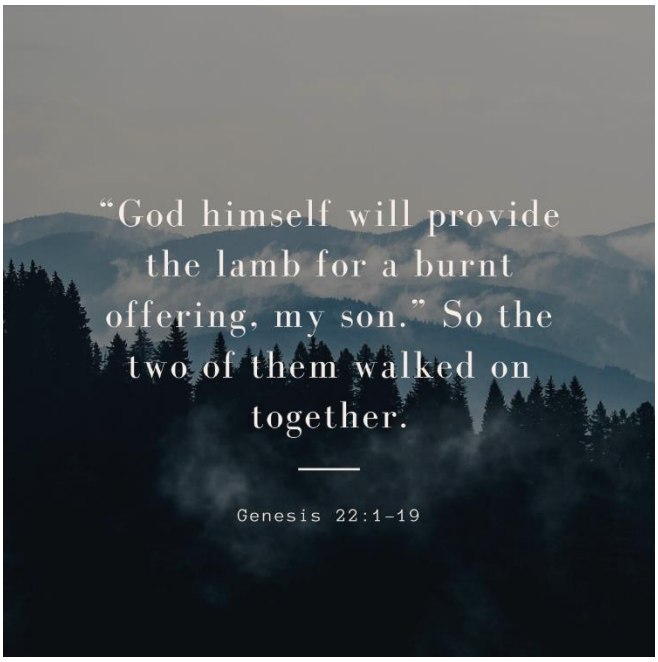
March 2, 2021 Lenten Devotional
Genesis 22:1-19 - "The rescue of Isaac from sacrifice"
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After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.' So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt-offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. Then Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you.' Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'Father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' Abraham said, 'God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.' So the two of them walked on together.

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

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.' So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba. Genesis 22:1-19

Reflection:
It seems as if the pandemic is the only thing we can talk about these days.

There is power in the universal experiences and emotions that the pandemic brings though. Moments of grief, relief, and anxiety that brings us a little closer together, that binds us a little tighter. It is hard, but we hear stories of families becoming closer and friendships getting stronger.

I cannot say I have ever made a burnt offering before, but I have made personal sacrifices before. We have all made sacrifices this year, willingly or unwillingly. We have faced the pain in giving something up. I have a hard time understanding the position that Abraham is in in the story. I cannot truly understand what he was feeling when he was asked by God to sacrifice his only son, but I have been asked and charged by community leaders and public health experts to sacrifice what I know as daily life and what is normal. We all have.

In this moment of global loss, grief, and sacrifice. I think we can take away two things from this story:

1. The Sacredness of Relationships
2. The Need for Unwavering Trust in God

Our reliance on each other is greater than ever, our relationships are what keeps most of us going. We are gifted to each to each other as purpose and pride, much like Isaac was gifted to Abraham. Isaac meant the world to Abraham; he was all Abraham wanted and God gifted that relationship to him. Much like he gives you and I each other. We need to keep those who we love close. We need to recognize the gift of love, but also understand what we have been sacrificing in the name of love for our neighbors this year and the importance in that. The power in that.

The relationship between Isaac and Abraham is sacred, but so is the relationship between God and Abraham. Abraham followed God's instructions and was prepared to sacrifice his only son to God. Abraham trusted that it must be the right thing to do if it was being asked of him. Our own trust and faithfulness should be given to God too. This time is uncertain and the loss of everyday can feel like too much, but in that we must put our trust in God in order to move forward. We need to trust him and the faithful leaders he places in our lives and we need to trust their judgement too.

Prayer:
Hey God, in a time where we feel overwhelmed by the world around us and the sacrifices being made everyday by loved ones, healthcare professionals, front line workers, and in the form of a life of a loved one, please give us the space to trust those who lead us and trust in you. Thank you for all of those whom we hold close that give us purpose and happiness. Please continue to support us and provide us in a time where we feel tested and tired. In your name we pray, AMEN.