

## Introduction

How many people like hidden pictures? For those who have never done this before, there are several objects hidden in a picture – for example, objects such as a carrot, dinosaur, and saltshaker could be hidden in a fall scene of children raking and playing in the leaves; you just have to look to find them. Likewise, as we have seen before, there are many Old Testament hidden pictures or types of Jesus: the brazen serpent Moses lifted up in the desert typifies Christ Jesus lifted up on the cross. The paschal lamb without blemish whose blood was applied to the doorposts and lintels of Israel typifies Jesus Christ our paschal lamb, who was without sin, who was slain from before the foundations of the world, and whose blood has been applied to our hearts. And the list goes on and on. Today is another example, as we look at the story of Abraham offering his son Isaac in Genesis 22. We're going to see Old Testament types of Christ as we learn about a Son, a Sacrifice, and a Substitute.

## Son

*Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. Then God said, '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. (Genesis 22:1-2)*

I read the following story: “An elderly mother in Scotland gave up her son to the Lord. One day she went to a missionary society meeting where only contributing members were admitted. The doorkeeper asked, ‘Are you a contributor?’ ‘I am not,’ she answered. When he wouldn’t let her in, she left disappointed. Pondering his words, she thought of her son who years before had gone as a missionary to Sierra Leone in West Africa. His body now lay buried in that distant land. She retraced her steps to the building and explained to the man, ‘I forgot. You asked me if I was a contributor. I gave my only boy.’”

There are many illustrations of a parent giving their only son for some cause. For example, the heart-wrenching tale of the bridge engineer whose only son fell into the bride’s gear box. He needed to move the bridge for the fast approaching passenger train, otherwise it would plummet into the river and many would die; but if he moved the bridge, the gears would crush his son. What a terrible dilemma: rescue his only son or rescue these faceless passengers! But he pulled the lever and gave up his only son.

Or I saw an article in the LA Times. The writer was saying goodbye to his only son who was being deployed into a foreign field of combat – in a sense, this father had given his son up to his country, knowing full well that his only son might die defending it.

Imagine the widow’s grief or the bridge engineer’s pain or the writer’s sorrow at the thought or actual loss of their only son; that was Abraham. God gives Abraham this difficult test of offering his son, his only son Isaac whom he loved. And we could talk about why God gives tests and why God gave Abraham this particular test, and about Abraham’s faith evidenced by his obedience, and so on – but I just want to focus on what God was telling Abraham to do: to take his only beloved son, the long anticipated child of promise, this miraculous blessing received in his old age – to take him and kill him as a burnt offering. What a sacrifice!

Abraham here typifies God the Father, and Isaac typifies God the Son; for 1800 years after the events of Genesis 22, God took his son, his only son Jesus whom he loved, and offered him for the sins of the world. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10) What a precious sacrifice, that God did not spare his beloved Son; and, “Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave

him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?" (**Romans 8:32**)

## **Sacrifice**

*1. **Burdened** – Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac...(Genesis 22:6)*

Isaac carried the wood on which he would be sacrificed up Mount Moriah, even as our Lord was made to carry his cross – the wood on which he would be sacrificed, up Mount Calvary. But this wood not only points to the cross, it points to our sins. As Abraham laid the wood on Isaac, God the Father laid our sins on God the Son, even as we read in the prophet Isaiah: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each one of us has turned to his own way, and the LORD laid on him the iniquity of us all” (**Isaiah 53:6**) and the apostle Peter writes, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” (**1 Peter 2:24**) For anyone here this morning who has not believed on Christ and you are heavy laden under the oppressive burden of your sins and guilt, know that you don't have to be crushed for your iniquities because Jesus Christ was crushed for our iniquities. He paid the penalty for your sins in full, and if only you will appropriate his sacrifice as made even in your behalf, if you will only apply his precious blood to your case by believing on Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior – then as when Christian in *Pilgrims Progress* stood before the cross and had his burden fall off his back and roll away, you too can be unburdened. The sacrifice was burdened so you don't have to be.

