

Sermon for Morning Prayer The Seventh Sunday After Trinity

Lessons:ⁱ

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the twenty-second Chapter of the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis.ⁱⁱ

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah [MORE-eye-uh]; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

“And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and

as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the sixth Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews.ⁱⁱⁱ

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the First Lesson: “And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”^{iv} In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

Introduction:

There is a classic method of Scriptural interpretation called *typology*. This is the study of what are called *types* and *antitypes*. This is based upon the Christian conception that the Old Testament is the record of God’s preparation of humanity for His final revelation of Himself in the form of the Incarnate Christ. That final revelation, of course, is the essence of the New Testament. Thus the Christian Church has always seen the Old Testament and the New as an essential pairing, in which the Old Testament is the precursor of the New one.

A *type* is an Old Testament person or event that presages, in some ways, another person or event in the New Testament, which is called the *antitype*. Thus, for example, the account in the First Book of the Kings of the prophet Elijah’s feeding himself, the widow of Zarephath [**ZAIR-ee-fath**], and the widow’s son, all with a handful of meal and a few drops of oil,^v is a *type* of Our Lord’s miraculous feedings of the multitudes,^{vi} which themselves are *types* of His institution of the Eucharist.^{vii}

Theme:

Abraham’s near-sacrifice of his son, Isaac, is an Old Testament *type*. Our Lord’s sacrifice of Himself to make atonement for a sinful humanity, His passion and death, together form the *antitype* of the sacrifice Abraham proposed to make and to which Isaac submitted.

Development:

1. The location of Abraham's sacrifice was the place that would later become the Temple in Jerusalem.

Abraham travelled from Beersheba to “the land of Moriah”^{viii} to prepare to sacrifice Isaac. The custom of the day was to erect altars upon hilltops, so when Abraham “came to the place which God had told him of”,^{ix} he had climbed a hill to its top.^x

In Second Chronicles, we are told that this same “Mount Moriah” was the site where Solomon began to build the Temple in Jerusalem.^{xi} In Solomon's time, long after Abraham, this had been the threshing-floor of Araunah [**UH-raw-nuh**] the Jebusite [**JEBB-yew-sight**], which King David had purchased^{xii} and upon which David had built an altar of repentance and thanksgiving,^{xiii} because it was on that spot that David saw the angel of death end a pestilence that had killed 70,000 Israelites.^{xiv}

In Classical times, Jerusalem existed primarily as the city of that Temple, so the site of Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac was also the site of God's actual sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.

2. In each case, when mankind was unable to provide a suitable sacrifice, God provided one for Himself.

God sent Abraham and Isaac into the land of Moriah with all of the materials for a sacrifice except the sacrificial animal. When Abraham had proven his complete submission to God's will, by preparing to sacrifice his son, God saved Isaac by providing the needed sacrificial animal Himself, in the form of a wild ram caught in a neighboring thicket.^{xv}

When God wished to prepare a sacrifice that would be sufficient to overcome the separation between Him and His people that had pertained ever since Adam and Eve's disobedience, no ordinary sacrificial animal, or anything else that humans could provide, would suffice. Furthermore, the one to be sacrificed had to be provided by God, not by humanity, because humankind is radically unable to effect its own salvation but must rely on God's freely-given aid.^{xvi}

So God saved Isaac by providing the sacrificial ram and God saved humanity by providing the Lamb of God, His own Son, Jesus Christ. Not only was this

sacrifice provided by God, but only this sacrifice could redeem mankind because only Christ is without any taint of sin.^{xvii}

3. While God spared Isaac, Abraham's son, He did not spare His own Son.

There is just one place where the parallels between the *type* of Isaac and the *antitype* of Our Lord fail. That is in their ultimate fates. God spared Abraham's son, Isaac, from death and returned him to his father, Abraham, so that Isaac became the patriarch of a great people.

God did not spare His own Son, Jesus; instead, He permitted Jesus to suffer death – and an extremely unpleasant death at that, far worse than a quick slash across the throat with a sharp knife – and then took the resurrected Jesus to Himself to be the God and Savior of the whole world.

So Isaac continued to live out the balance of a natural life here on earth; Our Lord lives forever in heaven.

Conclusion:

Thus when Abraham obeyed God and took his son to Mount Moriah, as he thought there to sacrifice that son, he was foretelling God's "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world"^{xviii} which Christ established at the Last Supper and which we are, quite literally "graciously", that is, by an act of grace, permitted to re-present before God the Father each time we offer the Eucharist.

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ⁱ *Psalms and Lessons for the Church Year (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxviii (PECUSA 1928/1943).*

ⁱⁱ *Genesis 22: 1-18 (KJV).*

ⁱⁱⁱ *Hebrews 6: 1-20 (KJV).*

^{iv} *Genesis 22: 9-10 (KJV).*

^v *I Kings 17: 10-16.*

^{vi} *St. Matthew 14: 15-21 and 15: 32-39; St. Mark 6: 35-44 and 8: 1-9; St. Luke 9: 12-17; St. John 6: 5-14.*

^{vii} *See, e.g., St. Matthew 26: 17-30.*

^{viii} *Genesis 22: 2 (KJV).*

^{ix} *Genesis 22: 9a (KJV).*

^x *See Genesis 22: 14b.*

^{xi} *II Chronicles 3: 1. See, e.g., Meredith G. Kline, Genesis, in D. GUTHRIE AND J. A. MOTYER, EDs., THE NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY REVISED, 3rd ed., 99 (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1970). But see S. H. Hooke, Genesis in MATTHEW BLACK AND H. H. ROWLEY, EDs., PEAKE'S COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE 193 (Thomas Nelson Publishers 1982) and John H. Marks, The Book of Genesis in CHARLES M. LAYMON, ED., THE INTERPRETER'S ONE-VOLUME COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE 18 (Abingdon Press 1987).*

^{xii} *II Samuel 24: 24.*

^{xiii} *II Samuel 24: 25.*

^{xiv} *II Samuel 24: 16.*

^{xv} *Genesis 22: 13.*

^{xvi} *Cf. Article XI, "Of the Justification of Man", The Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer 605 (PECUSA 1928/1943).*

^{xvii} *Cf. Article XV, "Of Christ alone without Sin", The Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer 605 (PECUSA 1928/1943).*

^{xviii} *The Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER 80 (PECUSA 1928/1943).*

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