

## **May 2021**

### **The covenant with Abraham: Genesis 12–22**

\*Please note that the covenant with Abraham should have been published in the May 2021 Bright Spot newsletter but was not published until the July 2021 newsletter.

The Scriptures reveal the true story of God's good creation and of mankind's nature, purpose, fall, and rescue. It is a story about God's love and mercy. For his own mysterious reasons, God the Creator bound himself to humanity from the beginning. How do we know? We see in the genealogy at the end of Genesis 11 that Abraham is connected to Noah, who is connected to Adam. So, the story of Abraham is the beginning of the story of God's definitive plan to rescue all of Adam's children.

He begins his great rescue plan by wooing one man and his wife, Abraham and Sarah. Together with their child, they take the fragile first steps in a journey that has now lasted nearly 4000 years. The story of salvation is like a great tapestry. We normally see only how it is unfolding from the back side. Our view is mostly of knots and confusing tangles. It is not until we come around to the front to see how the tapestry is unfolding that it begins to make sense. Life must have felt like that to Abraham and his barren wife Sarah. What does one make of the missteps in Egypt, the dalliance with Hagar, the rescue of Lot? How does one make sense out of the command to sacrifice one's son? All these events are at the very beginning of the tapestry that the participants only ever see from the back. Abraham and his family are the first of the threads, the first of the messy knots and tangles. From our side, the lovely "right side" of the tapestry, we see a family, a marriage. And the beauty that is unfolding is set in an all-too-real human story, filled with strange twists, cowardice, heroism, and mysterious visitors blessing Abraham.

God chose to rescue the world through a human family, with its mixture of frailty and courage. This is entirely consistent with God's most remarkable act of rescue: the birth of Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, to a human couple. God's rescue of humanity is inexorably tied to his creation blessing and promise: be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth! The unity of the husband and wife—the promise that "the two shall become one"—functions as a signpost pointing the way to the most wonderful mystery of all: God wants to be one with us. He wants to share his own life with us. He wants to live one life with us. From the earliest prophets to the book of Revelation, the image of marriage is employed to describe the covenant. In fact, the union of a man and a woman in marriage is the fundamental symbol of God's covenant with us. God is the Bridegroom and Israel is the (often unfaithful yet still beloved) bride.

### **The story**

Abraham is a tribal chieftain—wealthy, confident, shrewd, well-traveled, and 75 years old. His wife, Sarah, also well up in years, is with him. Also with him is his nephew Lot, next in line to inherit this wealth. Abraham and Sarah have no children. Fanned out around them is a throng of relatives and workers, plus massive numbers of herds and cattle, tents, cooking utensils, bedding, clothes, provisions, and silver and gold to feed and house this large crowd on its periodic travels. They are walking south from Shechem, at the center of Canaan, toward the Negeb and Egypt.

We pick up the story at the end of chapter 11 of Genesis. Here we meet a man and his wife, who have set out with their extended family from the city of Ur (in modern-day Iraq) for the land of Canaan. However, when they come to Haran, in modern-day Turkey, they decide to settle there.

It was not unusual for nomadic tribes like Abraham's to settle on the outskirts of a city, sometimes for several generations. Such a family might even become involved in local politics. But things always change. Perhaps a family might wear out their welcome. Jealousy and tension between the locals and successful migrant groups still happens today. There might be a local drought so that they would need better pastures for the flocks. Perhaps simply their nomadic nature might prompt them to leave. But eventually, a nomadic family like this would move on again.

Abraham's story is different from the typical one, however. None of the usual reasons caused this man and his family to continue their journey to the land of Canaan. The father of the clan had an encounter with a God, and this God made three promises to him: I will give you a land, I will make of you a great nation, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

We know who this God is. We have the benefit of four thousand years of history. We know that this God is the Creator of the universe. We know that he is one God, but three distinct persons. We know that the second Person of the Trinity became man. We know that he suffered, died, and rose from the dead. We know that he sent his Holy Spirit to be with us. We know that this remarkable encounter with Abraham and his family was the first act in God's plan to rescue humanity from the terrible predicament that had caused humanity's exile from the garden and had opened the door to death.

It must be remembered that Abraham did not have this benefit of thousands of years of tradition and mighty stories about the Lord's powerful saving actions. His experience of God consisted only of some promises, a few rescues, and a mysterious blessing from the king of Salem. Now he is asked to believe that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars of the sky. And he does! He does believe.

At the heart of this journey of discovery is a covenant. It is something like a modern contract, with duties and obligations for each party. But in the ancient world a covenant was much more than a mere contract. A covenant was a solemn promise between two parties that established a relationship. While it could be a business agreement, a land sale, etc., it also could establish terms between a king and his subjects. In Abraham's case, the covenant revolves around how God plans to rescue humanity and restore his good creation. He will do it by establishing a unique relationship. He proclaims, "I will be their God and they will be my people."



