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Gospel lesson

Today's reading is a continuation from last week; Jesus continues to advise [the disciples He is sending out for ministry among the people]:



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-birds-flowers/>;
courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

Matthew 10:40-42

NRSV

⁴⁰ "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous;

⁴² and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple -- truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward."

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's/Interactive time>

I want you to help me put something together. Will you do that for me? <Let them respond>

Are you ready to start? What do you need to do it?

<Let them respond; pull out kit>

Now what do you expect to have to do?

<Let them respond; let them start working on it>

When he was young, my son had a collection of Legos, of all shapes, sizes, and colors. Do you think he ever put together one of these? <Let them respond>

He did not always have everything he needed for what he wanted to build, particularly instructions, but he had fun trying to fit pieces together. Sometimes, when he could not find the pieces he needed, he tried filling in the gaps with other things, like paper or wood blocks. How do you think that worked out for him? <Let them respond>

In the Old Testament lesson today, according to Isaac, did Abraham and Isaac have everything they needed to sacrifice to God? <Let them respond>

Isaac expected to sacrifice an animal to God, but did not see one. What kind of faith do you think it took for Isaac to let his dad bind him up and lay him on the altar instead? <Let them respond>

What kind of faith do you think Abraham had to bind up his only son Isaac, whom he loved, and put him on the altar to sacrifice him? <Let them respond>

God spared Isaac, Abraham's son, from sacrifice. What do you think God wanted Abraham's descendants to do when Jesus, God's son, was offered as a sacrifice? <Let them respond>

The family started out with completely trusting faith, but did not sustain it over the centuries. Yet even after Jesus was killed, was humanity left without recourse? What did God do? <Let them respond>

God provided a way out of sin, a way back into healthy relationship with our Creator. Whenever you feel like a situation is hopeless, trust God and pray for help & guidance. Whether it is in the form and timing you expect or not, God will provide.

<Resume screensharing in Zoom>

<Hymn "Amazing Grace">

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Message: Hearing the Voice



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/forming-a-family-preparing-a-people/week-4-fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-4-fifth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Great Provider of all good things,
as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may trust faithfully in Your promises, and help others to experience Your grace as well. Amen.

We conclude this month's sermon series today with

“God Will Provide”:

“When Scripture makes us want to flee, learning to stay, pray, sing, and tell the story faithfully.”

I wanted to flee when I first looked at the instructions for the VBS station I expect to lead, because the instructions say to use items that are no longer made. How are we supposed to make the point of the demonstration without the props for it?

Last week we were reminded that God hears our cries. I did not cry so much as pray for help to God on the VBS thing, and with input from Chris, Katie, and Angela, have gotten most of it figured out. God provided the resources needed for me to serve the Lord better.

Back in the ancient Near-East, there were a lot of different gods worshipped and a custom to sacrifice children as an act of worship – because in transactional worship, big boons required big sacrifices.

God had already provided Abraham with many blessings, including a miracle in Isaac being born. It was time for Abraham to prove his loyalty. God told him to take Isaac and offer him on the altar as that which goes up to God – in the common lingo of the day, that meant as a burnt offering.

Abraham probably figured that if God took Isaac, God would provide another heir because God had promised that Abraham would be a father of nations through his

and Sarah's offspring. If God had worked a miracle once, God could do it again, right? Abraham trusted God.

But Abraham did not have the heart to tell his son to expect to be replaced. Instead, when Isaac asked what they would sacrifice, Abraham said that God would provide a lamb - and God used that.

First, God made it clear that this was not to be transactional worship, but worship built on relationship. Also, God made it clear that human sacrifice was not to be done. And as the family developed into a nation in relationship with God, God had to remind them that the relationship was not one-sided.

The psalmist today sings a mixed song, going from lament to praise, because working on relationships is complicated and tough. When the world and the Hebrew people were ready, God came to live among humanity as Jesus, so that we could better understand how to live in relationship with our Creator - and with one another.

Jesus's teaching today reminds us that because God loves every single person, we need to treat one another with grace, welcoming one another and seeing to each other's needs. Jesus essentially tells us that whenever we share love in God's name, that builds our relationship with God in a positive way.

And then Jesus was the lamb that God provided so that the human children could live - a sacrifice setting

us free from sin and bringing eternal life to us. All God asks is that we stay in healthy relationship with God and with one another, for God loves all of us.

Paul pointed out that we still have a choice between sin and God, and that only God enables us to live.

- ✝ We see people in the world daily choosing to trust money, political power, social fame instead of in God.
- ✝ We see people wailing to God that the world is terrible – without their trying to do anything to change the problems they see.
- ✝ We see people caught in systems of oppression and denigration, enslaved to sin they did not enact, in need of help to change the systems.
- ✝ We see people afraid to speak up and tell the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus, because they are afraid of the kind of reception they will get.

Are we not Christians? Do we not know that God is truly in power, calls us to love, and provides opportunities for us to share God's love that all may have better lives? We should be pushing for God's truth and peace with justice, holy love and nurture for all on the path to life. Are we afraid we do not have what is needed to do that?

God will provide what we need to truly live in love! And when we show love, true caring for others, Jesus's message is welcomed (albeit in varying ways).

Here is what I am calling on you to do this week:

- ✝ Turn away from sin and look at needs in the community or even in your home, apart from what you want. What is stopping the needs of others from being addressed?
- ✝ Pray to God for guidance. Ask how best to show love and grace in addressing the community or home need. Pray also for the resources needed to address it.
- ✝ Do what God enables you to do - and listen for the opportunity to include others, for we are not expected to fix it all ourselves.

In all your actions and words, proclaim Jesus, the love He entails, and the life He brings. You may be the means by which God provides what others need.

After all, we are not called to transactions, we are called into relationships. Strengthen your relationship with God by developing relationships with others. God will provide the means.