

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 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.” But the angel of the Lord said, “Do not lay your 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.” So Abraham called that place “The Lord will provide.”

(Gen 22:1-2, 11a-12, 14a)

Dear Friends:

Beginning today, we are switching from so-called Track 2 readings to Track 1, an option available to us following Pentecost and prior to Advent. Whereas the former track assigns OT selections consistent thematically with NT and Gospel, the latter chooses OT readings in a more chronological fashion through the Bible.

Our Genesis passage today is problematic in the minds of many Christians. Could a benevolent God test Abraham—or any human being—to the extent God commands the believer to sacrifice a beloved son? Trying to avoid simplistic answers, I point out nonetheless that the life of Abraham—indeed of all of us—is set in the contradiction of the testing of God with the providing of God. Complete obedience is demanded of us, even as grace is meted out to us with regularity. Command vs. promise; life denying vs. life giving.

As I reflect here for the last time as your rector, I am keenly aware of the testing that all of us have been undergoing as a result of the coronavirus. Testing of every one of us personally and family-wise, as well as the obvious challenge to St. Paul’s as congregation. I do not believe God manipulates our testing on a daily basis; it’s a function of creation as it is. But God, as Genesis promises, provides for us as well. All that is asked in return is our faithfulness.

In Christ,
Fr. Reed+ (904)472-4119 cell

The Collect of the Day

Almighty God, you have built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Relief from the Virus Contagion

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, graciously comfort your people amid the uncertainty facing us in the Coronavirus contagion: Mercifully attend to those who are sick, bless those who seek a vaccine and cure, bless our Church and civic leaders as they seek to guide us, and fill our hearts with confidence that, though at times we may be afraid, we may still put our trust in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Concluding Collect: For the Election of a Rector

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of Shanna, Dana, Jim, Walter, Kari, Middi, Brandon and Ted, those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

First Reading—Genesis 22:1-14

God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” 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 that I shall show you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.” Abraham took the wood of the

burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

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." He said, "Do not lay your 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. So Abraham called that place "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

Psalm 13 *Usquequo, Domine?*

- 1 How long, O LORD?
will you forget me for ever? *
how long will you hide your face from me?
- 2 How long shall I have perplexity in my mind,
and grief in my heart, day after day? *
how long shall my enemy triumph over me?
- 3 Look upon me and answer me, O LORD my God; *
give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death;
- 4 Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," *
and my foes rejoice that I have fallen.
- 5 But I put my trust in your mercy; *
my heart is joyful because of your saving help.
- 6 I will sing to the LORD, for he has dealt with me richly; *
I will praise the Name of the Lord Most High.

Second Reading—Romans 6:12-23

Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Holy Gospel—Matthew 10:40-42

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple-- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”