## Genesis 12:1–3

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 12:1–3

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

### Meditation

When God was free to do anything he wanted, what he did is called revelation, because it shows us both what God is like and how he works with us. He could have rescued humanity in any way he chose. He could have used his mighty power to overpower free will, to crush sinners. He could have wiped out all of humanity. Yet he chose not to. With Noah, he saved a remnant, one man and his family. He renewed his creation blessings and his commitment to rescue humanity through marriage and family. But even after that dramatic rescue, humanity failed once again (and not for the last time). What God chooses to do in response to human failing is eternally surprising! Again, he bound himself to one man and his family. He made a series of promises to Abraham that culminated with the promise that all of the families of the earth would be blessed through this one man and his family.

This relationship, between God and Abraham and later with Abraham's descendants, would be formalized in a covenant. This covenant would be both like and unlike anything the ancient world had ever seen. The best image for this covenant is that of marriage—not marriage as it was after the fall, but marriage as God always intended it to be, the union of two equal persons living one life together. When God was free to do anything he wanted, he united himself to humanity in a way that can best be described with the language of marriage.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

**Unity Prayer:** *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



## Genesis 12:4–9

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 12:4–9

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup> Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, <sup>6</sup> Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup> Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup> From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD. <sup>9</sup> And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

### Meditation

As surprising as God's choice of Abraham is, so too is Abraham's response. As an old man with an old wife and a large household, he leaves the city of Haran in response to the call of a God he cannot possibly know very well. Why would he do that? It can only be that God put into Abraham a gift of faith that empowered him to respond with such willingness. God moved him, but Abraham is the one who moved. It is as much his story as God's. We will see the interplay of grace and free will at every turn. This is the story of God's fidelity, the power of his love, coupled with Abraham's frail humanity. Abraham will succeed. He will fail. He will put God's promises in jeopardy over and over. In the end, he will believe, and God will be free to work. But this is never easy. It always requires Abraham to say yes to trust, to worship this God he is just beginning to know.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

**Unity Prayer:** God, make our hearts one. Amen.



## Genesis 12:10–20

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 12:10–20

Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land. <sup>11</sup> When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know well that you are a woman beautiful in appearance; <sup>12</sup> and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. <sup>13</sup> Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account." <sup>14</sup> When Abram entered Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. <sup>15</sup> When the officials of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. <sup>16</sup> And for her sake he dealt well with Abram; and he had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female slaves, female donkeys, and camels. <sup>17</sup> But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. <sup>18</sup> So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? <sup>19</sup> Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her, and be gone." <sup>20</sup> And Pharaoh gave his men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had.

### Meditation

Abraham deceived Pharaoh and exchanged poor Sarah for his personal safety. What a horror it must have been to be abandoned by her husband who thought only of his own life. More than that, this personal tragedy had profound implications for salvation history. What of the promise that God had made to Abraham to make of him a great nation? As part of Pharaoh's harem, Sarah could not be the mother of Abraham's children. Did the promises that God had made to Abraham way back in Haran involve both the man and his wife? How does Sarah fit into it? How important is marriage to God's plan? In a way that would prefigure another rescue from Egypt, God worked here in a terrible situation and saved the day. Abraham left Egypt with Sarah and a great load of riches. This won't be the last twist in this all-too-human story. But God is ever mindful of his promises, even when Abraham (or later, Sarah) is weak and fails.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation.*

*Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

**Unity Prayer:** *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



## Genesis 15:1–6

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 15:1–6

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." <sup>4</sup> But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." <sup>5</sup> He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>6</sup> And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.

### Meditation

This is a turning point in Abraham's relationship with this God he is only beginning to know. He hears the Lord renew his promise that he will protect him and make him a great nation. It is difficult for Abraham to process this concept. His wife is barren. He inquires of the Lord if the descendant will come from his faithful servant Eliezer of Damascus. The Lord says, "No. You will have your own child and your descendants shall be as numerous as the stars in the sky." And what is Abraham's response? "He believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness." In some mysterious way, Abraham is in a right relationship with God, because he believes what God has told him. Abraham has faith. Abraham will soon be challenged to live in a way that reflects his faith—but for now all he does is believe. And that is enough.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*



## Genesis 15:7–12,17–18

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 15:7–12,17–18

Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." <sup>8</sup> But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" <sup>9</sup> He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. <sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. . . . <sup>17</sup> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."

