

January 2, 2022

KIBC Sunday Worship Service (the New Year Worship)

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "Abraham, a Man of Faith"
—The Lord Will Provide—

Text: Genesis 22:9~14

22:9When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

22:10Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

22:11But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

22:12He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

22:13And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

22:14So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."

Introduction

Happy New Year!

I pray that the grace of the Lord be with you this year, 2022. I give thanks to Him that we have a New Year worship service today.

I was praying and thinking about what message I should preach at the beginning of the year. Then, the Lord guided me to study from **the faith of Abraham**.

Now I would like to study what faith Abraham, the father of faith had.

There were four times when Abraham had **to make an important decision** in his life of faith.

① **Genesis 12**

It was the time when Abraham left Haran. Haran is located in the northwest of Mesopotamia and of the east basin of the Euphrates River. He lived there for more than 75 years and received God's great vision.

Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

He believed in the God's word and left for a long journey. At that time, he was 75 years old. His adventure in the world of faith had begun.

② **Genesis 15**

Abraham did not have any children for 50 years in his marriage because Sara, his wife, was a barren woman.

Genesis 15:5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Abraham received God's promise even though it seemed to be impossible at the time.

③ **Genesis 17**

This was the time when he was **circumcised** as God's people who kept His covenant.

Genesis 17:10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised.
Genesis

④ **Genesis 22**

It was the time when he offered his only son as a burnt offering.

Genesis 22:2 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 of which I shall tell you."

These four situations were very important stages where Abraham, called the father of faith, made decisions.

Now, 2022 starts and we may be required to make decisions. How could Abraham make these important decisions? Let us study the following two points.

Main Points

1 . Contradictions in Abraham's Life of Faith

1) What Isaac Means for Abraham

As you know, Hagar, a female servant, bore Ishmael before Abraham came to have Isaac whom God promised. There was a severe battle between Sara and Hagar. As a result, Hagar and Ishmael left Abraham. How painful it must have been for Abraham because Ishmael was his son.

Then Isaac was born. He was the only son who was the promised child. Isaac was the son whom God gave him. On the top of that, he was born from Sara who was barren. Abraham must have devoted everything to Isaac. Of course, he must have had fellowship with God, but we naturally come to think that he was probably caught by his human love as a father without knowing it.

At first, he must have understood that Isaac was the promised son from God. It was probably not long before he came to think that Isaac belonged to him and was his own property. He came to think that Isaac was his own thing even though he was given by God. It was a strong feeling of human affection, but it was also a dangerous one.

We should be careful. Abraham was given Isaac only by God's grace. It was not because of his work or power. We should know this hidden problem of faith. At the beginning, one gives thanks to God, "Amazing grace! I praise your name, God!" But we become focused on God's gifts rather than God Himself. Eventually, we come to think of God's gifts as our property and try to keep it.

It is God who is amazing. It is God who gives amazing grace. The more we realize how great the grace is, the more we should praise the Lord and should serve Him and follow Him.

My friends, **the contradiction of faith** is that we should examine our human feelings and our selfish affection by God. Abraham was like that. He was tested his faith. If he offered Isaac, what about the God's promise that He made?

God said as below,

Genesis 15:5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to

him, **“So shall your offspring be.”**

Therefore, his faith itself is questioned.

When God told him to offer his beloved son, he must have thought **this a contradiction of faith**. He knew that there was nothing left without faith. However, on the other hand, his faith became his own and clung to it. He would persist in his faith. Therefore, this was the reason that Abraham was tested in this way.

2) Testing Faith

Let us think another point about **the contradiction of faith**. The results of the tests of faith that Abraham had experienced up until this point were good examples. Therefore, when Abraham was tested, he understood that the God’s promise would be fulfilled. However, it was different this time.

Genesis 22:2 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 of which I shall tell you.”

My friends, it is natural that Abraham thought, “My God, it is an unreasonable command! Isaac is the son you promised. I believed and You gave him to me.”

There is the great problem of faith. God showed him a way where he could not see the end. It is **the contradiction of faith**, isn’t it? It is the point that God wanted to teach Abraham. **A genuine faith is to completely follow the word and go forward.** The true faith is to trust in God’s word and follow it even though we cannot see the way to go. When we clear this point, our faith becomes the true one. Abraham was faithful to the word of the Lord.

3) Three Days of Journey

22:4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar.

At that time, Abraham was at Beersheba. It took about 62 km to the land of Moriah in Jerusalem. It took three days of travel. Why did God tell him to go to a place three days away? The reason was that Abraham needed three days to be tested in his faith.

My friends, each of three days, and every moment with Isaac was an incredible trial for Abraham. If the place was near and not of the distance of tree days, he may quickly have finished what he decided. However, the three days of walking had a

very deep meaning as a trial. A man usually becomes discouraged as time goes by even though he really made up their mind to do it.

Faith is not an event that occurs momentarily, emotionally or is made up of feelings. It does not change even though we may walk three days and make certain of every step we take. Faith is everything to him who devotes his whole heart to it. It must have been more painful for Abraham to offer Isaac than to offer himself.

The three days of walking to the mount Moriah reminds me of Jesus and His every step to the cross. How heavy the cross was! He could definitely not take a step forward without faith in God.

