

**BY FAITH,
ISAAC TAUGHT HIS SONS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE**

Their future secured by God's promises -- Their future assured by holding to God's promises.

Hebrews 11:17-20

TEXT: *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Did you take note of the picture on the front of today's bulletin? This is an artist's rendition of that awesome test the Lord required of Abraham: *Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 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."* WOW! But then we are told: *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.* Ge 22 Today's text from Hebrews tells us how Abraham was able to go through with this with such steadfast determination.

But if you look at the picture on the front of the bulletin, you see a young boy, and a tiny altar, with a pile of wood that wouldn't cook a steak. I think that we often think of Isaac in this fashion. But when you read the Bible and hear that Abraham *had cut enough wood for the burnt offering...* that is, enough to burn a human body, and then the Bible says: *Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife.* Ge 22 In other words, Isaac could not have been such a small lad. In order to carry enough wood to burn a human body, up a mountain, he had to have been at the prime of male maturity. He had to be one powerful man! And to be so big and strong, he had to share in the faith of his father, or there would be no way this powerful young man would have let his father tie him up and place him on the altar!

Why do I point this out? It is because of what the Writer to the Hebrews tells us: *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.* What this means is that this awesome test of his father left an impression on Isaac that strengthened his faith as well. He, too, became a preacher of the Gospel: **BY FAITH, ISAAC TAUGHT HIS SONS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.** The future secured by God's promises; and, the future assured by holding to God's promises.

Ever wonder about what went through Abraham's head that night before he left to sacrifice Isaac as the Lord had commanded? The New Testament tells us: *By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.* Reason is not a sinful thing. God created man's ability to reason. But when it comes to God, the creature must set reason aside and simply listen to what God says. God had said two things: The Law: *You shall not kill*; and the Gospel: *Through you, Abraham, all families on earth will be blessed.* (The Savior). There was no conflict between these two Divine revelations, until the Lord commanded Abraham to kill the one through whom the Savior would come. Like I said before: No Isaac; no Jesus. While human reason cannot resolve this, FAITH in God's Promise of the Savior gave him an answer -- a REASONABLE answer: *Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death...* In other words, for all intents and purposes, Abraham would surely have cut Isaac's throat in the anticipation of God's faithfulness in keeping His promise. God would have to resolve the contradiction. God would HAVE to raise Isaac back to life to keep that Promise.

Isaac held that same promise in his heart, otherwise he would have shoved his old father down and escaped. Instead he let himself be bound and placed on the pile of wood he had carried up the mountain for his own sacrifice. What God taught Abraham that day, He also taught Isaac. Knowing that Abraham would go through with the sacrifice, God graciously put an end to the test and sent a special gift: *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. 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." Ge 22

To this day, all who know and believe in that same Jesus who came into this world because of Abraham and Isaac, we can know that our future is secure. Even when the things of this life seem to contradict reason. When reason says that I've sinned and deserve damnation, God's promise of forgiveness through faith in Jesus says that I am going to go to heaven. When reason suggests that God is ignoring me, demanding too much of me, is paying no attention to me, or does not see me or consider me, faith in Jesus declares: Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes! Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies! (hymn 588 CW).

While there are many lessons to be learned from the account of Abraham and Isaac faith experience on Mt. Moriah, there stands before us a powerful emphasis that is easily overlooked. It is a lesson on what I'd be so bold as to call and emphasis on "Lutheran Education." Lutheran Education is exactly what Abraham and Isaac are involved with: Teaching the Faith in God's promised Savior so that our future children hold to that faith and God's saving promises.

Today's text from Hebrews 11 says: *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.* This can mean nothing other than the fact that Isaac TAUGHT his sons. He spoke of this amazing experience and how he was willing to go through the frightening death by sacrifice believing what his father Abraham believed, that if his throat were cut and his body burned, the Lord would HAVE to raise him back to life for the sake of the Promise. He explained to them why their grandfather Abraham named that mountain on which their father nearly lost his life: *The LORD Will Provide.* He taught them that it is ONLY for the sake of Christ that we are saved for eternity in heaven, and that there is a resurrection from the dead, and that this Lord will be with those He has redeemed, called and enlightened.

In their day, through their own individual experiences, they would learn the meaning of: *On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.* His sons, Jacob and Esau would surely "climb their individual mountains" of fear and pain, trouble and hardship. But God is faithful, and when they reach would reach the top, and ONLY when they would reach the top of each "mountain," after the end of each test, the Lord would provide. Contrary to human reason, the Lord will show mercy and grace not to those who deserve it or have earned it, but to those whom He has called. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob also would proclaim, preach and teach this truth to their families and to all who would ask them about this hope that they had in their hearts and lives.

And so should we. God spoke directly to Abraham, but have the Gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection for our salvation. You have written proof that the Lord has called you to be His own. It is in your Baptism. Human reason asks, "How can water do such great things?" Lutherans reply: **It is NOT the water that does such great things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not baptism. But with this Word it is baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.** This same Spirit connects us to Jesus, washing away our sins, and empowers us to believe that God will do what He says, even as we climb our mountain of life.

Therefore, we should value this sacrament and after applying it to our children, continue to teach them about what this means. Teach them about what Paul says when he writes about Baptism: *Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.* Ro 6 This is the Faith that enables men, women and children to do what Abraham was able to do: put his reason to work under the power of God's promises, and to do such a mighty acts of obedience to the glory of God, even in the face of climbing mountains of adversity.

By faith, Abraham taught his sons about their blessed future through God's Savior. Our Christian parents and grandparents teach this, and our Lutheran Schools teach these things that pertain to faith and reason. God give us the faith always to do this! Amen