

Sermon Wesley Box Hill 28 Jun 2026

BEWARE OF BLIND FAITH – Genesis 22: 1-14

Greetings once again in the precious name of our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ.

The binding of Isaac is not an easy story to get your head around. A father who is asked by God to go and sacrifice his son and actually, without much hesitation goes ahead and prepares to do this is something that most of us will find hard to digest. That this father is Abraham, one of the most iconic and mythical father figures in the scriptures, doesn't make it any easier.

Contrary to Christian interpretations that tend to praise Abraham for his faithfulness, Jewish interpretations tend to believe that Abraham did the wrong thing. That he should have said no. Abraham bargained with God at Sodom and Gomorra and found God willing to listen and reconsider. He knew he could argue with God, but he does not protest when it comes to his own son.

He does not seem to have understood that, what God is looking for, is a partner to work and think things through with, for relationship and not blind obedience.

What this story is about then is not a great triumph of deep faith but a failure of Abraham's judgement that would have cost him his son if God had not intervened.

Reading the story like that brings other disturbing aspects to the surface.

Sarah, the woman of the house, isn't told about what is going on or asked for her opinion. In fact, we don't hear from her again in the story until she dies.

Jewish interpretation suggests that this is because she was so heartbroken after she finds out what has happened that she is literally lost for words for the rest of her life. Dumfounded by the fact that her crazy religious husband took her only child, and was ready to kill him as the ultimate sacrifice to God.

And then there is Isaac. If you take the text chronologically from what has gone before he is 37. A man who lets himself be taken by his father, and be bound. Looking up from a pile of wood at a knife in his father's hand ready to kill him. Not questioning, not resisting, obedient till the last. Meekly raising the question as they move up the mountain: 'Father, did we forget to bring the sacrifice?'

There is a hint of a suggestion in the Hebrew text that Abraham may have been walking up that hill in a trance like state. Not quite with it. And you'd probably have to be, if you think that God is asking you to let go of what is most precious to you and consider bringing a sacrifice that is too horrendous to contemplate. Ignoring and suppressing his inner voices of reason and morality and overriding them with blind faith and conviction. He must have known, somewhere deep inside him, that this was not right. And yet, he is still doing it.

Abraham wakes out of his trance and finds a ram in the thicket. God given. Finds that he doesn't have to go through with what he was doing. God doesn't want from him what he thought. There is a different future lying ahead than the one he had imagined before.

Blind faith can be wrong, deep conviction about what is right can be wrong. God may be waiting for us to say no, to change track and sending us subtle and not so subtle messages to help us let go of opinions and convictions that do not, morally or ethically, fit in with what God wants from us.

The question we need to ask ourselves may then be what convictions and beliefs do we need to reconsider? That God would have hoped we would say no to?

What are our priorities when it comes to implementing faith? What is it that God might be asking us to do differently? In our lives, in the world, in the Church, with the earth?

Amen.

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