

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

December 2, 2020

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pastor: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

All: Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God in his mercy has given his Son to die for you and for his sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

People: Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON *Genesis 22:1-14*

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." 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 of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up

as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE LESSON *Romans 8:31-34*

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL LESSON *John 10:14-18*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

SERMON “Jesus, Son of Abraham” Genesis 22

- I. Who is Abraham’s famous son?
- II. The Preparation for the Test (“After these things God tested Abraham;” Gen 22:1)
 - Abraham had Isaac at the age of _____; Sarah was _____.
 - What are “these things?”
 - How has God prepared us?
- III. The Purpose for the Test (“God tested Abraham...” Gen 22:1)
 - I Peter 1:6-7 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be tested genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed”.
- IV. The Provision for the Test (“So Abraham called that place, ‘The LORD Will Provide.’” Gen 22:13-14)

- Who else did God provide for?
- How does this point to Jesus?

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you, from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. More attention has been given to Jesus; more devotion has been given to Jesus; more adoration has been given to Jesus than any other person, ever! On the other hand, however, more opposition has been given to Jesus than any other person—ever. Every recorded word that Jesus said has been sifted, analyzed, scrutinized, debated—every word. More than all of the other kings and queens, philosophers and scientists put together. After 2,000 years, there is never one minute on earth that millions are not studying what Jesus said. Think about it—really think about it. Here’s a person who lived in a tiny land two thousand years ago, yet his birth divides the centuries—AD, BC—before Christ and Anno Domini, the year of our Lord.

Just who is this person? Just who is Jesus? That’s the question we’re asking during this Advent Season. Who is Jesus? Matthew is our guide. In Matthew 1:1, he says, “**A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham**”. Question. Who is Abraham’s famous son? Answer. That would be Isaac—the son of sacrifice. That would also be Jesus—Jesus is the Son of sacrifice.

You know Isaac’s story—it’s one of the most dramatic stories in the Bible. Abraham and Sarah had been trying to have children all their adult lives. Then at the ripe old age of one-hundred for Abraham and ninety for Sarah, the son is born, the miracle son. His name is Isaac. Isaac! His name in Hebrew means “laughter.” In Genesis 21:6-7, Sarah explains his name by saying, “**God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me...Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.**” Isaac was a great blessing to this couple that waited so long to finally have a child of their own!

However, after Isaac had grown up, God speaks these haunting words to Abraham, “**Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about**”.

We know something of what Abraham felt. We’ve had our heart leap into our throat. We’ve been filled with panic. We’ve buried our head in tears and anguish. We know what it’s like to see a cloudless day suddenly change into dark clouds, storms, lightning, and tempest! A child is born with spina bifida. A grandmother just died. A career isn’t in gear. A father has dementia—he doesn’t know anyone anymore. A childhood was ripped apart by an alcoholic parent. A constant state of depression refuses to lessen its grip. A miscarriage still hurts— after all these years.

At such points in life, it’s easy to get lost in despair. We lose ourselves in our jobs, or in the internet or TV or alcohol. We express our pain in anger and hatred and revenge. Jesus comes. Jesus helps. Jesus provides. And why is that? Jesus is the Son of Abraham. Jesus is the Son of sacrifice. Let’s take a look.

In verse one, we have the preparation for the test. “**After these things God tested Abraham**” (Gn 22:1). The key words are “**after these things.**” What things? Abraham had seen the LORD faithfully guide him from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran and then to Canaan. Abraham had heard the LORD say, “**I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens**” (Gn 15:5). Abraham had witnessed the miraculous birth of Isaac. What’s it all mean? It means that God prepared Abraham for his test.

God has prepared us, too! Holy Baptism, the Holy Gospel, and the Holy Supper deliver the Holy Spirit and with him we have forgiveness, joy, and power! Through the means of grace, God pours out upon us courage and confidence, insight and wisdom. The test we’re going through isn’t random, it’s not an accident. Every test is Father-filtered. Whatever it is, God has prepared us for the test! He works through, and has worked through, our lives and many experiences!

