

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

July 2, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Genesis 22: 1-14

Responsive Reading; Psalm 89: 11-18

Epistle Reading; Romans 6: 12-23

Gospel Reading; Mathew 10: 40-42

Sermon Title: Prime the Pump

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; As you sow, so shall you reap. If you are not willing to give all you have for God, you will never receive all that God has for you.

Today's topic is Faith. Faith is something we seem to give lip service to and then skip on to something more interesting. We hear and say things like, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed you can move mountains."

Yady ya da, OK, I got that much faith so what is the big deal?

The big deal is what we see in our Old Testament lesson.

Abraham is told by God to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering to

God. Hey, this is Isaac, this is the son that Abraham waited for until he was one hundred years old. This is the son that is supposed to be the start of a lineage that would outnumber the sands of the earth and the stars in the sky. This was the promise from God. This is the son that Abraham loved. How could this be?

So, how did Abraham react? Did Abraham question God? Did Abraham argue with God? Did Abraham refuse to comply? No. "So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him."

Somehow Abraham still had total faith. Notice that when he saw the mountain a far off, he said to the young men with them, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship and WE will come back to you." WE will come back. How could that be?

Next when Isaac asked his father where was the lamb for the offering, Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the Lamb for a burnt offering."

What was Abraham thinking? Did he think that God would stop the procedure, or would God raise Isaac from the dead, or what? That is just the point. Abraham did not think. Abraham BELIEVED! Abraham believed in God's promise right up to when

he reached for, “the knife to slay the boy”. Abraham had faith a whole lot bigger than a mustard seed.

How does this relate to us and anything that would even come close to this requirement for total faith? To bring this into perspective for us, let me read you the words to a song called, Desert Pete.

I was travelin' west a buckskin on my way to a cattle run, Cross a little cactus desert under a hot blisterin' sun, I was thirsty down to my toenails, stopped to rest me on a stump, But I tell ya I just couldn't believe it when I saw that water pump, I took it to be a mirage at first, it'll fool a thirsty man, Then I saw a note stuck in a bakin' powder can, This pump is old, the note began, but she works so give'er a try, I put a new sucker washer in'er, you may find the leather dry.

You've got to prime the pump, you must have faith and believe. You've got to give of yourself 'fore you're worthy to receive. Drink all the water you can hold, wash your face, cool your feet. Leave the bottle full for others, thank you kindly, desert Pete.

Yeah, you'll have to prime the pump, work that handle like there's a fire. Under that rock you'll find some water I left in a biters jar. Now there's just enough to prime it with so dont'cha go drinkin' first. You just pour it in and pump like mad, buddy you'll quench your thirst.

*You've got to prime the pump, you must have faith and believe.
You've got to give of yourself 'fore worthy to receive.*

*Drink all the water you can hold, wash face, cool your feet.
Leave the bottle full for others, thank you kindly, desert Pete.*

*Well I found that jar and I tell ya nothin' was ever prettier to my
eye. And I was tempted strong to drink it, 'cause that pump
looked mighty dry. But the note went on have faith my friend,
there's water down below. You've got to give until you get—I'm
the one that ought to know. So, I poured in the jar and I started
pumpin' and I heard a beautiful sound. Of water bubblin' and
splashin' up out of that hole in the ground. I took off my shoes
and drunk my fill of that cool refreshing treat. I thank the Lord
and thank the pump and I thank old desert Pete.*

*You've got to prime the pump, you must have faith and believe.
You've got to give of yourself 'fore you're worthy to receive.
Drink all the water you can hold, wash your face, cool your feet.
Leave the bottle full for others, thank you kindly, desert Pete.*

*Drink all the water you can hold, wash your face, cool your feet.
Leave the bottle full for others, thank you kindly, desert Pete.*

Now, can you better relate to this? You are about to die of
thirst and you find a bottle of water and an old dry pump. The
note says the pump works. But, what if it doesn't? That bottle
will only prolong your life a couple hours and a well full of fresh

water could save your life. What if you prime the pump and it does not work? If that happens you not only don't have your life saved, you even lose the few hours of life the bottle would have given you.

What do you do now? If you drink that water in the bottle it is only a temporary fix. You will most likely die and so will anyone coming across the well with no prime bottle in the future. But what if it does not work?

Desert Pete is talking about water that sustains the body but Jesus offers water that sustains the soul. In John 7: 37 and 38 Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Faith is not an easy thing to embrace but faith can make the difference between living and existing. We do not base our faith on what we see but rather on what we believe. God left us something a whole lot more reassuring than a note in a baking powder can. God has given us His word in the Bible and the proof of the validity of that word in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of His Son Jesus Christ.

If we thirst after righteousness Jesus will quench our thirst. We will have our thirst quenched but first we must prime the pump. We must be willing to pour ourselves into Jesus in order for Jesus to fill us to overflowing with the Holy Spirit.

God would never have allowed Abraham to sacrifice his son. God is appalled by human sacrifice. God would never ask us to give up our child for Him but God loves us so much that He gave up His son for us. The story of Abraham and Isaac is a spoiler alert for what we can expect of God. God is a pump that we can trust with our lives and with our souls.

As we sow, so shall we reap. If we are not willing to take a deep breath and give God our total confidence then Jesus died in vain. Jesus said in our gospel, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward." Anything we commit to God will be acknowledged but, if we give our "total" commitment to God, He will bestow us with His "total" grace.

Let's prime the pump and live life abundantly.

Hallelujah and Amen.