

February 22, 2015
Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Genesis 22:1–18

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Genesis 22:1–18 (ESV)

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”
² 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.”³ 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.⁴ On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.⁵ 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.”⁶ 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.⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”⁸ Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.⁹ 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.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”¹² 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.”¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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.”¹⁵ And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven¹⁶ and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,¹⁸ and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

“Why me?”

We have probably all uttered those words at one point or another when we've been hit with a seemingly unbearable trial in our lives. It just doesn't make sense to us. How could this be happening to me?

We want to cry out...Why is this happening to me?
How am I going to get through this?

Do these questions sound familiar?
When we read our Old Testament Reading for today, it would seem that Abraham would certainly be justified in asking of God, “Why me?”

But in our text we discover that even as we're asking, “Why Me?”
God Is at Work in the Midst of Life's Trials.

Abraham might surely have asked, “Why me?” at God's request. You mean my son, my only son...the one You promised, the one we waited so long for...the one who would father all of those descendants that I am supposed to have.

You remember, as many as the stars, or the sands on the beach, really
God...how are You going to pull that off of you have me sacrifice my son...my only son!

God's request was an amazing test of faith! (vv 1–2).
Isaac was the son God had given Abraham and Sarah in their old age.

Sarah had been unable to have children (16:1). And finally, finally when Abraham was age 100 and Sarah was 90 when Isaac was born (17:17; 21:5).

This was a miracle on top of a miracle, because even if Sarah hadn't been barren previously, now, because of her age, it was physically impossible. I like the way that God's Word puts it in Genesis 18:11 (ESV)

“Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.”

Post menopausal Sarah had a miracle baby, beyond medical science even today. This was a natural conception, not done by in vitro fertilization nor any other unnatural means besides the will of God.

Isaac was the heir who would continue God's covenant promise to Abraham (17:1–7, 16). For this and every other good reason, Abraham loved Isaac just as any other real father would.

And now, after years of waiting, after his miraculous birth, after God's promise seems to have finally fulfilled, now Abraham has been called by God to sacrifice his son...his only son.

Abraham could have cried out, “Why ME!!” But he didn't. God's request was met with faith and obedience (v 3).

Why? What gave Abraham the strength to even consider what you or I couldn't even conceive of doing?

It's simple really. Abraham trusted God.

He trusted in spite of the past challenges in receiving a son.

He trusted in spite of future plans God predicted through that son (see Heb 11:17–19).

Abraham did as God commanded (vv 4–8).

He obeyed, even when he had time to think about it on the three-day journey to change his mind. It wasn't a snap decision; think about that long trip up that mountain.

Still, he obeyed in spite of every fatherly instinct, in spite of the emotions, the love he must have felt as he heard Isaac's question: "Hey dad, we have the fire and the wood, but what about the lamb."

We don't know the exact age of Isaac at the time, but the Hebrew word *na'ar*, translated here as boy, in other translations as a lad. That could stretch the age from and older child to a young unmarried adult.

Either way, he had the wherewithal to know something was missing from the sacrifice. And can you imagine Abraham trying to answer the question, as the words stuck in his throat, "*God will provide*".

He had provided, God gave Abraham a son...and now He is taking him away.ve wanted to shout loudly, "WHY ME!!"

While Abraham might have asked, "Why me?" God was already answering, "I will" provide the lamb.

God provided the lamb for Abraham (vv 10–13).

"Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² 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." ¹³ 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." Genesis 22:10–13 (ESV)

And God provided the Lamb for all people.

A sacrifice is demanded by God. If we plan on getting to heaven by our own works, then we are to be pitied. It can't be done. God demands perfection, and our own good works, done for our benefit, done to earn our salvation, are like filthy rags in the sight of God.

(Is 64:6)

God provided the perfect sacrifice in His Son, Jesus Christ. Born of a woman, born under the law, to fulfill the law for us, to redeem everyone who is under the law.

God does what He would not allow Abraham to do: Not crying out "Why me?" but "I will" as He gave His Son, His only Son as a sacrifice for the world.

God's "I will" is the result of and demonstration of His love for sinners (Rom 5:8). God made the payment Himself for the debt of our sin – not with gold or silver, but with the holy, precious blood and the innocent suffering and death of the Lamb that He provided, His Son, His only Son.

And "to this day" God does work in the midst of our "Why me's?" to provide His "I will" (v 14).

When we don't know where to turn, God provides, even if we don't notice, if we write it off to luck or our own skill, God still provides.

God will provide for the one enduring the trials. God also provide for others observing the trials.

Christians who have endured trials themselves have the opportunity to offer help and insight to those who are undergoing trials, In ways that no one else can.

Speaking of this, Dr. Martin Luther writes:

“One Christian who has been tried is worth a hundred who have not been tried, for the blessing of God grows in trials. He who has experienced them can teach, comfort, and advise many in bodily and spiritual matters” (*WLS* § 4447; see also 2 Cor 1:3–5).

We have probably all uttered the words “Why me?” when faced with a serious trial in life.

God would turn our focus away from ourselves and toward Him when we are faced with trials.

For we know that God is at work in the midst of all of our trials, even when they are trials of our own making.

God works in us and through us in the midst of trials to accomplish His purposes. So perhaps instead of asking God: “Why me?”, a more appropriate question might be to ask in prayer, “What do you wish to accomplish in me and through me?”

May God give us the faith by which He will work in us and through us, especially during those times when we are tempted to ask, “Why me?”

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria – To God alone be the glory

Sermon Outline

While we ask, "Why Me?" God is at work in the midst of life's trials
Genesis 22:1-18

1. Abraham had every right to ask, "Why Me?".
2. God was answering, "I will" provide the lamb.
3. God provides His "I will" in the midst of our "Why me's?".