

Heralds of the King: Blessing in the Midst of Suffering

Children are an amazing gift (Bible says) - that's what we keep telling ourselves

- Don't always seem like a blessing
- Intentionally push one another's buttons
- We love them so much: Do anything for them
 - Difficult time disciplining them
 - Melissa may disagree, but it tears me up inside
- Why? I love them so dearly & want to bless them
- Parenting: like a torture chamber - lack of sleep, always busy, fighting

Despite my love for them - caught between this tension of suffering & blessing

That's often how God's blessings come - in the midst of suffering - exactly what we see in Gen. 22 as we continue through Heralds to the King

Abraham - Man of God who so dearly wanted children, but was unable to have them. Longed for children for 86 years - wife let him have a child with her servant (Ishmael) - Abraham was finally happy - then Sarai was jealous - Abraham suffered through this for over 14 years

Sarah conceived and bore a son - Sarah even more jealous and made Abraham send Ishmael away

Vs. 1-2

Why now? Why Isaac? Abraham longed for children for so many years

- We are tempted to love God's good gifts more than God himself
 - Would Abraham still love God if He took Abraham's favorite gift?
 - Same questions we must ask ourselves - the true answer can only come through testing
 - Would I still love God if I were put in the shoes of an Ethiopian making \$1 per day?
 - If He took my home, my 3 meals per day, children, spouse?
- Abraham didn't wake up 1 morning to find Isaac dead - God didn't simply take Isaac from him
 - God asked Abraham to give him up - that's a much greater test
- Imagine that night - Couldn't sleep (toss and turn)
 - Paced around the house, crying to God - I thought you were going to make me a father of a multitude of nations (Gen. 17:4) Through Isaac my descendants shall be named (21:12)

Vs. 3-5

- Abraham rose the next day & started his journey - why?
 - Was he super morally good-natured? No
 - Faith - believing God knows best - somehow God would fulfill His promises
 - Isaac 15-30 yrs old - what was their journey like? 3 day camping trip
 - Nightly discussions by the fire - did Isaac share his desires to be married? Have kids?
 - What was going through Abraham's head for those 3 days? What was that journey like?
- Doesn't sugar coat it, not lying - Abraham had faith that in some way God would preserve the boy's life
- Went to Worship - submitting ourselves to the word of God - giving first and best to the Lord
 - Abraham is submitting himself, yielding himself to the will of God and giving his firstborn son, whom he loves as his most prized possession, in obedience to the Lord - considers it as worship - worship is a sacrifice

Vs. 6-8

- Isaac knew they needed a lamb - God would provide

Heralds of the King: Blessing in the Midst of Suffering

Continued to the place God directed - built the altar - bound Isaac and laid him on the Altar

- Isaac was 15-30 yrs old (Abraham was 115 yrs old) how much faith/trust did Isaac have in his father?

Only imagine what that was like - tears as Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his only son

Vs. 11-13

- Abraham is stopped, thankfully
- Ram instead - Isaac somehow knew they needed a lamb, but here is a ram
- Sacrifice it instead - Substitutionary atonement - heart of our faith
- Substitutionary atonement is typified here w/ram
 - Son is spared, goes free, Ram is slaughtered

2 Cor 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- W/O this understanding, we don't have the Gospel, the good news, the story of the Bible

Vs. 14 - Everything was not completed on that day - will be completed on a day appointed by God in the future

Vs. 15-19

Gal. 3:16 - Jesus is the offspring referred to in the promise to Abraham - Jesus is the blessing to the nations of the earth

Why would God do this?

- God knew Abraham's heart
- Abraham knew his own faith
- Prove it to Isaac
 - So that Isaac would have his own faith - God of Abraham, needed to be the God of Isaac, God of Jacob

Truth: Sometimes difficult things happen in our lives not because God is mean or because God is picking on us, but because God is pushing our faith out so that others can see - to know and trust God

- We are so obsessed with our own feelings, hardships - tempted to say God is not good

Abraham understood his son was watching, how I respond is enormously important

- if I curse God or disobey, I will raise a faithless son who does not know the Lord

Abraham demonstrates his faith for his son

- Parents must demonstrate faith for kids - they're watching
- Classmates, neighbors, co-workers, family
 - When hard times come, is faith real?
 - When suffering comes, what will happen?

That is the question we all have to wrestle with

When we trust God, incredible blessings come - through suffering

We may not see the blessings - Abraham didn't see Jesus, but

Heralds of the King: Blessing in the Midst of Suffering

Rom. 8:28 - And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Very same thing that God faced with his own son - final lamb mentioned in Gen. 22:14

- Took the punishment we deserve
- We could have a right relationship with God - we could be blessed through Jesus' suffering

Where is your faith? How is your faith? How do you think you would react to the same test?

- Talk about it with your GC
- Talk about it with your family, fight club, friends

Response - communion to remember Jesus' sacrifice

- Sing as an act of worship - we offer our best
- Give as an act of worship - offer our money
- Gather as an act of worship - offer our time