

## 4/3/26 – Good Friday     **The Mountain of Obedience, Again**

**Pastor Doug Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church     *Matthew 27:45-54***

On February 22, Pastor Nate preached about the incredibly difficult story, from *Genesis 22*, of Abraham being asked by God to sacrifice Isaac, the son of the promise, who was born to Abraham and Sarah after many years of waiting. The sermon was titled, **The Mountain of Obedience**. In it, Nate asked some challenging questions, including, “What’s the greatest thing you’ve ever been asked to give up? What’s the greatest thing God has ever asked you to give up?”

*Genesis 22:2* states, “*Take your son, your only son whom you love – Isaac – and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain that I will show you.*” Abraham was asked to sacrifice his own son, his greatest possession. He’s asked to give up the thing that’s most precious to him, in a single act of obedience. When he and Isaac are on their way up the mountain, Isaac asks his father (*Genesis 22:7*), “***Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?***” And Abraham says (*Genesis 22:8*), “***God Himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.***” And that’s what happened. Abraham’s obedience and faith are rewarded. “*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’.***” That background is important for us on Good Friday.

Listen to ***Matthew 27:45-54***. “From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*’ that is, ‘*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*’ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘*This man is calling for Elijah.*’ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, ‘*Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.*’ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who

were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, **“Truly this man was God’s Son!”**”

Our theme, today, is the **Mountain of Obedience, Again**. I invite you to reflect on two fathers and two sons. Think of the parallels between the story of Abraham and Isaac, and God and Jesus. **Abraham showed faithful obedience. Jesus demonstrated perfect obedience.** Abraham was willing to give his son. God gave His Son. In *Genesis 22*, Abraham was asked to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah. Isaac carried the wood for his own sacrifice. At the last moment, God provided a substitute. This story became a prophetic shadow of what happens later with Jesus. A beloved son, a climb up a hill bearing the wood of sacrifice, obedience even when it’s costly. God providing the sacrifice.

But there’s a crucial difference: Isaac was spared. Jesus was not.

I also want to recall another of the mountains that we climbed, the Mountain of Temptation. In *Matthew 4:1-11*, Satan tempts Jesus to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, even quoting scripture about angels catching him. The temptation was to take a shortcut around obedience. This temptation is deeper than it first appears. Satan was essentially saying to Jesus: **“You can prove you are the Son of God without suffering.”** It’s the **shortcut**. The temptation Satan shared was, “Jesus, c’mon, you don’t want to experience rejection, humiliation, and the physical pain of the cross for them. Why put yourself through that when you could choose spectacle, applause, praise, and miraculous rescue?”

But Jesus refused. He answers with Scripture, and remains on **the path of obedience and surrender**, the path that eventually led to Golgotha and **the cross**. **Golgotha is The Mountain of Perfect Obedience.** In *Matthew 27:45-54*, another beloved Son is on the altar of sacrifice. But this time, there is **no voice stopping the sacrifice**. No ram in the thicket. No substitute. Because this time, **He is the Lamb**.

When Jesus cries: **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**, it’s important to consider what Jesus says. The final words of Jesus that Matthew gives us from the cross are found in the opening sentence of *Psalms 22*, which is a plea for deliverance from suffering and hostility. When Jesus faced the temptation of Satan, he quoted scripture in responding to each one. As his life is nearing its end, he again quotes

scripture. If you read *Psalm 22*, you'll see it's incredibly descriptive of Jesus' experience in his final hours. I'm going to share some of it.

**“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; ‘Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver — let him rescue the one in whom he delights!’** Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots. But you, O Lord, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion!” (*Psalm 22:1-21*).

Many people have noted, through the years, that perhaps Jesus chose to quote *Psalm 22* because it describes what he has been experiencing, and because in bearing the sins of the world, it was the first time he ever felt separation from God. That is a possible explanation. I think it's also possible that there is an additional reason, which can be missed. While *Psalm 22* begins with an expression of lament, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**, from verse 21 through the end, at verse 31, it's an affirmation of hope, praise, and deliverance.

***Psalm 22:24, 27-31***, “For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall

worship before him. For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations. **To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.** Posterity will serve him; **future generations will be told about the Lord,** and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.”

Jesus quoting the first words of *Psalms 22* doesn't represent a failure or a lack of faith. This is **obedience carried to the very end**, and even in his death, Jesus ends with a note of hope for those who have ears to hear. His last breath will not be the end of the story.

Where Abraham stopped, Jesus continues. Abraham lifted the knife — but God stopped him. Jesus goes all the way to death. The cross was not forced on Jesus; he was willing to accept it out of love, faithfulness, and obedience. Isaac lived **because a ram died**. We live **because Jesus died**. On Mount Moriah, a father learned that God would provide a lamb. On Golgotha, the world learned that **God had become the Lamb**.

One of the fascinating connections between the story of Abraham and Isaac and Jesus on Good Friday is **the location of the two events**. In the providence of God, *Genesis 22* says that Abraham was told to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (about 2000 BC). **2 Chronicles 3:1** says that about 1,000-1,050 years later (about 957 BC), **“Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had designated.”** This means that the mountain where Abraham nearly sacrificed Isaac, one thousand years later became the location of the **Temple Mount** in Jerusalem! For centuries, thousands of lambs were sacrificed on that mountain for the sins of the people.

About 1,000 years after Solomon began to build the Temple on Mount Moriah, Jesus was crucified at **Golgotha**, meaning “place of the skull.” **Jesus** died close to Mount Moriah, as the **final sacrifice**. The site was likely **just outside the city walls of Jerusalem**. Jerusalem is built on a ridge with several connected hills. Golgotha was likely on **the same mountain ridge system** that includes Mount Moriah. So, the crucifixion happened **very close to the place** where Abraham almost offered Isaac.

Even creation reacts to the death of Jesus; there is darkness, an earthquake, and the curtain of the temple is torn in two – from top to bottom to make it clear it was not torn by human hands but by God – because Jesus on the cross reveals God’s self-sacrificing love to the whole world. God’s presence is not confined to only one place in the Temple in Jerusalem that could be accessed by only one person.

All this takes place to point to the conclusion: **The obedient Son has completed the sacrifice. John the Baptist** had described Jesus in the first chapter of the **Gospel of John (John 1:29)**, **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”** This refers to Jesus as the divine sacrifice sent by God, connecting to the Paschal lamb of Passover and *Isaiah 53*'s prophecy of a Suffering Servant, who is like a lamb led to the slaughter.

During **Passover**, lambs were sacrificed at the Temple. The **Gospel of John** notes that Jesus died **around the same time the Passover lambs were being slaughtered**. So, while priests were sacrificing lambs at the Temple on Mount Moriah, the **true Lamb of God** was dying just outside the city. The story that began with **Abraham** raising a knife, ended with **Jesus** stretched out on a cross. The mountain of sacrifice and obedience became the **mountain of salvation**.

In February, Nate said, the point is, *“Do you trust the God who provides?”* That’s also the question for us, on Good Friday, *“Do you trust the God who provides?”* Do you trust the God who does what God would never require of any human parent? Will you trust the God who gave up a beloved, cherished Son for you and for every person?

At the end of Matthew’s story of the crucifixion, we have a final witness, a Roman soldier who says, **“Truly this man was God’s Son.”** The one who recognizes Jesus for who he truly is, surprisingly, is not a disciple, a priest, or an expert in the Hebrew scriptures. It’s a **Gentile centurion**, witnessing the power of obedient suffering and complete surrender. This is the climax of the story, and what Matthew hopes you will say after hearing or reading his account of the life of Jesus, including his death on the cross. **“Truly this man was God’s Son.”**