

**A Lifetime Journey (Genesis 22:1-14)**  
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C. S. Lewis once wrote, “The truest and most horrible claim made for modern [transportation] is that it ‘annihilates space’... one of the most glorious gifts we’ve been given. It is a vile inflation which lowers the value of distance, so that a modern boy travels a hundred miles with less sense of liberation, pilgrimage and adventure than his grandfather [felt when] traveling [a mere] ten”.

Now, if your thoughts about Lewis’ insight causes you to think only about mileage, you’ve missed the point. Lewis’ “annihilation of space” explains a problem risen to an epidemic level in our modern age, and I don’t mean like COVID-19. Regardless of the specific nature of one’s circumstances; good or bad, hard or easy, many today seem unable to appreciate “distance” by taking the “long look”. Most, want immediate answers to questions, immediate solutions to problems, and immediate justice to right all wrongs. Why?

- Agitated, upset, or nervous..., many simply want the acid indigestion to end. AND, that’s just looking at this paradox from the negative side of life. The... positive side shapes up much the same.
  
- Expectant, eager and anticipatory..., some just want the journey to end... (pause) the day to finally arrive, and the reward now rather than later.

Lewis’ idea of “distance” appeals to few today. Many struggle to see worth in the journey, and... there are days...if we’re honest, we really get that. However, here’s something there’s just no getting around. God calls,... He beckons..., invites..., enjoins..., pleads with us to journey with him into a future unknown to us, but one fully known to Him.

So it was with the man we know as Abram or Abraham; no last name, just Abram or Abraham. We are first introduced to Abram in the genealogy of Shem in Genesis 11. This man, Abram, was the one told by God in Genesis 12:1 that his life would be a journey, one looking to what he would always see in the distance. God said, “Leave your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you”.

God would later change Abram’s name, but not the nature of his journey towards something still quite distant.

Genesis tells us that; <sup>3</sup>...God said to him, <sup>4</sup>‘As for me, this is my covenant with you: You WILL BE the father of many nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. <sup>6</sup>I WILL make you very fruitful; I WILL make nations of you, and kings WILL come from you. <sup>7</sup>I WILL establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.’”

So many..., “I WILLS” calling..., beckoning Abraham forward into a distant future. Perhaps Abraham thought, finally, his journey into a distant future was nearing its end. Not so, for in

Genesis 22 the Bible says, “<sup>1</sup>Sometime LATER God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. <sup>2</sup>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.’ <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance”.

I wonder... did Abraham grow weary looking towards that which could be seen only from a distance? Apparently not too much, because until the end of his life he walked with God, imperfectly to be sure..., nevertheless, seeing worth in the journey.

I want you to know something this morning. God still calls us to walk with Him today, to journey with Him into a distant future. So, what to learn today from Abraham’s journey that he continually saw from a distance? Well, we learn that...

**The journey we see from a distance is a place of great sacrifice Genesis (22:1-2).** “<sup>1</sup>Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’ ‘Here I am,’ he replied. <sup>2</sup>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.’” It’s hard to imagine sacrificing one’s son or daughter, but for Abraham this involved something much deeper than even that. Genesis 16 records the account of Abraham sending Sarah’s servant Hagar away, along with the son she had borne to him, Ishmael. Isaac is now not only Abraham’s son; Genesis two describes Isaac as Abraham’s “ONLY son”. How to reconcile the “I will(s)” of Genesis 17 with the sacrifice of Isaac in chapter 22? The journey Abraham saw from a distance involved sacrifice, and of this you can be sure. The journey we see from a distance will involve sacrifice for us as well.

Legend has it that Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, once captured a prince and his family. When they came before him, the monarch asked the prisoner, “What will you give me if I release you?” “The half of my wealth,” the prince replied. “And if I would release your children?” “I would give everything I possess.” “But... should I release your wife? What would you give me then?” “I would give myself.” Legend says Cyrus, moved by his devotion, freed them all. As they returned home, the prince said to his wife, “Wasn’t Cyrus a handsome man!” With a look of deep love for the prince, she said...; “I didn’t notice. I kept my eyes only on the one willing to sacrifice himself for me.”

And, **the journey we see from a distance never leads to a place clustered around self.** It leads to a land centered on sacrifice and here’s why. The One who sacrificed Himself for us is the same one who calls us... beckons us to the sacrificial journey we see in the distance, and this we see when we keep our eyes only upon Him, as it was written, “<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship...” (Romans 12:1).

Find yourself on a journey of self – self-pity, self-indulgence, self-centeredness, or self-worship, and you’ll find you’re on the wrong journey. The journey we see from a distance involves great sacrifice, for the Kingdom of God never comes without great cost. The journey we see from a distance is a place great sacrifice, however.

**The journey we see from a distance is (also) a place of great supply Genesis (22:9-14).** <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. <sup>11</sup> But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham!' 'Here I am,' he replied. <sup>12</sup> '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.' <sup>13</sup> Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. <sup>14</sup> 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.'"

Missionary Hudson Taylor once wrote in his journal, "Our heavenly Father... knows very well that His children wake up every morning with a good appetite... He sustained 3 million Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years...depend on it... God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply..."

And, of course, we know why, yes? What Abraham saw from a distance looking forward, we see clearly in the distant past. Trust Jesus as your Savior, and you will learn of another mountain, known to us as Mt. Calvary where the Lord supplied forgiveness for sin, strength for today, and eternal hope for tomorrow...; God's wonderful grace that supplies all we need, both now and forevermore. For we know our "God will meet all [our] needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead, because he believed in God's great supply, and listen to me today. If you've journeyed to the cross, you believe this as well... you've been through a lot this past year... Perhaps this part of your journey is near its end; maybe not...; but here's something we know today. No matter when this part of the journey ends, another journey will begin, because... one day... when you call a new pastor, you will simply invite a person and their family to... journey with you towards new and changing horizons you see now only from a distance. It will be for THEM and for YOU a journey of great sacrifice; it will be for YOU and for THEM a journey of great supply.

On another occasion C. S. Lewis wrote, "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant places, but He WILL NOT allow us to mistake them for home." This was the ultimate destination Abraham saw from a distance in his journey with God. This is the same journey before us today. God does refresh us along the way, yet deeply known to all on this journey, our destination is never here..., it's always there... and so, as we journey today, this morning we remember:

Such as it was for Abraham, so shall it be for us. Many times a journey of great sacrifice; always a journey of great supply through Christ Jesus our Lord.