

(aka God): Provider

Reconnect – May 29, 2011

(aka God)

How what He's been called shows who He continues to be

YHWH-yi'reh:
(Provider)

May 29, 2011

re:connect
Barrhaven Community Church

Text: Genesis 22:1-19; Hebrews 11:13-19

Key Thought: The God who tested Abraham still pushes us to yield to him everything that matters.

Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means "the Lord will provide"). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided." (Genesis 22:13-14, NLT)

Intro: Pop Quizzes



- Everyone's least favourite school exercise – the pop quiz
- Scheduled is one thing – you can borrow notes, teach yourself what you failed to learn the first time around, study hard, prepare yourself (or not) – and then take the test
- But a pop quiz – all you have to go on is what you know well enough to carry with you every day – and a lot of times, it doesn't feel like that's a whole lot

Q: So why do teachers use pop quizzes? (to keep students on their toes, make them study more, see if anything is getting through in what they're teaching)

- What most students don't realize is that keeping your wits about you is the best way to get through a pop quiz – most people are too busy moaning and complaining and being shocked to actually focus, read the questions, and attempt good answers – but the ones who can keep their heads, follow instructions and understand the questions have an okay chance of success

Back to Abraham:

- **Context:** when last we left Abraham, he was watching his tree grow and raising his “one and only” Isaac on the backside of the Promised Land – not thrilled, but content to take it day by day with some stability, learning what life was like with the consistent, constant Eternal God
- All of a sudden, maybe 10 years later, all of that changes in a moment, as God chooses to show Abraham a different side of himself:

Read text: Genesis 22:1-19, NLT

Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith. "Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am." "Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."

“... the designation of Yahweh as the Enduring God indicates the stability, security, and permanence that Abraham now feels in the covenant and in his relationship with God. This condition is not to last, however, as God tests Abraham. The very God who has become recognized and appreciated for bringing enduring stability and security is the God who is now responsible for such turmoil... In testing, one is testing some value, quality, or attribute in that person... Whatever is being tested is stretched to its limits. Likewise, when God tests, he tests some value, quality, or attribute by stretching it to its limits. In most cases he is testing the faith and faithfulness of individuals or of Israel by expecting them to obey in difficult circumstances”

(Walton, Genesis, 509-510)

- God sets the system to “test” right at the beginning – He doesn't want us for a minute to think that this is real – so WE know the difference, but Abraham, the test subject, does not
- Think about a production process – the testing comes after a prototype is designed and created, to try to discover any flaws – and then testing becomes a part of the process at every point after, to ensure that what you're making is the best possible whatever-it-is

The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. "Stay here with the donkey," Abraham told the servants. "The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back."

- No hesitation on Abraham's part – he gets up the next morning early and gets everything ready for himself – he does it all
- Does he tell Sarah? Doesn't say... does he argue with God? Plead and beg? Doesn't say... but he has three days alone with his thoughts

- And whether he's putting a brave face on things ("we will come right back") or just continuing the deception, we don't know
- When we hear what God was asking, it sounds ridiculous or horrible, or both – human sacrifice? And yet, in that culture, all kinds of human sacrifice was practiced to appease the gods – commentators generally agree that Abraham wouldn't have been shocked at the request so much as by the one making it, because the God he knew was different than the other gods of the region – something was different this time
- Abraham has served God for 50 years now, and followed time and again – but in 50 years there has never been a request like this one
- Isaac is his one and only, his pride and joy – he has given up everything for this child, including another son that he loved and loved
- This is the child he waited 25 years for, that he could never have – the child of promise, who is now being taken away at a moment's notice

So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac's shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son," Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

- the second time that Abraham says "Here I am" in the story – first to God, then to Isaac – the compliant answer, the "How may I help you?"
- Again, a faith answer from Abraham – even if he doesn't believe it, he is choosing to demonstrate a faith to the rest of the world around him

When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!" "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."

- "Here I am" a third time – again, the answer of faith, this time mixed with relief
- Was Abraham super-slow on the trigger? Couldn't God have intervened at some point sooner than that? And why make Abraham do it at all, if God knows the future? If God knew how Abraham would choose, why put everyone through all of this in the first place?

Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the Lord will provide”). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.” Then the angel of the Lord called again to Abraham from heaven. “This is what the Lord says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.” Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

- This test is done for God’s benefit, not Abraham’s – Verse 12 – Somehow God needs to know, needs to see it, needs Abraham to see him seeing it, for this to matter and to be pivotal in Abraham’s life
- Promises reaffirmed, Abraham has passed his ultimate test – and Abraham and Isaac come back together (but this time, Isaac is maybe keeping a little more of a safe distance ;)

Provider?



- Wal-Mart – love/hate relationship
- Many times I have heard this section spoken on referring only to God taking care of all our needs – providing for us
- But there’s a little more to it than that – the word used is associated with providing and with seeing – in other words, “the God who sees to things” – who takes care of the details
- Providing is tied to needs, not wants – which is part of the reason we get so frustrated with God – we have so many wants, that change and fade when we get them – but we have needs that someone has to take care of, either us or others
- I want God to be like the mall – where I can find one of just about anything I could ever want – or even better, like the Internet and an unlimited credit card, and all I need to do is indicate the website and I’m good to go
- But God decides that he’s going to be more like Wal-Mart to me instead – that he will have what I need, but it might not necessarily be exactly what I had envisioned (my love/hate relationship with Wal-Mart!)

Superintendent Lord – for Yireh

- A word I saw used in this context this week was “superintendent”
- Renting stories – we rented for years and years – and had all kinds of landlords, good and bad
- Life not being in charge – renting – when something goes, it’s either comforting or unsettling to have a Super, depending on what they’re like and the job they do, and the experiences you’ve already had with them
- If there’s a problem, do you call them? Depends on their track record and how hard it might be – you might be tempted to do something or fix something yourself
- But in a perfect world, they are there to take care of things – to “see to things” for you – not the other way around

But pushy, too:

- Superintendent doesn’t completely do it for me, because most are absentee – you don’t see them – and yet God has a way of ensuring that He will not be ignored for too long – he has a plan for us, and he pushes us to make sure that we get there
- **Piano practicing** – a big part of our home the last couple of years – any given day there can be joy, tears, anger, and eighth notes flying around our living room – from multiple children and adults! – it’s about testing, it’s about learning, it’s a discipline thing – and one day, if they stick with it, the payoff of the meltdowns will be an incredible talent and something they can take pleasure in – maybe ;)
- **Unschooling movement** - **unschooling movement – but the problem is, it’s information without testing – there’s no backchecking, no placing under pressure – no ensuring that what is being developed is solid enough to withstand the pressures of life and the demands of career, family, choices, etc.
- **Tests – Hope’s EQAO** – mandated by the Ontario government - meant to evaluate in every way – the kids have been prepping for this but interestingly enough, it’s as much of a test of the TEACHER as it is of the students – so it is in many ways with what God leads us through
- Testing is about refining production – about ensuring that your results are what you are looking to produce, that there’s no disconnect – about ensuring that what you have is what you need, that it can be relied on, that it’s real, genuine, reproducible
 - My conversation with Tracy a couple of nights ago – what about physical suffering? Is God just waiting to heal us of everything, for us to ask him properly? Is it the devil that’s in the way, every time?
 - But our trials produce perseverance – **Romans 5:3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. 4 And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. 5 And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.**

Key Thought:

TAKE IT HOME:

The God who tested Abraham still pushes us to yield to him everything that matters.

It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God's promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, even though God had told him, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted." Abraham reasoned that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again. And in a sense, Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.



Hebrews 11:13-19, NLT

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Conclusion: Sole-sourcing



- Sole sourcing – F35's project – the western nations are worried because the "next generation fighter" is WAAAAY over budget – and the government here has faced criticism because it "sole-sourced" on the contract we signed – no competition, because it was felt that this particular plane was head and shoulders above the competition, the best of the best
- We get uncomfortable when we hear about sole-sourcing, even though many of us do it all the time – because on the whole, it's a very unwise way to buy something – just to go out and buy it, not to price, not to compare, to make up your mind in advance no matter what and keep your wallet out in the open – seems to be a sure-fire way to get taken advantage of – and yet, and yet, and yet... that's the sort of access that God is looking for in our lives

- And when we have that choice to make, our worries sometimes are very similar: will this cost me too much? What kind of control am I giving up, and will I have to pay too high a price down the road because of this?

Response: