

Good Friday  
St. John 19:16-42

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Up to the top of the mountain the pair trudged. Fire in hand, the father leads the son. On the son's back, a bundle of wood. "Father, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering," the father replies.

The father must have had a frog in his throat as he said that. The son might just be getting an idea of what is going on. Nevertheless, onward and upward they go. Along the way, there is no lamb. What was the father thinking, then? What images were going through the son's mind the whole way up?

They get to the place. The father builds an altar and puts the wood in place. Then, the heartbreak really begins for the pair: the father binds the son. A coil of rope keeps the boy's hands together; a coil of rope his feet. He's not going anywhere but on the altar. The father must have been fighting back tears. The son's screams must have been hard—nay, impossible—to ignore. But this is the Word of the Lord.

The father unsheathes the ceremonial knife. The son is pleading for his life. A deep breath, and the knife goes up. The son screams again. The father was just about to strike the killing blow when a voice calls out to him—the Angel of the Lord: "Abraham! Abraham! Do not lay a hand on the lad, 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."

Tears of sorrow and screams of fear and mercy are turned in the wails of joy and relief.

Then, in the thicket behind him was a ram. The father binds the ram, takes the knife, slaughters it, and offers it as the burnt offering instead of his son. (cf. Genesis 22:6:13)

Note this, dear hearers, and note it well: this was no lamb, but the sacrifice saved the boy's life that day. The lamb would come—lambs upon lambs would come. But none of them would be THE lamb provided by God. That Lamb would come.

Out of the city and up the hill they trudge. Hammer and nails in hand, the soldiers lead the Son. The Son carries a wooden beam, for a time, then another is forced to carry it for Him. The Son says nothing about this; He willingly goes to the hill. The Father sends Him there.

Like Abraham, we might well imagine that the Father had a lump in His throat. The Father sends the Son to die, and the Son knows it, too. Recall that the Son wept for a time about this, as He was sorrowful to the point of death, even prayed that this burden be removed from Him if at all possible. (cf. Mark 14:34, 36) There He is, though, drinking from the cup, bearing His cross, looking forward to His death.

They get to the place. The soldiers build the altar, and the wood is put in place. The Son and two others are bound; rope binds them to their crosses. These men are not going anywhere, not that the Son would go anywhere. He's on the altar upon which He will shed His blood as the propitiation for the world. The other two men scream for fear of what is about to happen. The men's screams are impossible to

ignore, but to the crowd, the three are getting what they deserved—most of the crowd. Women weep, the Son's mother weeps, His friends weep, perhaps even the scattered ones. "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me." (Luke 23:28)

The soldiers remove their hammers and nails from their satchels. The pounding begins. In agony, the men wail as skin is pierced and blood is poured forth. Hands and feet and nails are joined to crosses, and the crosses are lifted up for all to see.

On a mountain, God provided a ram to sacrifice in place of Isaac. God demanded the sacrifice of Abraham's son, but stayed the execution. God demands the deaths of all for their sins—divine justice—but sends His own Son in their place. His blood is shed for the remission of sins. There, on a hill called Skull, God did not stay the hands of the soldiers for His own Son as He stayed the hand of Abraham centuries earlier because He sent His Son to die for you.

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," the Son cried out. Abraham would rather not have seen the sacrifice of his own son, though he did rejoice to see this day. (cf. John 8:56) Here, the Father turns away, not because of His agony over the death of His Son, but because the Son now bears the sin of the world. God takes upon His own flesh all of the uncleanness and becomes the most vile sinner the world has ever known (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21); the Father turns away in disgust at His own Son, but in joy over you, because you no longer bear the weight of your own sin.

"It is finished," the Son cried out. And He died. Behold the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world. (cf. John 1:29)

The legs of the other two were ordered to be broken so that their deaths would be hastened. Not the Man in the middle, though; He is already dead. To prove it, a soldier pierces Him with a spear, whereupon blood and water poured out.

His blood is poured upon you as He is combined with water in Holy Baptism—the Son of God, the very Word of God, water, and blood: the sign and means of your redemption and salvation. To you, the Son's death is applied. You are given faith—a faith which trusts in the Son as your propitiation. God has provided for you His Lamb—the Son of God is your sin offering, and it is pleasing to the Father. In Him, you are the righteousness of God; you are forgiven for all of your sins.

It is finished, and the Son is dead. But, the Son lives again. Abraham displayed confidence that he and his son would return from mountain top. "The lad and I...will come back to you." (Genesis 22:5) "By faith," the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, "[Abraham concluded] that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense." (cf. Hebrews 11:17-19) The Father sends the Son to die for you—and He died in your place upon the cross, giving His life and shedding His blood for your sins—intending and knowing that He would raise Him from the dead victorious over sin, death, and hell for you. He is risen! He is alive forevermore, your light and your life, and you, too, will rise to live with Him eternally, because you are the righteousness of God in Him.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.