

## June 28, 2020 - How Much Can I Trust?

Based on Genesis 22:1-14

### Prayer:

Today's scripture is a bit bizarre. It is perplexing and really quite horrifying. Why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, the son who God has been promised would continue Abraham's lineage. This is the same Isaac who would father Jacob, (also named Israel) the father of the Israelites. It doesn't make a lot of sense. The God we know is compassionate, caring, generous and loving. We don't understand God acting in this way.

*Amanda Benckhuysen, professor of Old Testament at the Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids Michigan says:*

***"I don't which is worse—that God tells Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, or that Abraham seemingly complies without protest.***

***Compounding the ethical problem is the practical one. Isaac is the long-awaited child of the promise and at this point, he is the only one left in Abraham's household through whom God's covenant promises could be realized. Lot chose to separate from Abraham and his family and strike out on his own. God said no to Abraham's servant, Eliezer. Though with some protest, Abraham complied with God's insistence that Ishmael be sent away. And now this. The final hope that Abraham and Sarah have for "a great name" is to be snuffed out at God's command. To the human mind, this is incomprehensible. And no words I write are likely to lift the fog."***<sup>1</sup>

Amanda sums up my feelings succinctly. This is a bizarre situation.

Amanda and others, I have no doubt, suggest that this is a test to see how much Abraham trusts God. If one reads back through Genesis, there are times when Abraham has some doubts. The possibility of fathering a son at an old age with a wife well past childbearing years, was one of them.

Perhaps the intent of the writers of this text meant to raise the question of our trust in God. If one has faith that God can do anything, you are prepared to respond and follow any instruction, even if it is something as horrible as sacrificing your own child.

Of course, God stays Abraham's hand, Isaac is spared. God would have no part in taking a life. God never has and God never will. Those that suggest otherwise are in my view manipulating the scriptures to justify their actions.

What then is "The Test?" How much can I trust God? That is a biggie!

Before I continue, I am going to offer us a couple of minutes to think about that question. Take a few moments in contemplation, how much you can trust God in your life. What might that look like for you? I will bring us all back shortly. (Wait two minutes)

### **How much do I trust God? What does that look like?**

There is so much negativity around us these days it is exceedingly more difficult to see where goodness, grace and mercy live. Each Sunday when I prepare community prayers, I am challenged to offer positive or encouraging words. Our media sources and the internet are chock a block full of dismay and tragedy. Sometimes I would just

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=4500](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4500)

like to ignore what is going on in the world. Excluding anything to do with the pandemic, today's headlines are awash with misery.

- Mexico City's chief of police was shot and injured and two of his bodyguards killed in a dramatic assassination attempt early on Friday
- Two Canadians, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig remain in Chinese prisons as the dispute continues over the extradition of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou. They have been there since December 10, 2018.
- There were US airstrikes in Iraq after the killing of an American contractor.
- Civil war in Yemen is ongoing despite calls for a ceasefire. There is continued conflict within other Arab nations and their neighbours.
- There is another Ebola outbreak in the Congo, Ebola kills on average 50% of those infected.
- Hundreds of thousands of refugees continue to live in squalor and fear, and countless children continue to be on the brink of starvation

And I ask, God how much can I trust that you will bring help, healing and peace? What will your day look like when there is really "Free Trade," a time when sharing of wealth overrides economic benefit and stock market share prices? God can I trust that someday we will be able to look upon each other simply as neighbours whether we are Asian, African, Black American, Indigenous, Indian, Inuit, Spanish, German or anything else? Will there be a time when I can check the headlines and be amazed at our collaborative efforts to put aside our selfishness so we can save the planet?

How much do I trust you God?

We all have our personal reflections on such a question. For me I trust that the Holy One, the God that walks with me every day, has given me wisdom, empathy, courage and determination.

I know that I have been given wisdom to understand that God is at work through me in ways that I can't imagine. I also understand that there is a lot I can't possibly fathom in what we might call "the big picture." But if my actions are based on caring for and about others and I continue to have empathy, some good will come of that.

Of course, in the face of adversity and frustration one needs courage and determination. These are two more gifts I have been given from The Creator. They are tested frequently as it is at times easier to back away and give in. But I trust in the potential that the unwavering goodness that is the Holy One, will prevail.

And I trust that if I use those gifts, God's Kin-dom is still possible. Naïve as that may be, it is a premise I refuse to give up. I am a bit stubborn that way.

And so, I trust God that you will lead and keep me grounded in your love. I trust that you will keep me hopeful despite setbacks and burdens. I trust that you will nudge me when I stray off course and I trust that you will remind me to get back on the bus when you need to. (Of course, I trust you will get on the bus with me). I also trust that you are there, wherever the journey should take me. You are mentor, friend, parent, and guardian. You are grace, healing, mystery and wonder.

I suppose like Abraham, I am tested at times. We all are. But it is not God who is doing the testing, God is doing the rescuing. From a near disaster God spoke to Abraham reminding him what was most important in life. Our circumstance is what

tests us. Our trust that in and through God we can and will make a difference is what rescues us.

Thanks be to God.

Thanks for listening this morning. Amen