

Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 16th July 2023 10 am

If God tested your faith what would he find?

Love - Older message on this passage – Monyhull Sunday 21st February 2016

Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture and prayer

Hymn MP 645 The God of Abraham Praise (3:24)

Scripture Psalm 90 (page 599)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk Sin shirt

Chorus MP 304 I want to worship the Lord

Notices Selly Park, Clean building, door, Ukrainian family, Joyce

Prayer and share time

Reading Genesis 22:1-19 (Page 22)

Hymn MP 476 My Lord what love is this

Sermon "When God tests your faith what does he find?"

Hymn on screen O great God

Closing Prayer

Prayer and Exordium

■ I,, take you, to be my wife (or husband), to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and to obey till death us do part, according to God's holy law; and this is my solemn vow.

■ And then after the ring is put on the finger are the words: I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage. With my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you, within the love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

✚ To love is to be willing to give everything, you can't partly love someone!

If you are married it is likely that you said these words or something similar. They encapsulate well what love is, not feelings, but a 100% commitment to that person, - come what may – till death do us part.

Sadly many marriages fail because they are entered in to with only a partial commitment. There is a commitment elsewhere. I just don't mean another man or woman, no more like a man who gets married but uses his time as if he is still single. Or there is a wrong and conflicting commitment to my parents that leaves me torn. Or the property and possessions are not shared, there's a pre-nuptial agreement to plan ahead should they split=make a break-up more likely

Yes there could always be 'that other woman' as Lady Diana voiced. Or the woman holding alive that 'old flame' that still burns in her heart.

✚ Love – if it *is* love – must be total.

No-one can serve two masters Jesus said: **Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.** Mt 6:24, Lu 16:13

So it is with us and the Lord. you cannot 'partly love God'. God made you and I to love Him as he said in that unambiguously command:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Mr 12:30, Deut. 6:4,5 & Lu 10:27 note: all x4

✚ Commitment is nowadays frowned upon, and who doesn't feel the spirit of it. Sadly many Christians are affected by it. If the Lord looked at my faith and the level of my love for Him, what would he find?

That is the title of the sermon: "When God tests your faith what does he find?" x2

Paul speaking about this to the Christians at Corinth said: **I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.** 2Co 11:2

Jesus explained this in characteristically dramatic terms: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. Lu 14:26

We get the point – if we should love those mentioned – *how much more* should we love God - our glorious maker and gracious redeemer.

The call to Christ is a high call, the highest. It is to forsake all else, as someone who is to take those marriage vows. **In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.** Lu 14:33

■ That is why many are not found in a place of worship this morning. That is why many who have been – are here no longer. They won't give up everything for Him. It is too much for them.

Abraham is the example - for all believers

And here he is tested. **1 Some time later God tested Abraham.** Here is the first use of the word test. **Abraham** the man of faith, is **tested**. So it says in Hebrews 11 **God tested him.** What will the Lord find? Will Abraham be willing to **give up everything he has?** Lu 14:33

God had put his finger on Abraham and called him. – So in Christ he does to you and I – Abraham obeyed that voice, left all and followed. 'Come follow me'

Abraham was taught to trust His new Lord, to leave, to follow and then believe in his old age the promise "you will have a Son". And the promised son came.

And now the test, **2 God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."** i.e. how much do you trust me?

Abraham may well have had a sharp intake of breath, he would need it to help his brain process the explosive contradictions.

1. For years had God had promised a son to fulfil His promises of blessing to the world. And now finally Isaac had come. Sacrifice him? Kill him?
2. What would he say to Sarah! Can you imagine going back indoors and say: "I have just killed our son!" WHY,,, x3 "God told me too"
3. Am I not to love my son and even as every godly Dad knows be willing to sacrifice myself for him - not sacrifice him.
4. And what is more all around the pagan nations practiced the sacrificing of their children, - which to God was an abomination. **Ahaz even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.** 2Ki 16:3 & 2Ch 28:3

Lord I know how much you hate it – do you really want me to do that? x2

2a

But Abraham had heard God clearly.

3 Early the next morning Abraham x2 ... got up and saddled his donkey.

Abraham responded immediately, why? Because he loved God x2. He loved God more than his wife, He loved God more than his son, He loved God more than his own life.

