SERVICE AT HOME SUNDAY 28th June 2020- Rev.Manoa Ratubalavu

New every morning is the love our waking and uprising prove; through sleep and darkness safely brought, restored to life, and power, and thought.

John Keble (1792-1866) We praise and thank you Lord for the wonders of a new day – its sights and sounds, tastes and aromas. Thank you for keeping us safe – held in your amazing love

Hymn StF 449

1 Lord of creation, to you be all praise! Most mighty your working, most wondrous your ways! Your glory and might are beyond us to tell, and yet in the heart of the humble you dwell.

2 Lord of all power, I give you my will, in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfil. Your bondage is freedom; your service is song; and, held in your keeping, my weakness is strong.

3 Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind, rich truth that surpasses my knowledge to find; what eye has not seen and what ear has not heard is taught by your Spirit and shines from your word.

4 Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart; I praise and adore you for all you impart, your love to inspire me, your counsel to guide, your presence to shield me, whatever betide.

5 Lord of all being, I give you my all; if I should disown you. I stumble and fall; but, led in your service your word to obey I’ll walk in your freedom to the end of the way.

Jack Copley Winslow (1882-1974) Words © Mrs. J. Tyrrell CCL 61615

Prayer:

Father God,

We are gathered in our homes in ones or twos, but we are not alone.

We are joined with millions of Christians around the world.

We praise you for the gift of your universal Church -- and, best of all, that you are with us!

We sing in different languages, often to different rhythms, but our theme of adoration is the same. We praise you for the gift of music to sing, or, if music is denied us, the gift to read and value the printed words -- and, best of all, that our hearts can sing your praises!

We possess different bibles, in different versions and tongues, but each of them brings us your good news of salvation. We praise you that salvation comes through your Son Jesus, crucified and risen -- and, best of all, the good news includes forgiveness for our sins!

Take all our prayers. Use them to draw us closer to yourself. Cleanse us of our sins and refresh us for your service, in Jesus’ name. Amen

Reading: Genesis 22:1-14

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ 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 that I shall show you.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the
burnt-offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. 4On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. 5Then Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.’ 6Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘Father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ He said, ‘The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?’ 8Abraham said, ‘God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.’ So the two of them walked on together.

9When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. 11But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ 12He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the boy 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.’ 13And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt-offering instead of his son. 14So Abraham called that place ‘The Lord will provide’; as it is said to this day, ‘On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’

Hymn: STF 459
Captain of Israel's host, and Guide of all who seek the land above, beneath your shadow we abide, the cloud of your protecting love; our strength, your grace; our rule, your word; our end, the glory of the Lord.

By your unerring Spirit led, we shall not in the desert stray; we shall not full direction need, nor miss our providential way; as far from danger as from fear, while love, almighty love, is near.

Charles Wesley

Reflection:

Sometimes we go through such heavy trials in this life. And, if we’re honest, we may wonder, “God, why are you allowing this to happen to me? I’m trying to follow you best I can. Why, Lord?” Yet, perhaps the better question would be, “Lord, what do you want me to learn out of this?” How do you keep that perspective that God is still at work, even through trials?

1. God tests our faith. There will be times in your life when God allows you to go through trying experiences. Most of you have lived long enough to look back and identify some of these times. James 1:2-3 tells us, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.” God uses tests and trials to grow us.

It’s the major trial: will Abraham trust in the promise? Or will
Abraham trust in the God who gave the promise? Will he let anything or anyone come between him and his God? Will his relationship with God remain top priority in his life?

Perhaps Jesus was thinking of this priority when he said, much later, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—even, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). As a Jewish rabbi, Jesus taught by exaggeration. Does he literally want us to hate our closest family members? Of course not. But he exaggerates to make the point that nothing and no one should come between us and him. You can only serve one master. Jesus must be the number one priority of our life. That’s what it means to be his disciple.

God will test your faith at times. God will call you to costly obedience. And out of that, you will learn something new about God. That is the second big lesson I see, that, out of hardship,

2. God grows our faith. When we endure times of testing, your faith has an opportunity to grow. Your understanding of God will mature.

In our story today, Abraham is obedient to God to the point of taking the life of his one and only son, the son of promise. As he lifts the knife into the air, at the last possible moment, the voice of the Lord intervenes and stop him. Immediately, Abraham notices a ram caught by his horns and sacrifices the ram in place of Isaac. Abraham names that place, “The Lord will provide,” or Yahweh Yireh, because God provided a sacrifice in place of Isaac.

The test is not to teach God something; it’s to teach Abraham something about himself and his God. Abraham now knows a whole new dimension of God as provider because Abraham obediently put himself in a place of learning. He put himself in a place of desperation for God.

You only learn more about God as you allow yourself to trust him, to believe him, to count on his provision.

I learn from this as I was about to be booted out from the Military house where we were staying and no place to go and finalising my papers to be a legal citizen of this country my motto was: God will Provide!!

An anonymous writer once wrote,

When doubt and dismay would enfold you,
And hope for relief becomes dim,
Remember that Someone has told you
To cast all your care upon Him.

Amen

Dear God,
Some of us feel exhausted by the constant stream of bad news...
Some of us feel exhausted from the effort of trying to not freak out...
Some of us feel exhausted from trying to make ends meet...
Some of us feel exhausted from the effort of trying to entertain and educate and feed and love children who are stuck at home...
Some of us feel exhausted by long shifts in a hospital we no longer recognise or by doing a job we are afraid might kill us...
Some of us feel exhausted being a shield for those with pre-existing health conditions that are already exhausting enough...
Some of us feel exhausted by our aloneness...
Some of us feel exhausted just through the effort of trying to make everything ok for everyone else...
So, if I get upset with you Lord, forgive me. It’s just that life is very tender and sometimes it’s easy for me to run off a short fuse...
I know, dear God, that not a single one of us is promised another day, so what I am asking for, I guess, is for enough strength for my 'now'; for this day I am in, and then the faith to trust you in my tomorrow. Amen.

Hymn StF 82 ‘O Lord, my God’

Oh Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works thy hand hath made, I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder, thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee: how great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee: how great thou art, how great thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees; when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur, and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home - what joy shall fill my heart; then shall I bow in humble adoration, and there proclaim: My God how great thou art!

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

(traditional Gaelic blessing)

Amen