will fulfill His promises. God can raise broken relationships to life.

- God can restore families to each other
- God can undo even death itself.
- God has provided Himself the Lamb, who takes all the brokenness, all the sin, all the death into Himself on the cross.
- Jesus has triumphed over death.

And that victory is ours already now by faith, and will be ours by sight someday.

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When God's will seems confusing when God's promises seem remote, when we are carrying a burden, God Himself will provide the Lamb.

- When we are facing brokenness because of sin
- When we are facing brokenness because of sickness
- When we are facing brokenness because of death

God will provide the Lamb on the mountain of the Lord.

Jesus, Son of Promise, walking from the temple mount down to Golgotha, the same spot that 2000 years earlier Abraham obeyed God's command regarding Isaac, Jesus would fulfill God's promise of the salvation of the world.

You can be confident of this: God's promise will prevail.

Abraham and Isaac came down from that mountain with a story to tell. It is still said to this day, on the mountain of the Lord. The Lord will provide.

- As we come through a moment of confusion
- As we walk through the experience of brokenness

- As we trust God's promises and come out on the other side, we, too, will have a story to tell.

And when we face sin and death and confusion, we trust we have a God of promise.

You can be confident of this: God's promise will prevail.