

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

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’

And he said, ‘Here I am.’

**and God 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 that I shall show you.’**

When they came to the place that God had shown him,

Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order.

He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said,

‘Abraham, Abraham!’

And he said, ‘Here I am.’

The angel said ‘Do not lay you hand on the boy or do anything to him;

for now I know that you fear God,

since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me.’

And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns.

Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

and said:

“By myself I have sworn, says the Lord:

Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, you only son,

I will indeed bless you,

and I will make your offspring as numerous

as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the sea shore.

And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies,

and by your offspring shall all the nations of earth gain blessing for themselves,

because you have obeyed my voice.

Meditation:

Ok...let's just say it out loud.

This is one of those scripture stories that turns many people off to reading the Bible...

A lot of people have told me over the years:

I don't like the Old Testament...

too much violence.

God is too violent.

And...to be honest...I don't want to follow a God that asks for human sacrifice..

But we need to remember as we listen to this story:

Human sacrifice has always been a part of many ancient religious traditions.

It was ALWAYS the best and the strongest and the most beautiful

who was an offering to the gods

so that the family or the whole community might be blessed.

By offering the virgin or the young warrior, because it was always the young who were sacrificed...the hope was that there would be rain to water the fields

and the hunt would be successful and

you would have victory over you enemies and

your women would have male babies and your flocks would grow large...

That is what ancient religions believed.

and apparently that is what the Jews believed as well....

Every time I hear this story explained, it is the obedience of Abraham that is highlighted.

but that is religion as same old, same old...

Yahweh is acting like every other god of every other people...

But Scripture Scholar Richard Rohr offers a different way to understand this story,

one that offers much more wisdom and guidance for our current life situation in this 21st century....

According to Rohr,
it isn't Abraham's obedience that is the teaching here...
but that God said: "STOP" no more human sacrifice!
no more children to be sacrificed!!
Yes...it has always been done that way...
but now, Yahweh says, NO MORE.

Can you imagine what the people might have said when Abraham and Isaac
come down from the mountain?

Are you crazy, Abraham??
We have always done it this way...
that is the way of our forefathers....
What are you thinking??
For sure God will punish us!
Did they believe him when he told them about the angel?
or did they think that he simply could not bear to sacrifice
his one beloved son..

In this wisdom story God has put an end to child sacrifice...
But real question is: have we?
It seems to me, we still offer up our children to the gods....
to the god of war,
to the god of the economy...
To the god of money...
to the god of status and prestige...
We may not sacrifice our children to the God in the highest heavens....
but we certainly sacrifice all of our kids to the many different gods
of our day and age...

Perhaps underneath all of this sacrifice is the unspoken fear

**that many adults have of not being good enough...
not being valuable
and not being lovable...**

**If we believe at our core that we do not have inherent worth and dignity and value
we will always rely on outside standards to prove to ourselves and to others
that we indeed measure up...
that we indeed are lovable and have inherent value...**

**We live in divisive, tumultuous times...
we are in a time of great possibility and great uncertainty...
our home planet is still the same size it has always been,
only now there are 7 billion of us...
We must be open to new ways of living together
so that we can figure out how not only to survive but to thrive and to flourish
as a human community.**

**In times past if you didn't like someone or some group
or the weather changed or the herds shrunk
you could move to a different place that could sustain your tribe and your family.
But with so many people living all over the globe, there is no where else to go....**

**In times past we believed that humanity was separate
from the rest of the Earth community...
But we know now how interdependent all of life is.**

**In times past we believed that the ones with the biggest weapons
could control every one else...but now with our nuclear capabilities
we know, even if we are not willing to acknowledge,
we are capable of literally destroying the very planet that sustains us...**

Jesus was decidedly a non-violent man:

**He apparently learned that from his father
who told Abraham to stop and not to sacrifice his son!
No more sacrifice.
No more killing: “Peter, put away your sword!”
Have you noticed that there was never a call for revenge or pay back
after the Romans crucified him.**

**At these moments of crisis and decision making...
as we seek wisdom and the way of life going forward,
we must begin the conversation about what old habits,
what old customs,
what old beliefs need to change.
Just because something has always been done a certain way
does not mean it is the right thing to do now....**

**Seventeen more children died on February 14.
Is Nicholas Cruz mentally ill? I don't know...
but he used a weapon of war,
he used an assault weapon whose only purpose
is to kill as many people as quickly as possible.
He used it to reek mayhem and death upon innocent children
their families, their community, and their nation...
We all know the litany:
Columbine,
Aurora
Sandy Hook to name just a few of the worse...**

**So the questions we must ask our selves and our neighbors...
why do we cling to our personal right to own an assault weapon?
Is it because we have always had the right to own a gun?**

We must ask ourselves: what are we truly afraid of?

We must ask ourselves: why are we still willing to sacrifice the children...

Amen.