Next, we see the purpose for the test. “**God tested Abraham ...**”. When a storm hits an eagle it initially appears as though the storm’s fury is going to crush the eagle against a rocky cliff. But the eagle faces the storm, tilts his wings at the proper angle, and slowly the fury that might have crushed him begins to drive him upward until he rises above the storm. What’s true of eagles can be true for us. The power that looks to destroy us is the same power by which we rise to new heights. God sends tests to bring us to greater heights of conviction and courage and Christian character.

There is a purpose for the test. That’s what Peter says in the opening verses of his epistle. “**In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These**

have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be tested genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed”.

I once heard a story about a young man who was taking a philosophy course. He’d studied, and studied—and studied some more! When he came to the final exam, the philosophy professor wanted to see how much philosophy these young people knew, how well they could think. The final examination was one word: “Why?” The young man thought for a while, wrote one word down, and walked out: “Because!”

Why? Do you ever ask that question when you’re going through a test? Why? Why me? Why me now? Why this? God says, “Because.” But he adds these words, “Because I love you right where you are, but I love you too much to leave you right where you are!”

Our tests refine us. They mature us. They season us. They humble us. God tests us to strengthen us. Satan tests us to destroy us. Satan attacks at the weakest points of our life, to bring us down, to bring us defeat. That’s not the God of Abraham and Isaac. God’s tests aren’t intended to destroy us. God’s tests are intended to develop us.

Last, we see the provision for the test. Genesis 22:13-14: **“He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place, ‘The LORD Will Provide.’ And to this day it is said, ‘On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided”.** This is our God! He provides! Our God sees the need of Noah and provides an ark. He sees Israel in Egyptian bondage and provides a way through the Red Sea. He sees David out-muscled by Goliath and provides a rock to hit that uncircumcised Philistine right between the eyes. He sees Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in a fiery furnace and provides a fourth Man. With every test, God provides a way out. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, **“And God is faithful; he will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tested, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it”.**

The God of Abraham and Isaac is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we have the ultimate provision. **“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”** (Rom 8:32). God spared Isaac. He finally didn’t spare Jesus.

Jesus willingly took the wood and marched up the mount—not Moriah—but Golgotha. There would be no substitute ram this time. He was arrested abruptly. Tried unjustly. Sentenced callously. Mocked repeatedly. Abandoned ruthlessly. Beaten brutally. Crucified barbarously. But he is risen triumphantly! God reversed the curse. Christ is alive, never to die again. Death has no more dominion over him! Jesus lives to provide what we need when faced with life’s tests. **“And my God will provide for all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus”** (Phil 4:19).

Now, notice the joy of Abraham. He doesn’t call his mountain Mt. Sacrifice, or Mt. Blood, Sweat, and Tears. Abraham calls the Mountain “The LORD Provides!” And He does, He really does. The story behind our Prayer of the Day shows this well. During World War II in England, the most ominous sound one could hear was the air raid siren. For a nine-month period between 1940 and 1941, the Germans attacked Britain’s airfields and then cities with nightly bombing raids. The sound would start softly, but would continue until it reached a spine-tingling trumpet sound. The constant threat of the sirens over those months led everyone to dread each night as the sun would set. It was during this time that Rev. Eric Milner-White was serving as dean at the famous King’s College at Cambridge. Knowing full well the fear that gripped the people, he penned the following prayer: “Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen”

We might not always know where we are going, or what lies ahead, but God provides. He has prepared us through the means of grace, works all things for our good and benefit, and has given us Jesus the Son of Sacrifice. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

THE LORD’S PRAYER

All: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who

trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICAMUS AND BENEDICTION

Pastor: Let us bless the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. *Numbers 6:24–26*

People: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN “Hark the Glad Sound” LSB 349

1 Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let ev’ry heart prepare a throne
And ev’ry voice a song.

2 He comes the pris’ners to release,
In Satan’s bondage held.
The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield.

3 He comes the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the treasures of His grace
To enrich the humble poor.

4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
Thy welcome shall proclaim,
And heav’n’s eternal arches ring
With Thy belovèd name.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHRISTMAS DECORATION DONATIONS: Sanctuary Christmas decoration donation slips are available in the narthex. Please indicate your willingness to help defray decoration costs by using the donation slip. Place in the offering plate or hand to an usher. Donation slips will be available through December 25.

SERVING OUR WORSHIP SERVICE TODAY

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