
The Story of Isaac - A Special Sermon for Children

A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler
Atlanta, Georgia
The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 22:1-14

I want to tell you the story of Isaac this morning. It is a scary story. Have you heard scary stories before? I have heard them. I don't like them.

Isaac lived with his parents, Abraham and Sarah, a long time ago.

One of the things that Isaac looked forward to every year was climbing mountains with his father. He loved camping out. He loved making the fire and cooking the food. Around the campfire, Isaac would listen to his father's stories. His father told him amazing stories.

Together, they would gaze at the beautiful stars in the dark sky above them. His father said, "Isaac, those stars are like all the love I have for you. I love you like the brightness of all those stars. Each one of those stars says, 'I love you.' Those stars bind us together."

Isaac heard his father say the same thing about the grains of sand on the seashore. When they were at a big ocean, or in the middle of a dry desert, his father would say, "Isaac, I love you like all the grains of sand on the seashore. Each one of these grains of sand says, 'I love you.' That sand binds us together."

Isaac wondered where his father had heard all these stories, and he asked him, "Father, where did you hear all these stories?" His father would say, "Child, I heard them from my father before me."

Isaac and his father had beautiful times together. They were bound together, Isaac and his father. They were bound together.

But one day was different.

One day, Abraham woke up his son very early. "Come on, son, we have something very strong to do today." Isaac got up very early. He thought he knew where they were going. They were going on a three day camp out. They were going up the mountain for a special blessing.

Isaac was carrying wood, and he was even carrying fire. But he could tell his father was upset that day.

"Father," he asked, "Why are you upset?"

But his father was scared, and his father did not say a thing. When Isaac saw his father upset, then Isaac became upset, too.

Have you ever seen your parents upset? It is a scary thing to see your father upset, or to see your mother upset.

"Why are you upset?" asked Isaac. Finally, his father, Abraham, said, "Child, we are bound together. We are bound together."

Then, Isaac noticed something. He noticed that something was missing. Usually, when his father and he would climb the mountain, they would take along a special lamb. That lamb would be their blessing; they would say prayers to God, and that lamb would be their food.

"Father," said Isaac, "we have the fire, and we have the wood, and we have the knife, just like we always do. But where is the lamb?"

And his father said something that young Isaac had never heard him say. Abraham said, "I do not know, son; God will provide." Isaac had heard his father say, "God will provide," but he had never heard his father say, "I don't know."

He thought his father knew everything. He trusted his father to know everything. He trusted his Mother to know everything. He liked the way his father and mother laughed when they talked about God and how God had provided for them.

But today, his parents were not laughing. Abraham and Sarah were not laughing.

"Something is wrong," thought Isaac, but he did not know what it was.

Isaac did not know what was really troubling his father. It turns out that his father, Abraham was not just scared. His father, Abraham was terrified.

Abraham thought he had heard something that did not make sense. Abraham had heard a voice say that he would lose his son. And Abraham did not like that voice. It was the voice of something dark and terrible. It was the voice of something that did not work anymore. Abraham knew it did not work.

Abraham could not believe that he would lose his son. Abraham would not believe that he would lose his son! Because Abraham knew that he and his son were bound together. If his son died, he would die.

Still, out on the lonely mountain, Abraham had to test the voice, to see if that voice was telling the truth. And Abraham had to let Isaac see the truth, too. Because he and Isaac were being bound together.

They kept walking, to the top of the mountain.

Isaac knew something was wrong. Abraham knew something was wrong. What was wrong?

What was wrong was that Yahweh had not spoken. Do you know who Yahweh is? Yahweh is the great mysterious name for the LORD himself. Abraham had heard lots of voices before. Usually, he could tell what was the voice of the LORD and what was not. But today was scary, because he could not tell what was the voice of the LORD.

Then, they finally got to the top of the mountain. They had climbed it together. They were tired, and they were both scared. What was going to happen? Isaac wondered if something would happen to him. Abraham knew that what happened to his son would happen to him, too. So he bound Isaac. They were bound together.

Then, suddenly, they heard a sound! They looked to the side. There it was. It was a lamb, already there, already there, at the top of the mountain, waiting for them. It was the kind of lamb they had often eaten together; and when they saw it, everything changed.

Suddenly, Abraham was not scared anymore. And when Isaac saw his Father not being scared, then he was not scared either. "God will provide," said his father, Abraham.

Isaac saw his father start to cry, and then the old man started to laugh, too. He took Isaac up in his arms, and he said, "Son, son, it has been a scary day. I thought I heard a voice say you were lost. But, no, you are back now! You are found! I thought you were bound, and now you're set free!"

"I thought I heard a voice say that I must do it myself, that I must provide," said Abraham. "But no, the true LORD has provided. Yahweh has provided, a child who can climb mountains with me and gaze at the stars with me and sift the sand through his hands with me."

"You are my son, my beloved," Abraham said to Isaac. "We are bound together." And when Isaac heard that, he too was thrilled. "My father loves me," he cried out, "and he will never do anything to hurt me."

That day was the best day of Isaac's life. That was a day of new life. It had been scary. It had been scary because he and his father did not know for a while. But then they had heard the voice of Yahweh together. "The LORD will provide," said the voice, and new life appeared..

Isaac remembered those words the rest of his life: "God will provide." "You are my son, my beloved." "We are bound together." "The LORD will provide."

AMEN.

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