

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
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**December 1, 2024**  
**Deeply Rooted (HOPE)**  
**Matthew 1:1-2 / Genesis 22:1-14**

The Douglas Fir is arguably THE iconic species of Christmas trees. And, you might not know this, but Douglas Fir trees actually grow in real forests and not just Home Depot parking lots. They don't just grow in forests; they grow exceptionally tall. It's common for Coastal Douglas Firs to be 200-250 feet tall. That's significantly taller than the space shuttle stood with its boosters and main tank.

Now, take a look at this dude. (Hyperion)



That is a Redwood named Hyperion. At just over 380 feet, it's the tallest tree in the world. It's surrounded by other redwoods and coastal Douglas firs – massive trees in their own rights but dwarfed by the great tree at the center of them all.

The reason I bring that up is because we are starting our annual Advent celebration. And, our studies will center around the family tree of Jesus, found in Matthew 1. This collection of names is filled with individuals who loom large over the history of God's people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David and Solomon. Yet they are all dwarfed by the great One at the center of them all – Jesus the Christ. In the landscape of human history, Jesus rises high above it all.

But there's something else about the family tree of Jesus that relates to that redwood forest. The roots of those trees spread deep throughout the forest and become intertwined with one another. In that way, they are all connected and interdependent with the largest trees having roots that spread the furthest out. So, imagine you could somehow grab hold of Hyperion and pull it up like a plant from your flower bed. If you could do that, you would not just uproot Hyperion, you would basically uproot the entire forest.

And that's how it is with Jesus and His family tree. He is central to understanding and experiencing all the truths we learn from the lives of His ancestors. His eternal life intertwines with theirs in a way that, if you uproot Jesus from their stories, you have nothing of substance left. That's why we are calling this series "Deeply Rooted." As we look at the traditional Advent themes of hope, peace, joy, and love in the lives of Jesus' ancestors, we will see that they are all dependent on Jesus and experienced by those whose lives are deeply rooted in the person of Christ.

So, let's take a look at the beginning of the family tree of Jesus in Matthew 1.

**Matthew 1:1-2**

***The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,***

Matthew traces the family tree of Jesus back to the person of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. Remember, God made a promise to Abraham that the One who would bless all the nations of the earth would be born to Abraham's offspring. Matthew wants his Jewish audience to know that Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise made to Abraham. Jesus came into this world through Father Abraham and his son, Isaac.

And, whether you realize it or not, that's a story that exemplifies the first theme of Advent: hope. In the story of Abraham and Isaac, we learn about how to live with genuine hope.

So, turn with me to Genesis 22 and let's take a closer look at Abraham and Isaac.

**Genesis 22:1-2**

***After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 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 of which I shall tell you."***

This is clearly one of the more difficult sections in all the Bible. God explicitly commands Abraham to sacrifice his son. How can we make sense of this?

If we took a deep dive into answering that, it would take all the time we have this morning. Let me just focus on one thing the text makes abundantly clear: God never intended for Abraham to kill Isaac. Verse 1 makes it clear before anything else happens that the intention of God in all of this was simply to test Abraham. This is a test and only a test. As a matter of fact, God powerfully stops a human sacrifice in this story. So, while there is a lot of mystery here, one thing is abundantly clear, this was a test of Abraham's faith.

And it's incredibly valuable for us to have this account of how a faithful man like Abraham walked through a difficult time of testing because the Bible says God allows our faith to be tested, too.

**1 Peter 1:6-7**

***In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.***

God allows the various trials of our lives as a way for us to see whether our faith is real or counterfeit. In that way, the trials of your faith are precious gifts from God that grow and mature us. When we come through the test and see that we really are trusting in Jesus, we have every reason to rejoice and be glad.

But, in the midst of the trials, it's hard to live with hope. When the heat is turned up, when the threats are real, when it seems like the night won't end, it's common to feel our hope slipping away. How

long will this last? Will life always be this way? What does this mean for my tomorrow? Trials threaten our hope.

And many of us can identify with that today. This room is filled with trials of various kinds today.

- Trials in our marriages and families.
- Trials in our health or finances.
- Trials at our job or in our school.
- Trials in our relationships.

