

Love that Worships Births Mission that Sacrifices!

Love and worship are two of the most important words found in the Bible. The first two times these words (or derivatives of these words, such as “lovest”) are found in the Bible are in Genesis 22: “*And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*” (Genesis 22:2). Then: “*And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you*” (Genesis 22:5). By the law of first mention we learn that God’s love and our worship in return is personified in sacrifice. Therefore, the motivation of “missions: love that worships” is exemplified in our willingness to sacrifice.

In the famous story of Genesis 22, we learn that God has asked Abraham to do the most difficult thing in his world. God requests of him to take his son of Divine promise up to Mount Moriah and when there to offer him up in sacrifice to God. The Lord is asking him to choose. This request is a harbinger to Luke 14:26, “*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*” (Luke 14:26). “*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*” (Deuteronomy 6:5). Then Jesus reaffirmed this in the Gospels three times, “*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*” (Matthew 22:37).

Our missionary, Bobby Bonner gave a life-changing message on this subject when my wife and I were with Becky and him in Zambia this past summer. To tell you the truth, it was one of those “ah-ha” moments for me. I thought to myself, Bobby has touched on the key to our service from one of the most ancient biblical stories. So with Bobby’s permission, I have reiterated upon the theme that he has so ably made clear in our annual mission conference. Allow me to elaborate:

1. God loves us and is asking us to love Him in return with the same kind of love.

When Peter had failed so miserably in denying the Lord just hours before Christ died, Jesus brought him back into the fold for lifetime service with one question three consecutive times: “*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*” (John 21:15). The Lord did not ask Peter, “Are you sorry, I mean really, really sorry for what you did in denying me?” He did not demand, “Now you must go back to the soldiers and maid that you lied to and get it right, because you will not speak for me until you clean up the mess you made!” Jesus did not flaunt in his face, “Peter, you have such deluded visions of grandeur, acting like you are better than all the other disciples and then telling me though everyone else would deny

me, you never would. Peter; do you see how much of a loser you really are?" Our Lord did not say, "Now, Peter, if you can promise me that you'll never do that again, I might find it in my heart to forgive you and use you." No, our Lord did nothing of the kind, He simply asked, "Peter, do you love me?" and He followed up by pointing out, that if Peter could love Him, he would find the ability to feed the lambs and sheep of God. If Peter or anybody can just fall in love with Jesus, all the strength to win souls and do mission work would follow.

2. Our Lord is asking us to love Him more than anybody or anything else.

God gave Abraham a son, Isaac because he loved Abraham. God in essence was saying: you know by the gift of Isaac how much I love you. Now will you make it clear that you love me more than anybody or anything and not just love the gifts I give you? This was a precursor of Calvary! The Bible says, "*And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together*" (Genesis 22:7, 8). Later in this chapter we see the fulfillment of Abraham's promise to his son and the prophecy of the future fulfillment when Jesus, the Lamb of God who would provide forgiveness for us in His death upon the cross! "*And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of THE LORD it shall be seen*" (Genesis 22:13,14). God gave what He loved best to save our wretched souls. Remember what Jesus asked of Peter, "...lovest thou me more than these?" The question is do we love the Lord more?

When we express our love to Christ in an act of worship (the sacrifice of "our Isaac"), God will give us back, as he did for Abraham more than we can ever imagine. Abraham not only got his son back, but a multitude of sons daughters because of his sacrificial act of love that worshipped! God said, "*And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis 26:4). In the New Testament we see God's promises extend to us through Father Abraham, "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*" (Galatians 3:16).

In reference to missions, the nouns "love" and "worship" should be turned into action verbs. The Bible says, "...*God is love*" (I John 4:8) and "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). We are reminded of this principle in the life of David. A sacrifice that doesn't cost us anything is not truly sacrifice. "*And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost*" (I Chronicles 21:24).

"Here am I" becomes the posture of love, worship, sacrifice and service!

The Bible says, *“And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I”* (Genesis 22:11). Was this not also the attitude of the prophet Isaiah? *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me”* (Isaiah 6:8). God will send the willing one to go. It has been said we cannot spell God or the word Gospel, without first writing “GO”! Allow me to highlight a few places in the Gospels where we are encouraged to go! *“And as ye go, preach...”* (Matthew 10:7). *“...Son, go work to day in my vineyard”* (Matthew 21:28). *“...Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled”* (Luke 14:23). *“...leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?”* (Luke 15:4). *“And go quickly, and tell...”* (Matthew 28:7). *“Go ye therefore...”* (Matthew 28:19). *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15).

3. Love that worships will not only birth mission that sacrifices, but will also bring a relationship with God that is intimate!

The Lord Jesus expresses just how close those who love Him more than anybody or anything can become: *“And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother”* (Mark 3:32-35).

If we have this intimacy, let us keep it; if not, our prayer is that this week will initiate this close walk with God and allow our Lord to birth and re-birth mission after mission until our mission in life is over and we say with Jesus, *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* (John 17:4).

-Pastor Pope-