“Put Your Faith Where God’s Mouth Is”

Genesis 22:1-14
Lent 1  (B)

“Put your money where your mouth is!” That’s what you are supposed to do when you really believe in something. Someone comes to you and says, “Hey, I have a great investment opportunity for you! Get whatever money you have available because you are not going to want to miss out on this!” So you say, “How much are YOU investing in it?” And he replies, “Oh, I’m not putting any of MY money into this.” Chances are, you will not follow this man’s advice. “Put your money where your mouth is.” Put your money in what you say you believe.

This morning we are going to talk, not about where we put our money, but where we put our faith. As Christians we do not put our faith in our own feelings or ideas, we put our faith in God’s Word. The story of Abraham and Isaac is a wonderful encouragement to “Put Your Faith Where God’s Mouth Is.”

I. Obey His Word

There is no greater example of faith in all of Scripture than the one before us this morning. That is quite a statement when you stop and think about it. The Bible is filled with stories of faith. Faith is trust. Noah trusted God would send a flood, so he built an ark. David trusted God would protect him, so he went out to fight Goliath. But there is no greater demonstration of faith in Scripture than the story recorded in our text. Consider the situation. For twenty-five long years God had promised Abraham that he would have a son. Finally, when Abraham was one hundred years old, Isaac was born. Imagine the joy Abraham and his wife Sarah felt as they raised their only son to become a young man. Everything seemed to be going along swimmingly until one day God said to Abraham, “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” (v. 2).

And the very next verse says, “Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey” (v. 3). Saddled his donkey!? “What are you doing, Abraham!? God just told you to kill your son! The very son, by the way, that God had been promising for twenty-five years! It doesn’t make any sense for God to ask you to kill him!”

No, it didn’t make any sense. Any “reasonable” human being would have said, “Whad’ya mean, kill my son? What kind of God are you anyway? You make me wait twenty-five years for a son and then tell me to sacrifice him to you? I thought you didn’t ask for human sacrifices. Forget it!”

But Abraham did not ask questions. He did not tell God to “forget it.” Instead, he obeyed God’s Word. That is, after all, what faith is - trust that obeys God’s Word even when God’s Word does not seem to make any sense.

That is what God demands of us. He demands obedience to His Word. He does not tell us to obey His Word when it is convenient or when it “feels right.” He simply says, “Obey it!” God did not come to Abraham and say, “Abraham, how do you feel about maybe sacrificing Isaac? Good idea or bad?” And, God does not come to us and say, “How do you feel about making me the number one priority in your life? How do you feel about worshipping me on a regular basis? Yes – no? How do you feel about giving me the first fruits of your income rather than the leftovers? How do you feel about forgiving those who have sinned against you? How do you feel about teaching your children about me?” God does not ask our opinion, He says, “Do what I tell you whether it feels right or not!” It certainly did not “feel right” for Abraham to kill his only son. But Abraham obeyed God’s Word because Abraham’s faith was founded on God’s Word.

Our faith is the same as Abraham’s. We don’t put our faith in things as unreliable as our emotions or our preferences. We put our faith where God’s mouth is. That means putting our faith
in His Word. When He speaks, we obey because, as we will see next, when He speaks we can trust His promises.

II. Trust His Promises

It does not make sense that a loving God would ask Abraham to kill his son. But, God’s command makes even less sense when we remember what God had promised about Abraham’s son Isaac. God had told Abraham that the promised Savior would be one of Isaac’s descendants. Think about the implications. The coming Savior would be Abraham’s only chance of avoiding eternal punishment for his sins. The coming Savior was Abraham’s only chance to have eternal life. That Savior was supposed to be Isaac’s descendant. Now God was telling Abraham to kill the very person upon whom God’s promise rested! It was like giving a bucket of water to a man dying of thirst and then telling him to pour it out on the ground.

But, Abraham’s faith allowed him to trust God’s promise whether it made sense or not. The book of Hebrews in the New Testament gives us some insight into what Abraham was thinking. It says, “Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from the dead” (11:19). So, there was Abraham on a three-day journey to sacrifice his only Son. That’s a lot of time to think. God had told him the Savior would come through Isaac. God had told him to kill Isaac. Those two did not add up. But, Abraham figured, “God can raise people from the dead. So, I can sacrifice Isaac and God can still keep His promise.”

God did keep His promise. Two thousand years later Abraham’s Savior, Isaac’s descendant, was born in a manger in Bethlehem. Two thousand years later that Savior made His own journey to Mt. Moriah to be sacrificed. You see, the location of Abraham’s sacrifice was not coincidental. Mt. Moriah is where Jerusalem would later be built. During the Lenten season we are walking with Jesus toward Jerusalem, toward the sight of His ultimate sacrifice. There Abraham’s Savior, our Savior, willingly laid His back upon wood to be sacrificed. But, for Jesus there was no stopping at the last moment as there was for Isaac. No one stayed His Father’s hand. The nails pierced. The blood flowed. The Savior died. In OUR place. Just like the ram in our text. God provided a ram as Isaac’s substitute, to suffer what Isaac would have suffered. Lent reminds us that God has provided a substitute for US. Jesus is the Lamb who has taken our place.

All of this is hindsight for us. It is easy for us to read this story knowing how it ends. But Abraham didn’t have that knowledge. Abraham only knew God’s promises. And He trusted those promises. He put his faith where God’s mouth was. THAT is what allowed Abraham to make this incredible journey and be willing to make this unthinkable sacrifice.

God’s promises also allow US to do the incredible and the unthinkable. We may not walk to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice our sons. God has not commanded us to do that. BUT, perhaps we drive to church on a Wednesday evening for Lenten worship. That is unthinkable for many people. It is too much of an inconvenience. There is too much else going on. So, why do it? Because God promises to bless us when we hear His Word. Or, maybe we take our paycheck and the very first thing we do is set aside a generous portion to give to the LORD. Why? Because God has promised that when we put Him and His kingdom first, He will give us everything else we need. These are the kinds of things we are able to do when we put our faith where God’s mouth is.

As I was preparing this sermon I wondered if it is fair to compare Abraham’s sacrifice with attending a Wednesday night Lenten service. Is it fair to compare giving your SON to God with giving a portion of your paycheck to God? I mean, are they even comparable? I’m still not entirely sure. But, here is the point: If God could give Abraham the faith to kill his only son, surely God will give us the faith to make these kinds of sacrifices in our lives.

Faith is an everyday part of life. We put our faith in those who place the expiration date on the gallon of milk that we purchase, trusting that the milk will not be sour when we open it at home. We put our faith in the plumbing in our house, trusting that when we turn the faucet, water
will come out. We put our faith in investment advisors, trusting that they will see to it that we are able to retire comfortably when the time comes. None of these people and things is completely reliable. But, we have a God who is. His Word is always trustworthy and true. “Put Your Faith Where God’s Mouth Is.” Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria