

IN NOMINE JESU

## THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF ISAAC

Our sermon for this fifth Sunday in the Lenten season is taken from our inspired readings, with our thoughts centered by this translated verse:

*And Abraham said, "Elohim will provide for Himself the Lamb for the whole burnt offering, my son." And they both went together.<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

There are at least three images or impressions of Christ in this Sunday's Old Testament Gospel. The first that likely leapt into your consciousness is from the image of Father Abraham offering his beloved son as a sacrifice to God. That image often leads Christians to reflect on the reality that the Father in the heavens offered His Beloved Son as a sacrifice to God.

The second was heard as the Presence of the Angel of the Lord appeared to halt the sacrifice of Isaac. Here the Hebrew term, Malach YHWH is used. Christian students of the Old Testament have learned that that particular naming brings with it declarations directly from God in the first person. Therefore many hold to the biblical opinion that the Malach YHWH is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ! (I hold to this, but I will not bind you to my understanding, as there is no one text in the Scripture that holds a declaration to this effect: "the Malach YHWH is the pre-incarnate Christ"). In any event, it is the Malach YHWH, the Angel of the Lord, is the One who speaks to prevent the mortal death and fiery consummation of Isaac.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 22:8.

The third image of Christ is the ram that was stuck in the thicket. That ram, the gift of God for faithful Abraham and faithful Isaac, is the one whose death came for the whole burnt offering. The blood of the ram served as the mediator between the father and son of the Lord's Promise and the Lord of the Promise Himself. Just so, the blood of the Lamb of God, the final and complete sacrifice for sins, the Blood of Jesus, is the mediator between the Father and the sons of God. The go-between is the blood in which our Lord states is the life. In that mediator, these words of Abraham to Isaac were fulfilled:

*"Elohim will provide for Himself the Lamb for the whole burnt offering my son."*<sup>2</sup>

Three images, impressions, types or anti-types of Christ are in the fourteen verses, as we number them, of this portion of Genesis. That you discern Christ clearly from this text is important. Finding and declaring Christ as the final and complete sacrifice for your sins is the primary reason that you - or any other congregation - is to have men stand in the pulpit and preach. In Christ alone is your vindication before God. In Christ alone is the Christian cause defended. If you leave this place today with nothing else remembered, we pray that you will recall that you have heard of Christ in the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Isaac!

Was that clear? Christ is in the death and resurrection of Isaac. Does something strike you as somewhat amiss in that statement?

Someone or two right now are probably looking at their bulletins, or in their Bibles, to figure out when Isaac died and when he rose from the dead. To do that, you must look at the text as God sees it. You are being called to discern the heart of the teaching of the Lord (the Christ and His benefits) in the death and resurrection of Isaac. Hear of the death of Isaac, from this day's text:

*And Abraham arose early in [the] morning, and saddled his donkey, and took the two young men and Isaac his son, and he cut wood for the whole burnt offering; then he arose and he went to the place which the Elohim told him.<sup>3</sup>*

Isaac was dead, because his human father's intent was to obey the Word of God and ritually slaughter him. You are called to look at the heart of the matter – when the obedience was demanded of Abraham, he physically took the steps necessary to fulfill God's command. This means that, to the father, the son was already sacrificed. Recall that YHWH said to Abraham:

*"Take your son, your only son, whom you unconditionally love, the Isaac, and you go to the land Moriah, and you cause to offer him there for (a) whole burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I say to you."<sup>4</sup>*

After receiving that Word of God, Abraham rises and sets out to do exactly that which God commanded. He, by faith had made all the preparations for the slaughter of his son. This also informs us that he considered his son already sacrificed, dead and burnt to ashes. Abraham, who knew that God had named and given Isaac as

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Genesis 22:3.*

<sup>4</sup> *Genesis 22:2.*

the son of the Promise, from whom would come the Son of the Promise, gave his son, his only son, his beloved over to death, the death of sacrifice. Lest you think that Isaac was not dead in Abraham's mind, the text informs you that, after a three day journey,

*Abraham took the wood of the whole burnt offering, and placed it upon Isaac his son, and he took in his hand fire and the knife, and they both went together.<sup>5</sup>*

Abraham left his servants and his donkey behind. All things and people that might have prevented the slaughter are left. Only the man and his son trudge to their appointed destiny. The father continues for he knows that the son is dead, and that, as this is the command and revealed will of YHWH, there is nothing he can do but acknowledge the death of Isaac.

For those who are not yet convinced, the third event of the narration makes triply clear that Isaac is dead in the mind and heart of his father. The death narrative of Isaac continues:

*And they came to the place which the Elohim said to him, and there Abraham built the altar, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and placed him upon the altar upon all the wood, and Abraham put out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.<sup>6</sup>*

God, who knows the intent of the heart, has declared that anyone who even thinks of a sin has committed that sin. The God who would later in time command, "you do not murder," centuries after that states that the one who even calls his brother a fool is guilty of murder. Therefore, thinking as God would have us think,

seeing with the revelation of God's truth, you as part of the Church know that Isaac is dead because Abraham willed to do the word of the Lord concerning him.

