

BIBLE STUDY
February 19 and 22, 2024

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Genesis 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Mark 9: 2-10

Romans 8: 31b-34

1. Genesis 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

- The story of Abraham and Isaac is one of the foundational stories of the cycle of Abraham stories and of salvation history. On one level the story is about the testing of Abraham's faith. God is presented as the all-powerful, inscrutable God who demands total faith and commitment from his creatures. Abraham, who is already presented as our father in faith, manifests the highest form of faith. In the end, this mighty God is revealed as compassionate and merciful who rewards faith in him. The story is told in a matter-of-fact tone without emotions. The demand to sacrifice Isaac is never questioned, just obeyed.
- Another way to look at the story is to see God's demand that he sacrifices Isaac as what Abraham perceives what God wants of him. Sacrifice of the first-born son was common in the religions of the nations surrounding Abraham. It would be natural for him to think that his God also wants the same from him, and Abraham would want to give his God the same obedience as others did. What Abraham learns that God does not want the death of his son, but another sacrifice of a ram in place of Isaac.
- Christians see this story as a prefiguring the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Isaac carries the wood as Jesus carried the cross. Isaac on the altar of sacrifice prefigures Jesus on the cross. Whereas God spared Isaac, he did not spare his only Son.
- There is a play on words in the description of the ram that will become the sacrifice. The word used is the same for "see" and "provide." Abraham sees the ram in the bush, but God has provided it. Thus, the name for God, Jehovah-yirah, God provides.
- God rewards Abraham's faith with the seventh promise of a great nation of descendants and land.

2. Mark 9: 2-10

- **V. 2:** The Transfiguration takes place six days after Jesus has told the disciples that he will suffer and die in Jerusalem. This is totally the opposite of what Peter and the disciples are expecting in Jesus. He has already enjoyed remarkable success in Galilee, the crowds love him, and the traditional expectation of the Messiah was that he would be a triumphant king who would reestablish the throne of David. Peter protests Jesus's prediction. Jesus rebukes Peter and says that he is like Satan to him, tempting him to seek his own comfort and not fulfill the mission given to him by his Father.

- Jesus takes the inner circle of apostles, Peter, James, and John, with him just as he did when he healed Jairus' daughter and will do at the Agony in the Garden.
- A mountain is the place of revelation because its elevation makes it closer to God. God revealed himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai.
- V. 3: Jesus' glory as Son of God is revealed to the disciples. He is completely changed. The details of his appearance are the traditional ways in which divinity is revealed with dazzling light. The light was unearthly.
- V. 4: Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus. Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the prophets. Their presence show that the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament have given way to the new revelation of God in Jesus. Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets. The old points to the new.
- V. 5-6: Peter is speechless but a characteristic of him is that it does not stop him from speaking. He is in awe of the vision. He recognizes it as good—as coming from God. He wants to make it permanent by setting up three tents. This is not a permanent state for Jesus. He will return to his normal appearance. This glory will be revealed after the Cross at the Resurrection. The glory of the Lord always lies beneath the surface ready to burst forth. Even in suffering, the glory of God is present but just not visible.
- V. 7: The cloud is the sign of the glory of God the Father. God the Father now makes himself known to the disciples. He gives testimony that what Jesus says about his suffering, death, and resurrection is true and they should believe Jesus. The vision is meant to strengthen the faith of the disciples in Jesus.
- V. 8: As quickly as the vision comes it goes. Revelations from God are not permanent states but momentary insight. A brief glimpse that we mediate on afterwards to savor its sweetness.
- V. 9: Again, Jesus asks for secrecy. People will not understand and will get the wrong idea. They will focus on glory but not grasp the necessity of suffering.
- V. 10: The three disciples still do not understand. They discuss it among themselves. They are trying to understand what rising from the dead means.

3. Romans 8: 31b-34

- Vv. 31-32: A magnificent affirmation of faith by Paul. The love of God conquers all that can work against us. God is FOR us. It may seem that everyone and everything is against us. But, even if that is so, God is never against us, he is for us. The proof of this is that God handed over Jesus for us. What greater love could there be? He spared Isaac, Abraham's son, but he did not spare his own Son.
- V. 33: God has declared us blameless through the death of Jesus. If God makes us innocent, who could claim otherwise.

- V. 34: With Jesus as our intercessor at the right hand of God, could any other testimony condemn us? God in Jesus is on our side. He is working to make all things right.