*2. **Bound** - When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (Genesis 22:9)*

According to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus and Biblical chronologist Bishop Ussher – two venerable authorities – Isaac was 25 years old at this time, while another Jewish source fixes his age at 36. Rather than being a vulnerable, young kid, Isaac may have been a virile young adult able to resist or run; yet nowhere does the text suggest either. What then did happen? May I suggest – as do some commentators – that Isaac willingly suffered himself to be bound and laid upon the altar? We can imagine the scene. As Abraham and Isaac reach the summit, and Isaac looks for the lamb which God himself will provide, Abraham breaks down and cries out to his son – “Oh my son, my only son Isaac whom I love – I didn't tell you this before, but I must tell you, I must: God told me to sacrifice you as a burnt offering – and you know that we must always obey God even when it doesn't make sense. Perhaps he will relent and spare you; or perhaps the God for whom nothing is impossible will raise you from the dead and restore you to me.” And Isaac, coming alongside his father, says, “If it is God's will – his will be done;” and he freely allows Abraham to bind him and lay him down on the altar. If so, Isaac serves as an example to us of faith manifested in obedience; and should God ever will for us something extraordinary, something that flies in the face of all our presuppositions and prior plans – something that seems to defy our common sense or that lies outside our comfort zone: whatever the instance is, we can, like Isaac trust and obey.

Now, if Isaac was in fact a willing sacrificial victim, he typified Christ in yet another way; for no one took Jesus' life from him against his will; rather, our Lord was a willing sacrificial victim; as he said in John's gospel: “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to 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 authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” (**John 10:17-18**) No one takes it from me, but I lay it down. The Jewish authorities didn't steal it, the Roman soldiers

didn't strip him of it - Jesus set it down, he laid it aside, freely, willingly in obedience to the Father – Jesus said, “This *command* I received from my Father – and not only in obedience to the Father but out of love for us; as we read, “this is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.” (1 John 3:16) If anyone has ever felt unloved, look to the cross and know there is one who loves you so much that he willingly died for you and I and everyone of us when we were yet sinners, undeserving of his incomparable, incredible love.

### 3. Substitute

*Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. (Genesis 22:13)*

At the last moment, as Abraham is poised to slay his son, the angel of the LORD – a pre-incarnate appearance of God the Son - stops him, and Abraham sees a ram caught in a thicket by its horns which he offers atop Mount Moriah instead of his son.

Here Isaac typifies the believer. Like Isaac as he lay fast bound under his father's knife, we were going to die: “For the wages of sin is death;” but when we were going to die, when we deserved to die, the ram, our sacrificial substitute appeared, even Christ. Abraham had told Isaac that God himself would provide the lamb; and he did – Jesus, the Lamb of God. As the Genesis ram was caught by its horns in a thicket, so the Gospel ram was crowned with thorns. And as the ram was offered in Isaac's stead, so the Lamb was offered once for all sins in our stead, as our substitute, making full satisfaction for all our sins. And as we stand atop Mount Moriah viewing the scene in Genesis 22, we can see 1800 years into the future as another only Son is offered on one of the peaks of Moriah – Mount Calvary: one of Mount Moriah's summits. So we see that not only was God testing Abraham and teaching us lessons about faith and obedience, but God deliberately engineered the events of Genesis 22 to point to his Son in a none too subtle way. So this morning, let us pray that God would increase our faith, so that we would pass any and every test he may give us; let us thank God for constantly pointing out his Son and the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout sacred Scripture; and let us praise him who loved us so much that he did not spare his only begotten and beloved Son, but who event sent him to die for our sins; and praise Christ our sacrificial substitute and risen Lord. Amen.

### **Communion Thought**

We have already seen three S's in this morning's message - a Son, a Sacrifice, and a Substitute - but in these verses from Genesis, we see a fourth S: a Seed. God promised Abraham, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The apostle Paul identifies this seed: he is none other than Jesus Christ. It's in Christ that God blesses people from every nation in the earth with forgiveness, pardon, redemption, eternal life and so much more. So, as we approach this table that reminds us of Jesus and him crucified, let us pause to remember and give thanks for the many, many blessings that are ours in Christ.

Our Communion reading is from 1 Corinthians 11:

**1 Corinthians 11:23-27** For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We here at Trinity celebrate an open communion, meaning all who confess Jesus Christ as their Lord are welcome to join with us in keeping this sacred ordinance in memory of him.