Three times you have heard of the sacrificial death of Isaac in this week's text, that you might know that he was dead before his father, himself, and God – even though the knife never sliced his skin! That is why this sermon had to begin with the three-fold revelation of the Christ in this Sunday Old Testament reading. Without faith in the Christ, Abraham could never have considered his son ritually dead. Without faith in the Christ, Isaac could not submit to his father's will to follow the Father's will.

Now we arrive at the resurrection of Isaac. He is declared, for the first time in this day's text, to be risen from the dead when,

*Abraham said to his young men, "You stay here with the male donkey, and I and the young man will go up there and worship, and come again to you."<sup>7</sup>*

Did you hear the resurrection of dead Isaac declared? Abraham, having decided in his heart to kill Isaac, thus rendering him already dead, also declares that he and the young man (he does not even call him "my son," or "Isaac" for he considers him already slaughtered) shall return from their worship, together! His instructions to the attendant young servants give nothing but the indication that Abraham believes that God will fulfill His promise to make Isaac the father of nations and the father of

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<sup>5</sup> *Genesis 22:6.*

<sup>6</sup> *Genesis 22:9-10.*

the Promised Son. Abraham believes that God can, will and does raise the dead!

Lest you may still doubt that Isaac was raised from the dead, today's theme text again rings out clearly with the resurrection. When Isaac questioned the sacrifice, or lack there of,

*Abraham said, "Elohim will provide for Himself the Lamb for the whole burnt offering, my son." And they both went together.<sup>8</sup>*

Abraham's declaration that Elohim Himself will provide the Lamb of the Sacrifice indicates to all but the hard-hearted that YHWH has all things under control, and that the now dead Isaac will live. Abraham, in his words indicates that he believes in the resurrection of the dead. He knows by faith that God will provide through dead Isaac the generations promised through him . This means that, even if Isaac's lifeless body is reduced to ashes in the fire of the whole burnt offering, Isaac will be raised to new life that the Promise might be fulfilled in him.

If those two declarations of the resurrection of Isaac have not convinced you that God raised Isaac from the dead, a third one yet stands in our text. It came when Isaac was bound and on the wood for the fire that would consume his lifeless body, neck barred to the knife, his father's hand reaching out for the knife. The third declaration of the resurrection came when the Angel of the Lord spoke His Word, calling, *Abraham! Abraham!*

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 22:5.

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 22:8.

*Then He said, "Do not lay your hand upon the lad, nor do anything to him! For now I know you fear Elohim. For you have not withheld the son, your only [son], from Me!"<sup>9</sup>*

Isaac rises from death, for the word of the Lord has stopped the father's hand. The Word has turned the father's heart from death to life. The three declarations of Christ in this text are the means that God uses to make death turn into life. It is the reality of the Christ, in both the life of faithful Abraham and faithful Isaac (for he too had to have faith to continue through his death, to become the sacrifice without fleeing, to await the knife without struggle) the reality of Christ that sustained them and removed the fear of death from them. They could do what they did because God's Promise of the Christ had removed the fear of eternal death from them. The sting of death was not theirs to feel.

Without the sting of death, there was no horror and fear in dying. The faithful who die in Christ will rise to life in Him. The threefold declaration of Christ began this sermon that you may have confidence in the same saving faith that Abraham and Isaac held. That is one meaning that you may take from this text.

Another reality that you may take from this text is that it was not written for the sake of Abraham, nor for Isaac. In time, it was written, by the inspiration of God, through the hand of Moses, centuries after the fact. Therefore it was recorded for those who would be descendants of the Promise through the faith of Abraham. It is to

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<sup>9</sup> *Genesis* 22:11a, 12.

be declared for those who are the sons of Abraham through faith in the Christ, who is declared to be the mediator, the only mediator, between God and man.

A third truth you may carry forth in your mind and heart today is that this text, with Christ at its center, is declared that you might imitate Abraham's obedience in your mortal life. You are free to cling to his belief in the resurrection of the blessed dead that is your present possession. You have been released from death's eternal sting. That is so, because, in this text you hear and believe that sin and death have been killed for you in the death of Christ.

That which God has once declared, He will not change – even if it seems to you that He has changed His mind. Even if the world or your flesh press in upon you and God seems remote, He is not. Your mind, in the midst of tribulation, may say to you that you have offended God so that He has withdrawn His Promise from you. Yet, just as He broke through death and sadness in Abraham and Isaac at the moment for the strike of the blade, He will break through for you in your times of testing. In Christ alone is your vindication. In Christ alone is your Christian cause defended.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Lent V (*LSB* One-Year Series)

Genesis 22:1-14; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 8:46-59

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**SOLI DEO GLORIA**