

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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March 5, 2006  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Genesis 22:1-18  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Genesis 22:1-18  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 6  
Second Lesson: Romans 8:31-39  
Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

## The Lord Will Provide

The nature of faith—what is the nature of faith? Faith, as we are told in Hebrews, is being sure of what you can't see, right? What you can't understand—you simply believe it—it is a matter of faith. A lot of things in life that we encounter are not matters of faith, right? It's not a matter of faith that there is a cross in the front of church this morning, is it? Unless you have already fallen asleep, you should be able to see that there is a cross in the front of church right next to the pulpit, right? It is not a matter of faith that I began with the wrong greeting this morning at the start of the service, is it? Sinners screw up and I screwed up, but that is something you see. It's not a matter of faith.

What are some things that are a matter of faith—of trust—of belief—that you can't be absolutely certain of? We are confronted with them in our text this morning in the reading I read to you from Genesis 22. We are confronted with something that is a matter of faith. When Abraham has to look at his son, Isaac, in the eye when his son is saying, "Hey Dad. Where is that lamb? What are we going to sacrifice?" And he has to answer, "The Lord will provide." That is a matter of faith because he had no guaranty on how the Lord was going to do it or what he was going to do. That is a statement of faith—the Lord will provide.

Then after the Lord provided for him, the Lord stopped his hand and stopped the knife from coming down and there was that ram and he offered the ram and he called that place "*The Lord Will Provide*"—that is a proclamation of victorious faith wanting everyone to know who God is and what God has done to meet his needs.

For you and me, we go through life and we often need statements of faith that we live by. One of them is that the Lord will provide. Sometimes we don't know how and when and where, but we know he will. Also, the Lord provides to you and to me opportunities to make this victorious proclamation of faith. The Lord will provide, the Lord has provided to those who don't yet know that truth—to those that are still looking for the answers. You and I get that opportunity.

This is probably one of those Bible stories that as a kid it stuck with you, right? The idea of a parent offering their son as a sacrifice, the idea that God said to him to do this, it probably brought up all kinds of questions that maybe you thought about or maybe you asked when you first learned the story. Why would God do such a thing? How could Abraham do this? It is a striking account of what happened. God says as we are told in Scripture that it was a test so that Abraham could demonstrate, probably for you

and me to see, the nature of what faith is. We see when we look at this the nature of faith. It is trusting God and taking God at his Word. We can get so wrapped up in Abraham and what he is able to do that we probably forget what enabled him to do it.

Remember that 25 years before Isaac was born God had told Abraham that all nations on earth would be blessed through the offspring of Abraham and Sarah. The Savior would come through his offspring. It took 25 years until that child came. He was promised when he was 75, the child was born when he was 100, the child of his old age, the child that he loved, the child of his beloved wife, Sarah, and God had said to him, "Through this offspring all nations on earth will be blessed." That was the Word of God that enabled Abraham to have a faith that amazes us, because that is what he put his trust in. It wasn't blind trust. It wasn't hoping and wishing that God will do something to take care of this. The Lord I sure hope will provide—that wasn't what was going on in Abraham's mind. What was going on in Abraham's mind, as we are told in Hebrews Chapter 11, the chapter of faith, was that Abraham believed that God would keep his promise—that the Messiah would come from the descendent of Isaac. Isaac didn't have any children yet. So we are told in Hebrews that he reasoned that God would bring him back to life if he actually killed him because God would keep his Word.

That is the amazing thing. Abraham stands so squarely on God's Word that he puts his trust in what God had said even though his senses would be screaming "If I kill Isaac, he can't have a child. There won't be a Messiah. We will all be lost in our sins." The senses would be saying, "This can't be right." But faith silenced the scream of his senses and said, "The Lord will provide." He reasoned that God would raise him from the dead. That was the way he thought God would answer it. It's not the way God answered it, but it was based on what God had said to him, the promises God had made to him. That is what faith rests upon. Not just blind faith. Not just hopeful wishing, but faith in God's promises.

