

North Main Street UMC - June 28, 2026
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

GENESIS 22: 1-18

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied.

² Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” ⁸ Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. ⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. ¹² “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear

God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram^[a] caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring^[b] all nations on earth will be blessed,^[c] because you have obeyed me.”

Matthew 10: 40-42 (Gospel)

⁴⁰ “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹ Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. ⁴² And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.”

The Word of God.

Our Gospel Reading for today concludes Jesus' instructions to His disciples. He emphasizes that welcoming His followers is the same as welcoming Him, and that even the smallest act of kindness—like giving a cup of cold water to a disciple—will be eternally rewarded. **The disciples are to act as envoys of Jesus**, extending his ministry, proclaiming the same good news and performing the same works of healing that he is doing. Now I would like to stop the world for just one minute and ask you to think back. Think back with me to the first century. Think about those 50 years after Jesus' death and what it must have been like for Jesus' disciples. Before the last one died their efforts had brought about a half million men, women, and children into the ranks of the church. But what they had to suffer in order to accomplish this task is seldom discussed. We like the outcome of their discipleship but we seldom hear the cost of discipleship. So, for the record here is the cost: History tells us...

1. John died of extreme old age after he was exiled to the island of Patmos.
2. Judas Iscariot, after betraying his Lord, hanged himself.
3. Peter was crucified; head downward, during the persecution of Nero.
4. Andrew died on a cross at Patrae, a Grecian Colony.
5. James, the younger, son of Alphaeus, was thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple, and then beaten to death with a club.
6. Bartholomew was flayed alive in Albanapolis, Armenia.
7. James, the elder son of Zebedee, was beheaded at Jerusalem.
8. Thomas, the doubter, was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel, in the East Indies.
9. Philip was hanged against a pillar at Heropolis.
10. Thaddeus was shot to death with arrows.
11. Simon died on a cross in Persia (what we now call Iran).
12. Matthew was first stoned and then beheaded.

What sacrifices! And we can still shake our heads and ask why? Why did they choose to follow Jesus and then die this way? Why desert your father and mother, your wife and child, and your home? Why put up with the constant humiliation, and hunger, and persecution, and defeat town after town after town? The answer is simple...because, in the words of Apostle Paul, they were held captive by the words and teachings of Jesus Christ. It is Paul's way of saying they were totally committed to Christ. As followers of Jesus, we know that Jesus' method of evangelism required simply proclaiming Jesus' salvation, healing, blessing, and acting with a sense of acceptance, kindness, and love toward all people. Jesus began the movement that his disciples would call "The Way" by changing people's lives, one heart and healing at a time....

It is quite likely we shall never be tested to the extent that the disciples were but there are some ways to gauge our commitment. There is a reciprocal nature to how you treat other people: What you do for others you will see it again in your own life.

Jesus also provides a ritual for failure that worked for the disciples and should also work for us. When you are not well received or welcomed, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Jesus concludes his missionary discourse with this Spirit-filled pep talk about rewards for those who receive and treat well his disciples and apostles, who go forth and proclaim the gospel. Anyone who extends even the least kindness to one of Jesus' own will not lose their reward.

We are called not only to love those who are similar to us or with whom we are comfortable, but all whom God places in our path. In fact, Jesus said, "I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Loving others does not mean agreeing with everything they say or do, nor does it mean acting

in ways that always gain their approval. No matter who we are, God provides us with love that brings healing to all of us. All need to hear Jesus' words and trust his promises. The prophets and disciples who go out in his name must know that he has promised to be with them and never to leave them alone. Those to whom they minister must remember that the Lord promises to reward those who find a way to bless the ministers among them. And that they will not lose their reward, be it now or at the end of the ages.

I would like to conclude my six years here at North Main with a simple conclusion. For all this time I have worked diligently to be not just in the church but also outside, bringing people to Jesus. The missions we do here are many. I pray that you continue with them as the first disciples did, knowing that God is walking with you.