

# Sermon for The Second Sunday in Advent

**Date:** December 6, 2020

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Genesis 22:1–18

**Epistle Reading:** Hebrews 11:17–22

**Gospel Reading:** Mark 1:1–8



**Sermon Text:** Genesis 22:1–18

**Sermon Title:** Jesus, the Root of Jesse's Tree

**Introit:** Psalm 80:1, 8a, 9b, 7; antiphon: v. 3

## Hymns:

LSB 347 – Comfort, Comfort Ye My People

LSB 357 – O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

LSB 338 – Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

LSB 331 – The Advent of our King

## Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

## Songs:

Away in a Manger

What Child Is This

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

My Song is Love Unknown

## Liturgy:

Creative Worship



Pastor James Groleau  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
1200 13th Avenue NW  
Austin, MN 55912  
Office: (507) 433-2642  
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net  
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org  
Phone Streaming at: 518-906-1379  
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



## **Text: Genesis 22:1–18**

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.” So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you.” And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here am I, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here am I.” He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

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Grace, mercy and peace you to, in Jesus' name. Amen.

People are often fascinated by genealogies. There are a number of DNA testing companies, and they claim they can tell you the location of ancestry. Through other links in online sites you can even learn the names of the men and women who make up your family tree.

The story told by the Jesse Tree is the story of your family. It began in a garden called Eden, and it leads us to a descendant of Adam and Eve, a man by the name of Abraham. He was not the promised Seed of the woman, but he was chosen by God to be a link between Eden and Bethlehem. Abraham was not a special person worthy of this blessing. He, like all of us, was chosen only by the grace of God.

Today we look at an account told by the ram on the Jesse Tree. It reminds us how Abraham, the bearer of the promise of the Seed of the woman, was prepared to obediently do the impossible: kill Isaac, the son of promise and the next generation of the bearer of the promise of the Seed. Abraham knew something that changed everything. He knew that God could raise Isaac from the dead.<sup>1</sup> The Jesse Tree would grow because its very root is not Adam, Eve, Abraham, or Isaac. It is Jesus.

Modern genetics can tell you a lot about who your ancestors were. A few years ago, the remains of King, Richard III, from the 1400's, were discovered under a parking lot. How did archaeologists confirm the identity? By comparing the DNA in the bones to the DNA of a known descendant of Richard III's brother. Hidden to the eye is the link that extends from generation to generation. Hidden, but there.

In the Garden of Eden as man and woman fell into sin, their Creator had immediately promised that One who was the "Seed" of the woman would defeat the serpent.<sup>2</sup> Through the generations God had preserved the human race, and the world was populated. Generations later, a man by the name of Abraham was called by God from idolatry to a relationship with Him.<sup>3</sup> Then God made a promise to Abraham and his wife Sarah. They would have a son.

The challenging part of God's promise was they were long past the age for having children. Though married for years, Sarah had never conceived a child. The

1 **Hebrews 11:19** – He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

2 **Genesis 3:15** – I will make you and the woman hostile toward each other. I will make your descendants and her Descendant hostile toward each other. He will crush your head, and you will bruise his heel." (*God's Word Translation*)

3 **Joshua 24:2-3** – And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods. Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River [*Euphrates*] and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many. I gave him Isaac.

very idea of having a son at their age would be... well, impossible. Impossible, except for one thing. It was not man but God who made the promise, and with Him, nothing is impossible.<sup>4</sup>

This promised son was to be named Isaac, but more important than his name was his role in God's redemption of all humanity. Isaac was to be the bearer of a seed and the father of nations.<sup>5</sup> From Isaac would come Jacob. From Jacob would come Judah. From Judah would come Jesse. From Jesse would come David. From David would come Mary. Then, miracle of miracles, from Mary, the virgin mother would come the Jesus the Christ, the Seed promised to Adam and Eve at the fall. Impossible? Nothing is impossible with with God.<sup>6</sup>

It is hard to imagine what Abraham must have felt as he heard the promise of from God, who gave him Isaac. The joy he and Sarah must have had when their son Isaac was born! Like any parents, they invested much of themselves in this son of promise as he grew. This promised son was the center of their world.

One wonders what would have gone through Abraham's mind and heart as he later heard the same Lord say:

Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.<sup>7</sup>

In an amazing act of obedience, Abraham prepared to fulfill this demand. He prepared the wood, the fire, and the knife. There was his son, Isaac, the son of promise, bound on the altar and wood. In Abraham's hand was the knife...

The God said:

Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.<sup>8</sup>

Imagine that. The future, embodied in Isaac, was on an altar about to be sacrificed. The future now appeared dark and horrifying. Except for one thing. Abraham

4 **Luke 1:37** – For nothing will be impossible with God.

5 **Genesis 17:19** – God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

6 **Luke 1:37** – For nothing will be impossible with God.

7 **Genesis 22:2** – He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

8 **Genesis 22:12** – He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.<sup>9</sup>

Abraham could not see the future, but he trusted the Lord, who held the future, and knew that with God, all things were possible.

God's promises will never fail. Abraham knew that. So should we. Just look at what happens through this son of promise, Isaac. He lives, and though he fails and fails over and over again, he still fulfills God's purpose. The generations of Isaac's descendants continue through the centuries. The promised Seed remains in the line God had chosen to bear a Savior, not just for that family, but for all the children of Adam. Abraham rejoiced when his son was born. He rejoiced when his son was spared, and he rejoiced at the promise of a Son yet to come.

We rejoice in that same promised Seed, whom we call Jesus. He is the Seed promised to Adam and Eve. He is the Seed promised to Abraham. He is the Root from which Jesse's tree grows. He is the One who reconciles our past with God's plan for our future. He is the redeemer of the present, and the hope of things to come.

In Isaac was a Seed, and we know that Seed in human form in the virgin-born Son of God. There is the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.<sup>10</sup> When Isaac was spared from Abraham's knife the Lord provided a sacrifice in Isaac's place. It was a ram with its head caught in the thorny branches of a thicket. So He provides a substitute for you and for me and for all humanity, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God whose head was caught in the thorny branches of a thicket.

He alone is the one time perfect sacrifice for all sin, for all time, for all people. One death in place of our deaths. One tomb in place of our tombs. One resurrection by which we too, shall be raised on the Last Day.<sup>11</sup> That comes to us though "one Baptism for the remission of sins."<sup>12</sup> One Supper where He brings eternal life.<sup>13</sup>

9 **Hebrews 11:19** – He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

10 **John 1:29** – The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

11 **John 6:40** – For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

12 The Nicene Creed

13 **John 6:54-58** – [*Jesus said*], "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."

All of this with forgiveness, peace, hope, joy, and certainty proclaimed in God's Holy and Sacred Word.<sup>14</sup>

Amen.

**P**roclaim God's Word,  
**E**ncourage one another in faith,  
**W**itness to God's love and  
**S**erve all people



14 The three Means of Grace: Holy Scripture, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion – Luther's Small Catechism