Did you ever read this or study this and think, "I hope God never asks me to do something like this. I could never do this." Do you ever stop to think about what God asks you to do day after day after day to trust that the Lord will provide? Do you ever think about those things you will face this coming week, this coming month, this coming year, sometime in your life that is going to call upon you to deny what your senses are screaming—that this can't work, this can't be, this won't be good—and trust that the Lord will provide? When your doctor tells you that things are terminal or tells a loved one that things are terminal, our reason wants to scream, "Why Lord? How can this be? I've always loved you. I've always served you. How can you let this happen to me?" But faith, based on God's Word, leads us to say, "The Lord still loves me. The Lord is still with me. And the Lord will provide the strength for me to endure this."

As you look at the pile of bills and you look at the balance in your checkbook and you wonder, "How are we going to make ends meet"—God has promised to you what—not he will give you all things, but he will give you all good things. He will give you what you need for body and life. Sometimes we forget that, don't we? We get so wrapped up in what we want that we forget about God's promises to give us what we need. Faith has to jump to the forefront, rely on God's Word and say, "The Lord will provide." As our Second Lesson said, *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—he*

isn't going to desert us now. He loved us enough to live and die for us. He isn't going to leave us on our own. That is the guaranty that God places behind every one of his promises.

We struggle with loneliness, fear, anxiety, depression, what promises God made to you that you can fall back on—"I'm with you always to the very end of the age", "never will I leave you, never will I forsake you"—God has made promises to us. The other thing God does is put us among other believers that are to be blessings to us also. Sometimes it takes faith to say that the Lord will provide through our fellow believers so that we take down our walls and that we let other people, other believers who want to serve their God, help us, strengthen us and encourage us with a message from the Lord.

Faith says the Lord will provide even when our senses scream that it can't happen. That is one of the truths we see with Abraham here today. He kept his faith focused on God's Word and he did things that I can only imagine. But then you notice that Abraham didn't stop there, did he? He praised God, but he praised God in a way of proclaiming what God had done so that all other people could hear it. It says that Abraham called this place *The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."*

Abraham wanted others to know what a great God he had so he called on his name. He worshipped him. He proclaimed what he had done—not only to his own family, but so that all others would hear it—who God is and what God has done. This is how we exercise our faith, how we live our faith, how we put our faith into practice—we tell others about God. It is the response of faith. The response to promises kept is to share the message of who God is and what God has done.

Abraham did it. He did it faithfully. People kept talking about it. *"On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."* That Messiah did come from his line. It did come from Isaac. On the mountain of the Lord, that Messiah provided salvation for you and for me and for all people. He died to take away the sins of all the times that you and I doubt. You and I sinfully doubt and accuse God of not having our best interest at heart. Christ carried all of them to the cross and took them away. As we see that and as we understand that and as we see the object of our faith, Jesus Christ, and as he strengthens us through the Word and through the Sacraments, we want others to know that the Lord will provide. This isn't a hope. This isn't a wish. This is a certainty of faith. We want them to experience that confidence and that comfort that we have because of this faith. So we want to tell others who God is and what God has done. We want to say to them, "You are worried? I have been worried. Here is where my comfort is. You don't know how to face this difficulty? I have been there. I have not known what was going to happen, but I have experienced God's help and God's protection and God's deliverance. Even as I faced things that tore my heart apart—as I lost loved ones and as I suffered and as I faced uncertainty—I found strength in God's love for me in Christ. It didn't take away all the difficulty, but it helped me to get through it all."

As we share with others who God is and what God has done, then the Lord will provide for them also. He will provide for them through frail vessels like you and me. Frail vessels like you and me that will mess up, that won't always do everything perfectly or trust perfectly. Frail vessels like us that will look back and say, "You know, when that person talked with me, I could have, I should have, I would have said this about God, but instead I talked about the Packers' draft pick."

Our God will forgive us for the times that we have failed. That will lead us to want to talk all the more about what a wonderful God we have.

Faith is based on Christ. Faith in Christ will never disappoint.