

We can all breathe a sigh of relief. These last two weeks when we think about danger, and guns, and schools, and kids at least in Deaf Smith County we can breathe deep knowing that everything worked the way it was supposed to work. Some may say that not enough information was disseminated and others may say too much or just enough. At our elementary school our students went to work as best they could with locked doors and teachers on edge and two DPS troopers in the parking lot. And when it was over it was over. One of the parents said, "I gave my daughter a hug and it was the best thing ever. She was safe and sound."

The majority of images of the first reading scene has Isaac as a young boy and Abraham as an old man. Sometimes, rarely in fact does Isaac look to be a teenager, regardless of the age of the boy Abraham is taller and more imposing. I think this image in our mind is important. How we paint the picture upon the canvas of our spiritual imagination probably says a whole more about us than it says about the story we are reliving. I bet that in general looking at an old man powerful and imposing taking the son of the promise of his inheritance up the mountain to be slaughtered as a sacrificial offering, seems an awful lot like how we see God. This great imposing figure desiring sacrifice and retribution, with long beard and sorrowful eyes. I bet that we imagine God a lot more like Abraham the executioner of Isaac than we see God as Abraham the father of Isaac.

The truth of the matter is that our spiritual imagination is all wrong. Our eyes have the wrong image in sight. Isaac was not a child or a teenager, he was a young adult around the age of 25. Isaac knew that his Father was chosen by God. Isaac had been told the story of his miraculous conception, and the visitors that predicted his birth. Isaac had been raised to seek the will of God. He had been told that he would be the father of a great nation. His progeny would be as numberless as the sands on the sea and the stars in the sky. The key to the story I think is not Abraham's faithful following but Isaacs.

“Son the Most High God has asked us to go up to the heights, a mountain fastness that he will point out as we near it. Gather a couple of our workers and load up fire wood for the holocaust. We will travel three days into the wasteland.” So he does. Isaac the young man, gathers up employees, ties up bundles of firewood for an immolation, a burning of the scape goat. And this band of faithful followers sets out for the mountain of Moriah. As Abraham, the old man, sets his sight on the high mount he tells the two servants who accompany them to wait. He turns the son of the promise into a pack animal to carry the sticks and logs and material for the fire up the side of the mountain. Isaac the human donkey recognizes they are missing the lamb of sacrifice. So he asks. And is told that God will provide. And they walked together forward, climbing the mountain, the scriptures do not relate their conversation. Isaac the young man, wise to the ways

of sacrifice and worship could read the writing on the wall. He is no fool, He knows he is to be the scape goat.

And in a blink of the eye he could overpower the old man. His father has already turned him to a donkey made him more like a beast of burden to make the sacrifice less personal, less intimate. And Isaac stays. They reach the summit and with boulder and stone, Isaac builds his own sacrificial altar. With every stone placed can he ignore is impending fate? Does his faith in the God of his father Abraham sustain him, is it enough to strengthen his resolve to open not his mouth? Does his earthly father's eyes drip with tears? Does the chin quiver and the lips tremble? Or is there steely resolve?

As the clarity of becoming the sacrifice turns to concrete action, does the father's fingers fumble as they tie the knots that bind the sacrifice hand and foot? As Abraham lifts the boy upon the sticks and branches laid upon the stone altar, what memories are suddenly alive and immediate. Does the father remember the first time he lifted the babe into the air and how at the same time the infant was as light as a feather and heavy as a stone? Does the son remember being lifted up and comforted in the terrors of the night by hands both gentle in comfort and unyielding in protection? Does Abraham blindfold the sacrifice so that he doesn't have to look into his eyes? Or does he stare intently into the depths of the boy's

soul as he lifts the knife to end his life? The Lord giveth and Lord taketh away.

Blessed be the Lord!

And the hero of the story is not Abraham. The true hero is Isaac. He did not hear the voice of the Lord, and he had faith, and trust, and love in the one who did. Christians we are much more like Isaac the son. Our lives of faith are built much more surely on the witness of others than on our own experience. Though God does speak to us, it is not usually in such dramatic ways. Though Christ gives us his peaceful assurance, we come to know salvation through the words and actions of His faithful followers. And we can no longer be silent. Our lives of faith are to be shared so that others may come to know truth, to know peace, to know love.

There is no longer a need for sacrificial lambs and scapegoats, Christ paid the price once for all. Christ bearers are needed, those whom carry the story of Jesus Christ the savior of the world in the hearts and on their lips.