

**God Provided Your Substitute!**  
**Genesis 22-22**  
**March 29, 2026**

Please open your Bibles today to Genesis 21. Have you ever wanted something so badly you could taste it? It occupied your every thought, it was the subject of your every prayer, it was the deepest desire of your heart. And then one day, after many years, it happened. That which you wanted more than anything became yours! Your joy was full, your happiness was complete. You had a perpetual smile on your face and gratitude in your heart toward God. Some of you know that joy, others may still be earnestly praying for it. Don't stop.

But imagine having received this gift and having enjoyed it for some time, you're asked to surrender it. To set it aside never to enjoy it again. And the light goes out of your eyes as you contemplate the emptiness that comes. Some of you know that as well. If so, you can relate to Abraham in our Scripture today. We've been following this man and although it's been 2 weeks since we were last with him, it's been 25 years since God promised him his heart's deepest desire. If you are able please stand as we read about him receiving his request from Gen 21:1 Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Say finally! After all those years of praying and waiting and hoping, Abraham and Sarah finally have the son God promised! The seed that would grow into the fulfillment of all that God covenanted to give them! A little boy in their old age! Imagine their great happiness! The light in their eyes! The joy in their hearts. For at least the last 25 years, that's all Abraham thought about. It was the subject of his every prayer, the number 1 item on his bucket list and the one thing he could do nothing about. Finally he has it!

And of course, they named him laughter, which Isaac means. Say laughter. Because both parents laughed at the idea of them having a child at their ages, and because they laughed with joy when he came, they gave him a name that would remind them of God's faithfulness in spite of their doubts. He would now grow as their only son and be the child of their favor. In obedience to the covenant, Abraham circumcised him indicating to whom he belonged. Imagine how they doted on him. And once again, Hagar and Ishmael get pushed out and treated as second class citizens because of the blended

family dynamics. Some of you can relate to that as well.

Nevertheless, Isaac grew and became his parents' pride and glory. This story starts out not unlike Holy Week that we now enter. For on Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as the people worshiped! Hosanna! Save us! Be our king! They shouted. The disciples were riding high! All they've left behind the last three years will finally be worth it when they become Jesus' cabinet as the new rulers of Israel. What they've hoped for for so long is at hand! Finally!

Return to Jesus' ancestor as we pick up in Gen 22:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." You're kidding me right? Say test. The word means to put on trial and Abraham's faith surely was. God is commanding him to do the unthinkable. It is beyond understanding. It's ridiculous. "Take your son," then for emphasis, God adds, "your **only** son, whom you **love**." Not Ishmael, that would be much easier. No, Isaac. Of course he loved him! Of course he was Abraham's dearest earthly joy! Flocks and herds meant nothing to him, I'll kill them all! Gold was but garbage compared to Isaac whom God had given and whom God now demanded as a burnt offering. Nobody's laughing now. No! I'm going to take the boy and run! This could never be! A test indeed, a trial of faith. What will the jury decide?

What would you do? Let's look over Abraham's shoulder and into his heart as He wrestles with the hardest trial of his life. Vs 3 "Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about." Abraham didn't dilly dally. He didn't put it off as we do tasks we dread. I might have given God time to change His mind. I'd have to pray about it, consider it, talk it over with my friends. Nope. Not Abraham. Say early. EARLY the next morning. Might as well, I'm sure he couldn't sleep anyway. And somebody rode a donkey. I don't know if it was Isaac or Abraham, but you don't put a saddle on a donkey to carry stuff. My guess is it was Isaac because that's just the way God did things 2000 years later when His Son rode a donkey near that same mountain of which this is a perfect prophecy or type.

Vs 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." So a couple days have passed on the road and now Abraham sees the place. Say Mt. Moriah. The mountain ridge on which Jerusalem was later built including the very hill called Calvary, Golgotha, where another Son would be sacrificed years later. But notice the faith in Abraham's words, "**we** will come back to you." That's faith speaking!

Vs 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together," Do you think it was any coincidence that the son carried the wood just as Jesus carried the wood He would be sacrificed on? I think not.

Vs 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Now there's a good question. Isaac had probably been wondering that since they left home! But father knows best, right? This tells us Abraham has been sacrificing lambs all along for Isaac is familiar with the process and he knows something's missing.

Vs 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together." Can you see the moisture in dad's eye? Can you see the angst on his face? Can you hear the lump in his throat? He can't look Isaac directly in the eye as he swallows hard and says, "God will provide." And they go on as Abraham prays for that lamb to be provided.

Vs 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood." Wait just a minute! Can you hear Isaac protesting? "I thought you said God would provide a **lamb**? Do I look like a lamb? My hair's curly, but I've only got two legs and I don't go baa!" Meanwhile, Abraham is resolutely doing what God commanded him to do. Tears streaming down his face. Body quivering with emotion. Enormous lump in his throat. How do I chose between my God and my son? Is this really happening? A test indeed!

This is the first of the Old Testament types or illustrations of Good Friday and some theologians believe it is given to us that we might consider the crucifixion from the Father's perspective. Given to us that we might look over **God's** shoulder, that we might get a glimpse of what all was going on in God's heart when He would offer up His Son, His only Son, whom He loved. For us.

Vs 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son." Regardless of his second thoughts, his misgivings, his aching heart, Abraham is determined to obey His God. At over 100 years of age, Abraham has finally learned that it's always best to obey God. Say Always. That God always has a plan and that God always keeps His promises even when circumstances **are** impossible. Hebrews 11:19 says of this day, "Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death." After 3 days, BTW.