The faith of Abraham would have probably failed if his fellowship with God was realistic and specific to things he exactly saw. But his faith was built on his strong relationship with the invisible God.

Jesus Christ stated his march to Calvary by taking the cross over his three years of ministry. Jesus walked to offer Himself to God as a sacrificial lamb. Without the perfect trust (faith) in the Father in heaven, he could never walk the distance.

*** Like this, the life of Abraham was one of trial and of the contradiction of faith. However, God's story was not complete yet. Yes, it starts from here. Let us study the next point.**

2. On the Mount of the Lord It Shall Be Provided

1) The Faith of Abraham

22:2 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 of which I shall tell you."

Abraham faithfully followed what God said to him. The Bible records as below,

22:5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."

The reason that Abraham did not take his young men was that he did probably not want to be hindered in killing his son. His attitude showed his faithful heart where he tried to follow God's word directly.

22:6 And Abraham took and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.

Abraham laid **the wood of the burnt offering** on Isaac and he **took in his hand the fire and the knife**. They went on Mount Moriah.

My friends, we see Isaac who would be killed and become the burnt offering for God, take the wood that was for himself. What a cruel scene it was! He looks like Jesus who took his cross and walked to Golgotha. Isaac was Abraham's precious only child who was more important than his own life. We hardly understand the painful heart of Abraham.

22:7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

My friends, the question of Isaac made **Abraham, the father, feel as if his heart was deeply penetrated by a knife.** It was a simple and natural question, but **it was so painful that he could not stand to listen.**

Abraham said as below,

22:8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

Abraham could not answer Isaac, "It's you." His answer was that everything is in God's hand. If he did not believe so, he would not have left his home. Abraham's decision has grown stronger during the past three days. He decided to trust in God more and more, surrender to Him, and completely follow Him.

If his decision was irresponsible, he would have become discouraged and he might have failed. One's faith is tested as time passes. If one's faith is a temporary one, it will be discouraged. On the one hand, the genuine faith becomes steadfast as time passes.

We understand Abraham's faith from his answer to Isaac, **"God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."**

His answer showed his attitude that he completely trusted in God.

22:9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

When Abraham arrived Mount Moriah, the place that God had told him, his faith became the most genuine one. It was God's plan that Abraham was to be led from Ur of the Chaldeans to this place where he was to experience perfect faith in God. Until then, Abraham must have experienced various hardships.

My friends, we experience many things in our lives: there are sorrowful experiences and hardships and are also wonderful and happy experiences. We should understand that we are molded to perfect faith through each of these experiences.

By the way, how was Isaac when he became the burnt offering? The Scripture records nothing about Isaac. The point that we understand from their conversations was that Isaac completely trusted in his father and accepted what Abraham did. Isaac really loved his father and trusted in him and left himself in his hands. I see Isaac in Jesus who trusted in God the Father and left God completely in His hands. The state of Abraham's mind at that time was, what if he killed the son who God promised? How would God's promise turn out? What about God's promise that He would multiply the offspring of Abraham? However, at that time, Abraham no longer looked at the situation through human common knowledge. He did not grumble anymore because he came to trust in God and follow Him unconditionally.

Let us look Hebrews 11:17~19

**11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son,
11:18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named."
11:19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back**

Abraham believed that his God was God Almighty. Therefore, he completely believed in Isaac who was the son of God's promise.

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless,

God Almighty is the One who creates anything from nothing. Therefore, Abraham believed in God Almighty and walked before Him as God said, **“Walk before me, and be blameless.”**

2) What of Abraham Did God Want?

22:10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

When Abraham took the knife and tried to kill Isaac the angel of the Lord called him.

It was not Isaac’s body that God really wanted. He wanted the heart of Abraham. That was Abraham’s faith. God never asks for any physical offering.

Psalm 51:16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

When God came to know Abraham’s faith, He stopped His command.

22:12 He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

22:13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

We see the man who walks before God here. The Lord said,

Genesis “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.”

The most important thing is to walk before God Almighty and be blameless. God wants such people.

3) On the Mount of the Lord It Shall Be Provided

22:14 So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

The Scripture above gives us courage and hope. It is God’s powerful word. God absolutely gives us what we need when we need it. God prepared a ram for the burnt offering.

God also prepares what we need in our lives. We have experienced that “**the Lord will provide**” many times even though they were small things. The Lord provided at that place and at that time. If He did not provide us, how would have our lives turned out?

My friends, the Lord provides us in our future. God keeps His promises. He surely **provides** and leads us. He always provides the way of escape even though we come to a dead end.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Those who believe in the Lord and follow Him, they are allowed to walk any place as the **Lord will provide**. The Lord will provide exactly what we need. Like this, our faith does not grow without God’s help.

Conclusion

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Today, we have the New Year Day, 2022. We study the story of Abraham, the father of faith, when he made the most important decision in his life. We may have time to make a **decision of faith** this year.

Let us conclude today’s message by reading Abraham’s word of faith, that he confessed after his difficult experience in faith.

22:14 So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

When we look up the Lord, trust in Him, and walk with Him, we are allowed to live

that experience "**The LORD will provide.**" The God who is our Lord is the One of preparation. Even though we have troubles or may be reaching a dead end the Lord definitely prepares the way of escape. How thankful we are! Let us start this New Year with faith that we studied today.

* God bless you!