✚ He did not understand it. Who could?

But he knew the Lord who had said the words, he knew He who had given the command. And he trusted Him. Abraham knew the fundamental truth that obedience to the Lord is always right, it *is* always right - and that giving all will never leave you without – no never, not in God's economy.

What was going on in Abraham mind? We have it recorded in Hebrews 11. **By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.** Heb 11:17-19 Martha did you hear that? As you grieved over your brother Lazarus, Jesus is the resurrection not just later but now!

Let us follow what happened:

The passage 1-19 is in three sections. The test is given v1-2, Abraham's action 3-10, and then the Lord's action 11-18, v19

Abraham steps out in faith, he is strong in the Lord, not in himself, the fleshly response and offended pride has been put to death.

Now it would be easy to read into what was going on with Abraham and that he dragged himself to do it. No with the Lord there is power to do what he tells you to do – and to do it willingly. Do it and you will see.

See there is no hesitancy as he sets out, in fact he said to his servants: **We will worship – and then we will come back to you.**

Abraham does not lie to his son when Isaac asks him about the animal for the sacrifice: **"God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."**

The altar is prepared, and his son bound. **10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.** He was about to kill him. Yes really he was about to do it.

✚ But he is stopped – do you picture an angel suddenly jumping in front of him shouting "STOP" ?

2b

11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, The angel is in heaven – Angels continually watch over the Lord’s people **"Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.**

12 **"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him."**

Why did he need to be told twice? Was Abraham thinking ‘God has spoken’ so why should I stop? Paul said **“even if an angel from heaven should speak”** Gal 1

But this Angel is not an angel but ‘the’ Angel and as we see in verse 15 **The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD.”**

Here is Jesus speaking, Jesus, the image of the invisible God and he - the pre-incarnate Jesus - appears many times in the OT, it is the theophany, God appearing.

✚ **So that is what happened – Abraham withheld nothing – and it’s only when you are tested to the uttermost that true character is shown – as Jesus’ trials**

In all the nations around where there was **no fear of God** Ge 20:11 Here now was someone different: 12b **Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.** No wonder God chose him to build a people after his own heart who would love & fear Him! Are you one of them?

Did you notice the phrase **‘Your only son’** the 1st time in OT. It is mentioned three times: at the beginning v2 **Then God said, "Take your son, your only son.**

The again in v12 **you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."** And again v15 **you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,**

Yes that is right this is the **only son** - no mention of Ishmael here.

✚ **Is this not what God did – He who took the best he had, the One He loved, and then give him up x2**

The **one who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all** Ro 8:32. God did not save his son from harm’s way - but put him in harm’s way.

The word **Love** occurs 687 times in the bible. It is first used here in Gen 22 (0157 אהב ‘ahab or ‘aheb) v2 where **God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and ... Sacrifice him.**

How about the first occurrence in the NT? Mt 3:17 **“And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”** And in other synoptics? Mk 1:11, Luke 3:22 **This is my son, / you are my son, whom I love** and in John’s gospel? = 3:16 **for God so loved ...gave ...one and only**

3a

With the first occurrences of a word we can often learn something important

Take - You son, - your only son - whom you love – go – sacrifice him.

Yes and on Mount Moriah, which was later to be the Temple mount in Jerusalem. What a clear picture of that Son who was a descendant of Abraham would - a seed - the seed, who one day later was to be given up for the sins of many.

But not yet, x2 - in the meantime there would be animal sacrifice 13 **Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son.**

This regular sacrifice was a constant reminder of the seriousness of sin, and a constant reminder of the need for a substitute whose blood was to be shed to pay for that forgiveness of sin.

14 **So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”**

And here a reminder that it is God who will bring the sacrifice....

✚ **Indeed the day would come when God would be the sacrifice!**

Will you think again about the dreadfulness of sin – that darkness that pervades the human heart, the desires and passions that lead you and I on the path to hell just as surely as the rain falls from the sky.

What an affront every sin is to a Holy God who made you and I for holiness and requires and commands that we sincerely turn from that sinful godless life.

The only remedy was the drastic giving over of Jesus the Holy and Righteous One, God the Son left the glories of heaven to be spat upon and hit and mocked and hated.

