

Outline for Sermon delivered on June 29, 2014

## Power of Story Telling

Just returned from being chaplain at Camp Noel Porter -- role of Story telling

How we make sense of our lives through stories, and hopefully arrive at JOY through THE STORIES WE MAKE OF OUR LIVES

Told a lot of stories at camp -- Bible Stories and songs, other Christians in the communion of Saints (James Weldon Johnson, Cornelius Hill), and Harry Potter

Sacrifice of Isaac -- meanings

Ancient Rabbinic story: Why didn't God send an Angel to tell Abraham to sacrifice his son? Because no Angel would accept so horrible a job.

## VERY IMPORTANT STORY

Last week - dismissal of Ishmael and Hagar

Interpretations:

Foundation for ram as Temple offering in Judaism

Movement away from child/human sacrifice

Xnty -- Offering of Son as sacrifice, Isaac as precursor of JC

*God demands a most horrible thing: "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering" (22:2). The rabbis imagine the scene:*

*God said, "Take your son." And Abraham said, "I have two sons." He answered him, "Your only son." He said to him, "Each is the only son of his mother." God said, "The one whom you love." Abraham replied, "Is there any limit to a father's love?" God answered, "Isaac."*

*The two of them walk on together, father and son, the son carrying the wood for his own sacrifice. The first century rabbis, with no connection to Christianity but with ample experience of Roman executions, said of this detail: "Isaac carries the wood for the sacrifice like one who carries his own cross." (Working Preacher)*

This is foundational story. What does it tell us, in and of itself, and what does it tell us when we hear it through our Christian framework?

What is different about the sacrifice of Isaac and the sacrifice of Jesus? Isaac was spared by God and it was a lesson for us that human sacrifice isn't (or shouldn't) be required, and yet we Christians feel we have been saved by Jesus' sacrifice.

There can be WRONG sacrifice -- as God reveals the Sacrifice of Isaac to be. Unnecessary.

There can be sacrifice for the WRONG REASONS -- egotistical, narcissistic -- to prove something about one's self. A parent who works too much, or a young soldier out to prove something on the battlefield, or a self-made "saint."

Lesson of Xian sacrifice: Sacrifice is good only when absolutely necessary. And only when it comes out of common life and is for the common good, inspired by LOVE. (Oscar Romero)

Sacrifice shouldn't be necessary -- when it is it's because of the presence of sin -- sinful institutions, sinful systems, selfishness, oppression and injustice.

Jesus sacrificed himself to show love in the face of terror, and his resurrection is proof of redemption over sin, triumph of love over death --

WHY THE HP THEME AT CAMP b/c of theme of communion of Saints -- friendship, love, helping one another along. LOVE -- the bond of friendship and love that the characters share IS the Xst figure of the story.

Read from HP and the Deathly Hallows -- Harry at Kings Cross Station

Harry's sacrifice defeats death and transforms the wizarding world because by the end of the 7 books HE LEARNS TO LOVE HIS NEIGHBOR AND HIMSELF, and that is the root of his sacrifice.

LOVE is the only reason for sacrifice -- love is the only worthy reason. Transformation of broken sinfulness into wholeness is the only possible purpose -- that is why JC sacrificed himself for us.