### Meditation

At the Lord's direction, Abraham arranged a covenant ceremony in the custom of the time. He cut in half a heifer, a she-goat, and a ram, and set them side by side so that there would be a passage along which someone could walk between the split carcasses. Then he killed a turtledove and a pigeon and put them on either side. Abraham knew that it would be required of the two parties to walk between the halves of the animals to seal a covenant. This covenant was a solemn agreement between those who passed between the animals that if they did not keep their part of the bargain, what happened to the animals would happen to them. They could be legally cut in half! A deep sleep overtook Abraham, and in his dream, he heard the Lord restate his promises. Then a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch went through the halves of the animals and between the two birds. The Lord had gone through the animals. The Lord had made a solemn agreement, a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. It is not recorded that Abraham passed through the animals. It is clear that God is on the hook. He has bound himself to Abraham. And through Abraham, he will rescue the fallen world.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

**Unity Prayer:** *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



## Genesis 17:1–14

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 17:1–9

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless." <sup>2</sup> And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." <sup>3</sup> Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, <sup>4</sup> "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations." <sup>5</sup> No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup> I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. <sup>7</sup> I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup> And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God." <sup>9</sup> God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations.

### Meditation

Some time before this scene, Sarai caused great turmoil by her ill-fated attempt to fulfill the promise of God on her own: She gave Abram her maidservant Hagar to sleep with. Ishmael was born to Hagar, and then Sarai abused and rejected both Hagar and Ishmael. Now, 13 years later, Abram was nearly 100 years old and even less likely to ever have children with Sarai. At this low point, the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless." God Almighty does not require feeble, independent human efforts to bring about his plan, but he does require faith and cooperation. The covenant, now binding on Abram as well as on God, required that Abram be blameless and act rightly. The covenant is also everlasting. It binds both God and Abram's descendants. Nations and kings would come from Abram. God marked this dramatic promise by changing his name from Abram ("exalted father") to Abraham: "father of a multitude." Keeping covenant meant that Abraham and Sarah would cooperate with God; they must obey him. In a way difficult for the modern world to understand, obedience is an expression of love. Another way to say that is that they must love him above all else.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

**Unity Prayer:** *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*





## Genesis 17:15–22

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 17:15–22

God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup> I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." <sup>17</sup> Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" <sup>18</sup> And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in your sight!" <sup>19</sup> God said, "No, but your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. <sup>20</sup> As for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. <sup>21</sup> But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year." <sup>22</sup> And when he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

### Meditation

God has not forgotten Sarah. She is integral to his plan to rescue humanity. Sarah had given Abraham her maid servant in an effort to "help" God keep his promise. But as so often happens, God has a surprise for Sarah. It is quite funny – at least Abraham thinks so. A child to a ninety-year-old woman? You're kidding, right? And as if to highlight the improbability of it all, God tells him to name the child Isaac, which means "he will laugh." This amazing turn of events is to prove that this is really God's action. He works through human beings, but it is unmistakably God at work, doing what only God can do. He will not forget the child of Hagar, but the plan to save all humanity will come through the marriage of Abraham and Sarah.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** *May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.*

**Unity Prayer:** *God, make our hearts one. Amen.*



## Genesis 22:1–10

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 22:1–10 (excerpt)

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place far away. <sup>6</sup> Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. <sup>7</sup> Isaac said to his father Abraham, "Father!" Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup> Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.

### Meditation

It is impossible to not experience the horror of this moment. What is Abraham to do? If he obeys the Lord and sacrifices his son—his most beloved son—he will lose the promise of descendants from himself and Sarah as well. If he fails to obey, he breaks the covenant and loses the promises. Abraham is poised to do the unthinkable. All he can do in that horrible moment is to trust that God will work it out in a way that Abraham cannot see or hope for. Faith is complete trust in God, even when we cannot see how things could possibly turn out for good.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

**Unity Prayer:** God, make our hearts one. Amen.



## Genesis 22:11–14,15–18

### Pray

*God, come to our assistance.*

***-Lord, make haste to help us.***

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*

***-As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.***

### Reading: Genesis 22:11–14,15–18

But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>12</sup> 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." <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> 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." <sup>15</sup> The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, <sup>16</sup> and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, <sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

### Meditation

We left Abraham poised to do the unthinkable. How was he to know that 1800 years later, the sacrifice he was considering—which God would not ask of him—was the very sacrifice that God himself would make? How was Abraham to know that one day, God's own son would carry the wood of his sacrifice up the hill and be offered on the wood of the cross to complete the rescue of humanity? How was Abraham to know that in an act of completely selfless love, God would bring about the fulfillment of his promise to bless all nations through Abraham's descendants? How was Abraham to know that God would raise his son from death and destroy the power of sin and death? Faith is a wonderful and terrible thing. It is a grace that allows us to believe in God even when the outcome is beyond the edges of our sight.

**Quiet reflection:** *Reflect on one or two ideas that came to mind in the reading or the meditation. Share one idea with your spouse.*

**Prayers and Intentions:** *As if you were talking to a friend, tell the Lord what and who are on your mind.*

**Lord's Prayer:** *Conclude your intentions by praying the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Blessing:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

**Unity Prayer:** God, make our hearts one. Amen.