

All that Abraham has lost

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Some thoughts on preaching the binding of Isaac:

- This is a story about a father and son, but it's also a story about the whole people of Israel. Abraham is asked to sacrifice the son who is supposed to be the first of a great multitude of descendants God has promised.
- It's worth pointing out how much Abraham has lost already as he follows God: his homeland, his livestock (to his nephew Lot), the nicest plot of land (Lot again), his son Ishmael and his concubine Hagar. Also, he's been circumcised.
- God's testing of Abraham comes after a long relationship of journeys, conflict, loss, and violence. This episode seems to be the apex of the story of God's relationship with Abraham. After God spares Isaac, the time of Abraham starts to come to an end: Sarah dies, Isaac marries Rebekah. It's briefly mentioned that Abraham has additional children with a new wife, but he dies soon after.
- Being in close relationship with God seems to lead to sacrifice and hardship. As Teresa of Avila said, "If this is how you treat your friends, it's no wonder that you have so few!"
- Three times Abraham declares, "Here I am": twice to God and once to his son.
- What does it mean to offer to God what is most precious to us? God does not ask parents to sacrifice children, but God does ask for our best gifts and work.