

for us to be; healed and whole. As we walk with God, listening to him, open to his promises, knowing his personality we discover ourselves, so that we can grow in living true to who we are no matter the circumstance.

In Jesus we are no longer determined by our circumstances. We don't have to continually prove ourselves, bouncing around like a pinball. In Jesus we grow mature, shaping life to Jesus' pattern, and not being moulded by our circumstances. In Jesus, whether our circumstances are good, bad or ugly we remain the same; and live from the trust Jesus has birthed in us. We live from the relationship Jesus has invited us into; and enjoy watching Jesus live true

to who he is, in every situation.

Today Jesus is seeking to prove your faith, as he invites you to walk with him, following him, growing in your relationship with him, because he can be trusted. Jesus has

sacrificed himself for us, that we might know Father's love. That we might have Spirit with us now; walking together into every situation of life. Today Jesus is inviting you to trust him; trust him with what is most precious; your family, your finances, your sexuality, yourself.

Jesus is saying; 'Trust me, let's walk and talk, that you might discover all I have dreamed possible for you.'

Today Jesus is inviting you to step out into life trusting him; for direction, for purpose, for value. Jesus is inviting you to experience the joy of discovering in life that he is totally trustworthy.

Let us pray.

Jesus we praise you for always living true to who you are. We praise you for being totally trustworthy, always keeping your promises. We invite you in to shape us to be healed and whole in you, that we can live true to who we are in you, in every circumstance of life.

Amen.



2 July 2017

WHO'S FAITH IS TESTED

Genesis 22:1-14

Today we encounter Abraham having to face maybe the greatest challenge of his life; God asks him to sacrifice his son!

What would be going through your mind if God asked you to kill someone you loved to prove your trust in him? I'd be wondering who this God character is. Why does he want me to prove myself to him? Have I missed something? What is God up to, it doesn't make sense? They'd be some of the thoughts running through my mind.

On reading this story I'm also a bit confused because I know that one of the things God says he hated about the people originally living in Canaan was that they had child sacrifice. Why is God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? I'm repulsed by

the idea. What is God up to?

We begin this story with this phrase: "Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith." (Gen. 22:1)

When you heard that phrase what was the first thought that came to your mind? The first thought I got was that of having to pass an exam. Where is the focus if this is an exam I have to pass? It's on me!

Have you noticed that when talking about faith people inevitably focus on the person who is meant to have faith? Then it is a question of the quality of their faith? Do I have enough faith? Is my faith genuine? I've noticed that the first thought of most people when talking about faith is that they focus on 'their' faith. They focus on themselves,

their ability to accept, giving their ascent to what they hear; like if they agree with it then it is Ok, but if they don't agree with it, then it isn't important.

When you hear the word 'faith' what is the first thing that comes to your mind? If it is yourself, or in this instance, Abraham, maybe we're looking in the wrong direction.

You might be surprised, but it isn't the quality or quantity of your faith that counts. I've run across plenty of people with amazing faith, it shaped their life; they'd only buy a Holden, they wouldn't talk to certain people, they gave their lives to being successful. I've encountered many people with amazing faith; but they'd put their trust in the wrong thing.



Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553

Jesus' disciples multiplying disciples

I can be completely committed to believing that the world is flat. I could commit my life to the cause. I could spend all my time and effort in trying to convince other people, the world is flat. I could be 100% committed to believing the world is flat. Would that make the world flat? If I asked you to sacrifice your son to prove your belief that the world is flat, would that make the world flat?

Of course not.

I've always understood this story as Abraham proving himself to God. My focus was on Abraham and what he did. Abraham has to prove himself to God.

If that is the story what does that say about you and God; for Abraham is an example of faith. Does this mean God is testing you, having you prove to him how committed you are?

And what is the inference if you fail the test? You fail. You're a failure!

You fail, means you're not good enough for God. You failed the test, you don't pass. You're not good enough; you didn't kill your son to prove yourself.

This doesn't sound like God to me. This definitely doesn't sound like Jesus to me.

It isn't the quality or quantity of your faith that counts.

trust God with your son, he will always keep his promises, for he is totally trustworthy.

The focus of this story is God, not Abraham. Which for me is Good News, because Abraham is you and me. God walks with Abraham growing his trust in him, maturing his trust in him, for God does come through. God does provide. He can be trusted to keep his word.

Notice that the emphasis is that God can be trusted to keep his word, not that I've proved myself to be worthy of God's love. Abraham isn't our father of faith because he was so perfect, but because God always came through keeping his promise. So we too can trust this God, knowing he will come through keeping his promises.

God proves himself again to be trustworthy. God has grown Abraham's trust in him

by coming through for Abraham once again.

The devil will get you to believe you have to prove yourself. I always remember when I was a boy there was a man at church who had lost his hand. My father shared with me how this man had taken an ax, and to prove his faith in God, slammed it down on his hand. What did that prove?

God proves himself by dying on the cross, so that we can know without a shadow of doubt

that he can be trusted. Jesus is 100% committed to us, not because we are so faithful, but because he is. It's his nature. It's who he is. Jesus lives true to himself, so he can't lie, he can't not keep a promise. That would run counter to his very nature. Jesus always lives true to himself; you can risk your life, trusting him, he'll always remain true to himself.

Abraham learnt this wonderful reality about God as he walked with

him through this testing time.

Abraham didn't prove himself, God proved himself to Abraham. God grew their relationship to a deeper level of trust. Abraham has experienced firsthand the trustworthy nature of God.

God proved himself to Abraham.

But this story also reminds me that Abraham didn't learn this lesson by remaining detached from God. Abraham didn't have God as a nice theory; all nicely bound up and placed on his book shelf.

Abraham is part of a living, vibrant, relationship of trust. He hears God. He responds to God. They are walking through life together in this bond of trust. Abraham grows in knowing this God who has called him;

grows in knowing his personality.

And as Abraham grows in this relationship of trust with God, he also grows as a person. God grows Abraham so that he too might live true to who he is no matter the circumstances of life.

That's what Paul expresses in the reading from Romans; "But now that you've found you don't have to listen to sin tell you what to do, and have discovered the delight of listening to God

telling you, what a surprise! A whole, healed, put-together life right now, with more and more of life on the way! Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death. But God's gift is *real life*, eternal life, delivered by Jesus, our Master." (Rom 5:22,23 Message Para.)

As we walk with God, listening to him, open to his promises, knowing his personality we grow to be more and more the person Jesus has given his life