

Judica (March 20-21, 2010)  
John 8:42-59 "Where's the Lamb?"

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The wood is on Isaac's back. The fire and the knife are in Abraham's hand. *But where is the lamb?* If there is no lamb then Isaac must die. He must die for his sins. For this miracle child born to an old barren woman, this laughing bundle of joy provided in Abraham's old age, is a sinner. The wages of sin is death. The wages must be paid. If there is no lamb then Isaac must die. But there is a Lamb. God provides. In the last instant the knife is stayed. The ram is caught in the thicket. He is bound to the Altar and his blood pours forth instead of Isaac's. Isaac lives and goes free. The ram died in his place. The innocent for the guilty.

That ram, and all the Old Testament sacrifices, point to the Sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whose death has made atonement for all the sins of all men. Through the sacrifice of that ram, by faith, Abraham saw the Day of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In the bloody sacrifice of that ram, Abraham saw the Day that the Lord has made, the Day that the builders rejected the Stone that God made the chief Cornerstone. He saw it and rejoiced in it. For by faith, Abraham saw Good Friday. He saw God substitute His only Son for Isaac. He saw the Innocent die for the guilty; the wrath of the Father appeased in a perfect sacrifice, a Son for a son. And on that mountain, in the death of that ram, He saw Easter morning, where death, hell, and the devil were defeated for him, for Isaac, and for us all. His

son was returned to him from certain death. Both were spared the fair torments of Hell.

Thus Abraham believed that God would provide, that by Grace he would journey to a better country and that his sorrows and suffering would end. By that innocent death outside of Jerusalem, the sacrifice of that perfect Son, it is so. Neither Abraham nor Isaac died, nor any of the believing prophets. The Pharisees had it wrong. They passed through death to life. For they believed in the Messiah through God's Word. They live, for Jesus lives. He is not a god of the dead. He is the living, life-giving God of the living.

Still, despite that great miracle of providing, Isaac's sons had to learn this lesson for them, they had to learn that God provides. Jacob, the second born of Isaac, the chosen one, is a scoundrel of the first order. And Esau is a pagan. But God interferes in their lives. He shows His power unto them, and us, in mercy and grace. He calls them to faith. Still, in the same way, the sons of Jacob, the grandsons of Isaac, will have their trials. They will almost kill, and then exile their father's best loved son, Joseph. But God will work that, too, for good. He will teach them forgiveness and compassion. Despite their sin, even through their violent betrayal, He will provide.

And on it goes. Each generation learns anew about the God who provides out of compassion, mercy, and grace. Then in the fullness of time the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin. Our Kinsman-Redeemer was born. He grew, was baptized, was tempted, and began to preach this dangerous Gospel. So that in John chapter 8 we

find He has been placed by His Father into thicket of the Temple, in the place where the sacrifices were made. There in the Temple made with hands stood our Brother born of Mary, our God without beginning, the Temple Stone cut without hands which crushes the kingdoms of men, which would be torn down by violent men but would rebuild itself in three days. The Lord of life stood there surrounded by the aroma of life-giving death, of sacrifice, of blood. And within a stone's throw of the mercy seat, where God Himself promised to be as a shield that protects us from His own wrath, the descendants of Isaac reject Our Lord and pick up stones. They cannot convict Him of sin. They cannot find any error in His teaching. There is no deviance, no change from Moses and the prophets in anything that Jesus says. Nor do they dispute any of His miracles. But still, they reject Him. They know what He is saying. He is saying that He is the God of Abraham, that He is the cause and source of Abraham's salvation and rejoicing. He is the reason Isaac lives. There is no legitimate reason not to believe Him. But despite the evidence, for the sake of their own callous greed, lust, pride, and rebellion they reject Him. They pick up stones to kill Him.

His time had not yet come. But it would. And when that illegal, kangaroo court convened in the hours of darkness before the dawn, Caiaphas brought this ridiculous, impossible charge against Him again: Blasphemy. Thus the King of the Jews, the Innocent, died for the guilty. They meant it for evil, but God meant it, and worked it, for the greatest good.

So it is still today. Men reject Him out of hand. We, ourselves, the spiritual descendants of Abraham, have the

same self-absorbed bent as Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. We are the illegitimate children of violence with greedy hearts and dirty minds. The deceit and crimes of Jacob and Joseph's brothers should be no scandal to us. Repent. We, too, must learn to live by faith, to trust that God provides for sinners. And He does. The Blood poured forth on Calvary, the Body laid in the borrowed tomb, has been raised up again to life. He lives. And in Him, we too, like Isaac before us, live, like the brothers of Joseph, we are forgiven, like Abraham, we believe! The stuff of that sacrifice, His Body and His Blood, which has been given and shed for you, is provided for you to eat and to drink, to unite you to Him and to your fathers in faith who have gone before you. This Blood cleanses your conscience from dead works to serve the living God by precisely by being poured from the Chalice, past your lips, and applied to your heart. This place, too, even more than the Mountain in Moriah, should be called, Yahweh-yireh, "**The-LORD-will provide.**"

I've yet to be driving through the cornfields of Illinois and stumble upon Yahweh-yireh, "**The-LORD-will provide Lutheran Church.**" But I hope to one day. There would be a Church that understood its connection Abraham and saw the Old Testament Christologically and Sacramentally! The Lord provides - always, the Lord. Yes, the Lord provides -here, for you, in His Word and Sacraments, as promised, as foretold, as we have witnessed. For the Lamb caught in the thicket of His Father's love has been slain. But that Lamb lives. And so do you in Him. You will never see death.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.