**2 July 2023, Abraham and Isaac**

 (Genesis 22.1-140. Matthew 10.40-42)

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**Today’s first reading a shocker!** What sort of God would require child sacrifice?

**Yet God asked Abraham** c1900 BC or BCE.

**Child sacrifice for sin** was known in those days i**e of the patriarchs:** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel)

**God was testing Abraham’s faith.** Was his loyalty to God such that he would sacrifice even his only son?

**Was he fit to lead God’s people** to be a light to the nation?

**Abraham passed the test** and the Lord stayed the execution, **thus outlawing child sacrifice** as being not part of God’s will.

**Note Isaac’s obedience also as successor.**

**Abraham worshipped God there.**

**We note God’s grace** - the ram for sacrifice**:** God will provide. Jehovah Jireh.

**The chapter goes on:**

* Israel will become numerous
* It will offer redemption to all nations (also Isa 49)
* A land is promised – Canaan
* After 500 years in Egypt, Moses and the exodus (C 1400-1300).

**Parallel with Jesus’ death? Yes and No**

**YES:**

* **the same 100% loyalty** required (Peter: “you are the Christ, the son of the living God”).
* And Jesus’ death and resurrection also offers **redemption to all nations.**

**NO:**

* God is **a God of love**, not punishment. Sacrifice for sin is superseded.
* **Jesus’ death not required by God.**
* It was foreseen by Isaiah in the **suffering servant.**
* It resulted from a **conspiracy of evil** forces – political, religious and the crowd.
* **Jesus spoke truth to power** and was a threat to be eliminated.
* **Jesus chose to drink the cup.**

**The power of victim hood** overthrows the power of the sword (N T Wright).

*For a brilliant podcast on Tom Wight’s new book on Paul, in dialogue with Tom Holland, enter online You Tube Tom Holland and Tom Wright - 58 mins but worth every second.*

**Gospel: Matthew 10.40-42**

**Continues the theme** from Genesis that we are called into an unqualified relationship with God:

* Linked now through Christ in God
* It is not earned – it is pure gift; spontaneous like love between two people
* Rewards to the prophets and righteous people are also pure gift (cf labourers in vineyard)
* Prophets also exposed to persecution
* Cup of water to the least includes all on the margins in life or community. It also is pure gift with no return needed or sought.

**So what is the take home message?**

* **Each of us called/invite** into central relationship with God
* **Love at the heart –** pure mutual gift
* **We are called to proclaim God’s word and reach out to the community in mission**
* **The Church IS mission,** not just a programme run by the church. **Just as a fire exists by burning**
* **We witness in our workplace, community, personal networks**
* **By the kind of people we are:** sensitive, caring, compassionate.
* **The Rev. Wendy Scott’**s research: sharing faith with people in context of meeting them at their point of need.
* **Sustained by worship and prayer**

**Over 2000 years** our understanding of God has grown:

* God does not require sacrifices for sin, let alone child sacrifices
* God is a God of love, not retribution.

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