And, because the trials are real, our hope is under attack. How do you live with hope in the midst of the trial? Let's keep reading and we will see.

### **Genesis 22:3-8**

***So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.***

Talk about a test of your faith! God asked Abraham to be willing to lay his beloved son down on the altar. And Isaac wasn't just Abraham's beloved son. Isaac was the embodiment of every future hope Abraham had. Remember, God had made a promise to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky so that Abraham would become the father of a mighty nation and from that nation, God promised to bless all the families of the entire world (ultimately by bringing Jesus into this world)...that was Abraham's future.

But, at the time of our text, all of that is a future dream in the heart of Abraham. He doesn't have a multitude of descendants. He has Isaac. Verse 2 describes him as his only son, the son he loved. And God was calling him to lay that son on the altar. To lay his future, his dreams and plans, on the altar. Just like we could identify with Abraham going through a trial, we can also identify with Abraham here.

As we look out over our future, we don't see hope. We see an altar. Our dreams and plans are either dead or dying. For some, the things we most deeply desire for our future aren't just threatened, they seem impossible.

Our hopes for our marriages or our children or our careers or the kind of life we dream of living, the kind of people we dream of becoming, might as well be dead and gone. It seems impossible.

So, what does Abraham teach us about living with hope when we look out at our future and see sacrificed dreams and plans that now seem impossible? Good question. Let me show you.

### **Genesis 22:5**

***Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."***

As Abraham and Isaac make their way up the mountain, Abe says something interesting. He says he and Isaac would go and worship and come back again. Do you see that? Abraham is confident that Isaac is going up that mountain to worship God in sacrifice. And he is just as confident that Isaac is coming back with him.

That's what hope is. Biblical hope isn't wishful thinking. Biblical hope is a confident expectation for a future good. And that's exactly what Abraham has, a confident expectation that Isaac is coming back with him.

You see that again in verses Genesis 22:7-8:

***And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.***

Isaac is probably somewhere around 18-30 years old here. He's strong enough to be carrying a large pile of firewood up the side of a mountain. So, he's old enough to do some quick math and realize that he and his dad were missing a pretty important part of a sacrifice, namely, the sacrifice. So, he asks Abraham about it and Abraham has this exceptionally confident reply: God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. God will do it.

That's a confident expectation. That's hope. Hope is a confident expectation for a future good.

In the midst of the trial, Abraham lives with biblical hope. But that begs the question, where does Abraham's hope come from? Is it just the power of positive thinking? Is he just a naturally optimistic person who believes good things are going to happen for him?

Let me show you where Abraham's hope comes from.

*Genesis 17:19 –*

*"...Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him."*

Abraham was confident Isaac would live because God had promised to fulfill His covenant promises through Isaac's offspring. Abraham had faith that God would keep His promise, no matter what. That's where Abraham's hope came from, faith in the promises of God.

That's the primary lesson our text teaches us about hope, and it gives us our big idea for today:

**Big Idea: Hope is deeply rooted by faith the promises of God.**

Whatever trial you might be walking through today, you can always live with hope because God has made certain immovable promises to those who are trusting in Jesus.

- He promises to work all things together for your good and His glory.
- He promises to make a river of abundant life flow through you by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- He promises to supply every need according to His riches in Christ Jesus.
- He promises to restore and redeem every broken part of your life.
- He promises to guide the steps of those who trust in Him.
- He promises to give you a place He has prepared in heaven for you.

The bible is filled with amazing promises about the good things God will do in the lives of those who trust in Him. And the key to living with hope, even in the midst of trials, is to deeply root your faith in the promises of God. You can be confident that your trial will turn to triumph. You can be confident the night will turn to day. You can be confident your tears will turn to laughter. You can be confident your grief will turn to glory. Why? Because God has promised it to those in Christ.

Big Application: What specific promises from God are you hoping in today?

If you want to live with hope, then root your life deeply in the promises of God. And when your hope is deeply rooted in the promises of God, it dramatically impacts the way you live. That's what we see in the life of Abraham.

Look at the rest of this story in Genesis 22.

**9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."**

Because Abraham had hope that was deeply rooted in the promises of God, his life was dramatically changed.

