

Sermon Notes

Trinity United Methodist Church

August 21, 2005

“A Mountain Higher than Everest” Dr. Dan Johnson, preaching Genesis 22:1-3

A. Genesis 17:9-12a - The Covenant between God and God's people requires a symbol; in the OT it is circumcision; in the NT it is baptism. These are the elements involved in Christian Baptism

1. It is an act of supreme Grace - God's covenant extension to the child (person).
2. It is a reminder that children are a gift from God. They “belong” to parents only temporarily.
3. It reminds parents early on that they are called to assume the “obligations of transmission” of the faith.
4. It calls parents to remember that they belong to a long line of descendants beginning with Abraham to Jesus and now to their child.
5. It is a call to parents to live and teach a way of life that honors God.
6. It reminds parents that bearing the child is only the beginning, rearing the child well is the real calling upon them.
7. It is a reminder that the deeds of the parents (good and ill) are visited upon their children for many generations.
8. It reminds parents that they and their child are stepping into the mighty river of God's grace and covenant and in the act of baptism they are participating in the continuation of that river.

B. Genesis 18:1-5 - The Three Visitors (this story adjacent to the covenant ratification)

Abraham and Sarah become models with enormous relevance to today, for they are persons who are (A) deeply, deeply, deeply committed to the covenant relationship with God and all that it means and (B) acting graciously, with hospitality and kindness to others who are very different than they are. In our days we have two extremes: Fundamentalism that is A but not B, and New Age that is B not A.

C. Genesis 22:1-19 - The Binding of Isaac

It is a test - the reader is told this, but Abraham is not.

This text speaks about God's faith in Abraham as much as it does of Abraham's faith in God.

This text affirms life and children and puts to an end forever in Israel any even remote possibility of child sacrifice which was common in surrounding countries in those days.

All Scripture is given for our instruction and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16):

God wants our dedication and reverence, not sacrifice.

Reverence for God leads us to see our loved ones as the true gift of God they really are.

God is faithful.

We are called to give (dedicate) our loved ones to God and in so doing they become even more precious.

“Truth be told all of us devote our children to some ‘god’ or other - To Mammon or Molech, to honor or money, pleasure or power, or worse, to no god at all. True, we do so less visibly and less concentrated but we do so willingly, through the things we teach and respect in our own homes.” Kass, 349