Say faith. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as what? Righteousness! Abraham is still believing God! Now more than ever! Believing that God has power even over death before God ever raised anyone from death. If God could give life as He did when Isaac was born, Abraham believed He could restore life again. When you begin to grasp how big God really is, and how powerful God really is, and how loving God really is, you're a lot more willing to obey Him no matter what He says. Abraham had reached that point. He now loved God enough to obey Him and He feared Him too much to disobey Him. He knew Him well enough to trust Him regardless. Oh, may we know God enough and love God enough and fear God enough to trust God enough to obey Him always! Even when it's the hardest thing we'll ever do!

German Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was executed by the Nazis for standing up for Jesus said, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." We'll sing that in our closing song today. Die to self, die to dreams, die to this world. But as we will learn next week, He alone has power to raise the dead! In North Korea, China, Iran and other places, the cost of following Jesus is very high. You will not only be rejected, insulted, and spit on, but may even be killed. That's not a popular gospel and it thins the ranks even more quickly than Gideon's men thinned out at the brook. But it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Giving ourselves up for Jesus. And 1900 years before Jesus was born, Abraham blazes this trail of faithful obedience even through great personal pain, for he knows his relationship with God is more valuable than even his own son, his only son, whom he loves. This is a great test as to what Abraham loves most, for whatever we love most is our god. Be it the Heavenly Father, our children, our possessions, our pleasures, or ourselves. God or another god, an idol?

Abraham answers that question for himself as he raises his knife to slay his son. The Hebrew implies a meat cleaver for butchering. He is about to put a knife to God's promises, to God's gift, and to his own heart. See the fear in Isaac's wide eyes? See the anxious look on his face? See the sweat on Abraham's forehead? His hair and his robe are soaking wet. His son is bound, fastened to the instrument of death. Fastened to the wood, on top of the stones, just as Jesus was fastened to a wooden cross, on top of the stone face of Golgotha. What started out in laughter and celebration back in chapter 21 has turned into horror here in chapter 22 just as Jesus' triumphal entry on Sunday turned to horror on Friday.

Eternity hangs between the knife and the child. Abraham's faith is measured from blade to chest. God's promises hang in the balance as Abraham prepares to plunge his knife into his only son, whom he loves. Vs 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Say shew. We of course knew it would turn out this way. We've heard it before. Abraham never had. At the last possible moment, just as the sharpened point was poised above the chest of his son, his

only son, whom he loved, God said, stop! And Abraham now used his knife to cut the ropes that bound his only son whom he loved. In the greatest relief he'd ever felt or would ever feel, with joy and gratitude, he frees his son Isaac, whom he loves.

Vs 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son." A sacrifice still had to be made. The altar of justice demanded a lamb. And, just as Abraham's faith believed, God provided! Caught by his horns in the thicket. The entwined vegetation had entrapped him. Perhaps foreshadowing the entwined thorns of our sin that were placed upon the head of another lamb on that same mountain of offering many years later.

Friend, God didn't just erase your sin, He couldn't. He is a God of perfect justice. Your sin had to be paid for and covered by blood. Yours or someone else's. Just because you were spared doesn't mean someone else wasn't. Someone else did die. And He died in your place for where God spared Abraham the pain of sacrificing his only son whom he loved, God did not spare Himself that same agony. That separation, if only for a time. That heartache and heartbreak. What God has never required of us, He did. He paid our price. What God didn't require Abraham, He Himself did so that Abraham didn't have to. So that you wouldn't have to. Religions throughout history have practiced human sacrifice knowing in their souls that sin has to be covered, paid for, atoned with blood. Some religions still sacrifice children. They haven't yet heard the good news that someone else died in their place.

In this passage, we glimpse the crucifixion through the Father's eyes. As we look over Abraham's shoulder we see God's heart, and we can sense how great a sacrifice Jesus' crucifixion truly was. And we begin to grasp what Paul says in Rom 8:32 "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" Oh may we **not** forget Gethsemane, may we **not** forget Calvary, may we never forget His great love for us that caused His great pain for us. And may we remember and may we reflect just a fraction of Abraham's faith and obedience by coming to Jesus' table today to remember His death as He has commanded us to do. It's a lot easier than sacrificing your child. How beautiful that we get to be served by Jesus Himself! How could we neglect that? How could we refuse that? God have mercy.

When Isaiah paints his prophecy of the crucifixion he tells us that Jesus, "was pierced for **our** transgressions, he was crushed for **our** iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We **all**, like sheep, have gone astray, **each** of us has turned to his **own** way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us **all**." Jesus died on that altar of the cross in all of our places. But although it was God's plan since before Creation, it was never easy for Him nor His Son.

Vs 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." Jehovah Jireh. Yahweh Jireh. God will provide! And He did. And He does, amen? What a perfect name for that place! For not only did He provide a substitute for Isaac on that mountain that day, He provided a substitute for you and me on Moriah's Mountain when the pure spotless Lamb of God, caught in the thickets of our sin, died in our place as His Father looked on. 2 Cor 5:21 tells us, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Vs 15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring **all** nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." 19 Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

So God repeated His promises to Abraham. Say passed. Abraham passed this hardest of tests. And with faith in the God who provides, we can too. For as we've mentioned all the way through this message, this isn't just about Abraham and Isaac, and God, it's about the Father and the Son and you and me. The week that started with Palm Sunday enthusiasm ended with a crucifixion and a death. Sunday's comin' and we'll celebrate that next week, but for today, I want you to see how much God loves you. How much it hurt Him to save you. You must be worth an awful lot to God for Him to offer up His Son, His Only Son, whom He loves, to take your place on that altar, on the cross and to save your soul. See yourself as Isaac, doomed to die, bound in sin. And see God's love providing Christ to die in your place, to save and to free you. It's hard to imagine anyone so spared would not to jump up and make way for the lamb. But some don't. We have to accept what Jesus did for us. If you never have, do that today as we pray. And if you have, thank and glorify Him for it and to obey Him in faithfulness.