And, in the time we have left, let me show you two more things we learn about hope from this time in the life of Abraham.

### DEEPLY ROOTED HOPE BELIEVES GOD BEYOND WHAT WE UNDERSTAND

Abraham knew that Isaac would be coming back down that mountain with him. But he didn't understand how that was actually going to happen. He has Isaac lay down on the altar and he raises the knife believing he would have to take Isaac's life. Listen to the insight Hebrews 11 gives us into the heart of Abraham.

*Hebrews 11:17–19*

*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*

Abraham didn't know how God was going to keep His promise about Isaac, He just knew that He would. He thought God could do what was otherwise impossible, like raising Isaac from the dead. Ultimately, God didn't do that. He kept His promise another way. But Abraham didn't understand that on the front end.

And that's how hope still operates today. We don't have to understand how God will do what He promises to do.

You don't have to understand how God will supply your every need...

or how He will deliver you from every temptation...

or how He will give you peace in the midst of the storm...

or how He will comfort you in the valley of the shadow of death...

or how He will work all the things you are experiencing for your good...

Hope doesn't have to understand how God will do what He's promised to do. Hope simply believes He will. As you walk through the trials of this life, there will be plenty of times when you simply say, "God, I don't understand how you are going to do what you've said you will do." I've got some really good news for you. You don't have to understand how the promise will be fulfilled because you aren't the one who is going to fulfill the promise. God knows and that's all that matters.

Deeply rooted hope believes God beyond what we understand. And...

### DEEPLY ROOTED HOPE OBEYS GOD IN ALL HE COMMANDS

#### **Genesis 22:9-10**

***When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.***

Abraham didn't leave anything out. He didn't go 90% of the way and call it obedience. He didn't get to the top of the mountain and consider his obedience complete. He built an altar. He assembled all the wood in order. He bound Isaac's hands. He put him on top of the wood. Then, he did the hardest thing he would ever have to do, the last thing he was naturally inclined to do. He took the knife in his hand and raised it over his son, his only son, the son that he loved.

Because He hoped in all of God's promises, He was willing to obey all of God's commands.

Obedience flows from a heart that is confident in God.

- When God promises that there is more satisfaction and pleasure in sexual purity than in immorality, hope believes Him and obeys.
- When God promises that there is greater blessing in serving others rather than demanding they serve you, hope believes Him and obeys.
- When God promises that He will bless you when you give sacrificially to His Kingdom, hope believes Him and obeys.

Is there an area of your life that you know God is calling you into greater obedience to Him? What would it look like for your hope to be so deeply rooted in Him that you simply did all that He is calling you to do?

Deeply rooted faith obeys all that God commands. And, what happens when our hope is deeply rooted in God's faithfulness to keep His promises?

God always comes through. Our hope is never misplaced when it's rooted in the promises of God.

Look at Genesis, verse 13:

***And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided."***

God provided a substitute for the sacrifice so that Isaac didn't have to die. And the name of that mountain became, "Jehovah Jireh...the Lord will provide." It was on this same mountain that Solomon would one day build the Temple, and the people of Israel would offer sacrifices year after year...at a place called "The Lord will Provide."

And that's exactly what happened. God would provide a substitute who was a sacrifice. That's one of the major things God is doing as He calls Abraham to lay Isaac on the altar – He is providing a substitutionary sacrifice. He's showing Abraham and all who would follow Abraham that He would provide a substitutionary sacrifice.

Two thousand years after God told Abraham to take the life of Isaac, God sent His Son, His only Son, the Son He loved. In His infinite wisdom, God determined it was right for an innocent person to die so that He could spare a multitude of guilty people...and the LORD Himself became that sacrifice. Like Isaac, Jesus put the wood for the sacrifice on His shoulders as He carried the cross up a hill. He allowed Himself to be laid on an altar. Only this time, there was not substitute because Jesus was the Substitute, the Lamb that God Himself provided to die for the sins of men, yours and mine.

Jesus was born to die in our place so He could bless this world with salvation. That's the ultimate fulfilment of the promise Abraham believed. That's the hope Christ brought at Christmas.

And that brings us to the Lord's Supper. This is a table of hope. It's the expression that we believe the promises of God that are fulfilled for us in Christ.