God the father sent him, and He like Isaac came willingly **led like a lamb to the slaughter.** What amazing love:

■ **Have we not just sung: My Lord, what love is this that pays so dearly, that I, the guilty one, May go free! Truly the *chorus line echoes our thoughts:* Amazing love, O what sacrifice, The Son of God given for me, My debt he pays, and my death he dies.**

The cruel cross at Calvary is the Lord’s provision for you. Only here can your lostness and fallen state be remedied. **Salvation is off the Lord who took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, ... the One pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.** Is 53:4-5

3b

Do not ignore it. x2 - If you do, one day – on the day you die and come before Him – you will have to give account for it!

And if you are saved then consider the wonderful blessing of being in Jesus

If you are saved you too like Abraham are chosen of the Lord. God has set his love upon you, he has given you grace, the gift of righteousness, something you have freely received by faith. You did not do it, the Lord provided – and you received the righteousness that comes through faith.

The righteous will live by faith

Did you notice it was through Abraham's 18 **offspring - all nations on earth will be blessed...** His seed was the one who redeemed him. It is Abraham's offspring who saves Abraham. IOW The church gave birth to its own saviour!!

So how should you now live?

Here Abraham shows us how to live by faith, Abraham loved God, fully, 100%, he gave his all. Two other words that also appear here for the first time show us what this love is. The word is worship **We will worship and then we will come back to you.** v5

This bringing of the sacrifice is worship. Christ has brought the sacrifice – we don't and can't what do that, our sacrifice is **a sacrifice of praise**. Is your heart full of praise? Do we hear it from your lips – does He hear it from your lips?

And worship and love is wrapped up with the last word '**obey**'

v18 **because you have obeyed me.**" x2

✚ **They go together: to love is to obey**

Jesus said: "**If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.** Joh 14:23, 15

And **He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.** Joh 14:24 And that is obvious to see - many show no love for God in their disregard for his word.

✚ **IOW Your love for the Lord - is seen in your obedience to the Lord.**

He has said we should forgive each other – do you forgive? He said you should trust him for everything, do you do that? He has promised to provide and be to you all you need, do you take him at his word? He has said you should give yourself fully to the work of the lord, do you do that?

John reminds us: **This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,** 1Jo 5:3

✚ **To love is to obey and that is our worship** x2

Some who profess to have been saved by the Lord, can hardly make an hour on Sunday morning never give themselves to sacrifice time, money, energy in His service. To think giving an hour on Sunday is loving God ... is delusional.

■ Remember the illustration of the WWI soldier saved from the bullets by a comrade who took them in his place and died as a result. Remember How this man was tracked down and discovered to be most indifferent, ungrateful and living as a delinquent.

✚ **Has not the Lord given his all for you – will you now give your all for Him?**

Mary, Martha's sister knew it - and showed it. She took an alabaster jar of expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus's feet, wiping his feet with her hair. *It was worth a year's wages, how much is that for you?*

Abraham was tested and was willing to give his all.

How about you? Testing comes in all sorts of ways, His Spirit prompts you to miss a meal, to not have that second helping, to ring someone, to help someone, not to watch that programme again, stop and give time to pray. These are all tests, and the essence of them is "does Jesus have His way, will you give up to His way, or will you resist and have your way?"

✚ **God the Father has shown us what love is. The one He cherished the most - he then gave. The only Son, the Holy One of God. The one with whom he had been bound in selfless love from eternity past - he gave.**

And did not Jesus show love for the father as he gave everything, energy, strength, time, his heart, His life over to love and serve his God and father.

If you are saved then he took hold of you, broke you, cleansed you, remade you, put his Spirit inside you that Jesus Christ might live out His life in you.

I believe Christ in you desires more that his is now getting. A desire to love His people and be with them, A desire to love God's word and live by it, a love for the gospel and actively seek ways of speaking it to others.

What Jesus said to Peter when tested - he says to you and –**I do you love me?** x2

Before we became a Christian we were, like everyone else takers. We wanted everything to come our way, the best for me. But now as Christians we are no longer takers but givers. Love gives all, God gives all, let us also give all.

When tested let us hold nothing back for in this we become complete, - for not to love fully - is to remain less than fully human.

■ **Let us love him as we should. - to love, cherish, and to obey till death us do part, no until death do us join Him in perfection!** _END