

First Things First

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[0 : 00] This morning we're going to be in Genesis chapter 22, so you're welcome to open up there in the meantime, just so that you're ready when we do read the passage together.

We're starting this morning with a new teaching series called Old Testament Images of Christ. And over the next few weeks we're going to be building up towards Easter, and so we're going to be looking at particular passages.

Obviously there's quite a few, there are more than the number of weeks leading up to Easter from today, but we've picked a few that we think will be really helpful for us as we prepare our hearts for the Easter season.

They all are significant in that in some way they foreshadow or anticipate Christ's work on the cross. And so over the next few weeks we're hoping to bring out some of those links, and hopefully as a congregation we will experience a growing appreciation for the depth and the richness of God's Word from beginning to end.

And our hope in this too is that we will begin to have a greater sense of the unity of Scripture. In other words, we celebrate Easter once a year, we celebrate Christmas once a year, and sometimes it just feels like these seasons drop out of nowhere, even though they're on the calendar in the same place every year, they can kind of take us by surprise and let them creep up on us.

[1 : 21] And the wonderful thing about God's Word is that there are no surprises. There's this beautiful unfolding story. And it does come as a surprise, but when we see it, when we see the story for what it is, we realize, hey, we shouldn't really have been that surprised because it is there all along.

And so we're hopeful that over the next few weeks we will catch a glimpse of that, of how God has been preparing His people right from the very beginning for the coming one, the coming Savior, and for His work on that cross in His death and in His glorious resurrection, which we hold to as the reason we're together this morning.

We come to worship because of what Christ did 2,000 years ago on that cross. He is the climax of this story. He is the climax of the world's story. And we get to remind ourselves of that every single Sunday as we come and open God's Word and sit together under it as His people.

So I'm going to pray. Let me read the passage, then I'm going to pray. And then we can work through it together. Genesis chapter 22. And if anyone has really lost Genesis, it's right at the beginning of the Bible.

So it's an easy one today. The trickier passages are coming in weeks to come. And we're just going to do from verses 1 to 19. Sometime later, God tested Abraham.

[2 : 45] He said to him, Abraham, here I am, he replied. 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 that I will show you. 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 that God had told him about. On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 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. Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and he placed it on his son Isaac. And he himself carried the fire and the knife.

As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, Father, yes, my son, Abraham replied. The fire and wood are here, Isaac said.

[3 : 53] But where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Abraham answered, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son. And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told them 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. Then he reached out his hand and he took the knife to slay his son.

But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, Abraham, Abraham, here I am, he replied. 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.

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. And so Abraham called that place, the Lord will provide.

[4 : 52] And to this day he said, on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided. The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 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, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me. Then Abraham returned to his servants and they set off together for Beersheba, and Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Let's pray together. I'm just going to drop this a little bit. There we go. Our Father, we thank you this morning for your word. Lord, we thank you each week as we sit unrooted together that you speak to us.

Lord, we are hopeful and we know, Lord, that you are present with us by your spirit now. And as we come wanting to hear, Father, you are wanting to speak. And so, Lord, we pray that you would give us the ears we need to hear, not just ears on the sides of our head, but in some sense you'd give our hearts ears to hear your voice.

Lord, would you call us to yourself? Would you help us to see Christ? Would you help us to understand? Would you help us to obey and to follow? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. So, I'm going to take you back to a dark period of life, a period I'm sure we've all tried to put behind us.

[6 : 26] Not too long ago, we were all locked up in homes, unable to speak to people in person. We had wonderful things like Zoom calls, which is the novelty of which we'll grieve in very quickly for me at least.

But we had the internet. Great for the internet. Who of you watched a lot of YouTube during lockdown? Thank you. Okay. I see that hand, brother. In our home, we discovered YouTube in a way we never had before, too.

James and I particularly discovered a sort of genre of videos that we had never watched before.

And these were, well, let me give some names and see if you, I want to see who, I want to see who knows these guys.

If I say Fabio Vipma. Okay. Put up your hand if you know Fabio Vipma. There we go. The cool guys. These are the coolest guys in the church. Okay. Danny, and I'm going to say his name wrong, Macaskill.

Macaskill. Only two guys. Does nobody else know these names? Okay. These are Red Bull-sponsored epic mountain bike riders. I've just shown you how uncool I am by...

[7 : 32] But I'm not saying that, and I'm sure the way we're supposed to. These are the guys who get sponsored by Red Bull to make videos of themselves going down crazy inclines, doing incredible tricks that your mind cannot believe, cycling on the tops of mountains and on tiny ledges, like where if you fall you really are going to die kind of scenarios.

And we watched these movies or videos. Our minds were blown. The two guys who raised their hands, are you mountain bikers?

Is that why you raised your hands? Is anybody in the church a mountain biker? You take your bike and you go in the mountain and you're right. No one in this church is a mountain biker.

Really? You all know a mountain biker. Correct? Okay. And I'm going to use that as an example for lots of other things we do, where we do it at what I'd call a very...

I'm not a mountain biker. But if I was a mountain biker, I would do it at a very sort of average level. I don't know if anyone in the room can relate to that assessment of myself.

[8 : 42] I don't know if you put yourself in the same category. And then you've got guys out there, like Fabio Wipmer and Danny Makaskill, who are what we aspire to be, but we know we'll never, ever really get there.

And so it's actually more we just enjoy the spectacle, the entertainment of how amazing they are. But they are the outliers. But truth be told, I'm very happy, actually, with my average fictional mountain biking experience.

I think most of us in the room, in whatever it is that you enjoy and do, can probably relate, I think, at least to that self-assessment and the sense of there are these amazing people out there who just achieve and push the limits in ways that we cannot even get our heads around.

Now, we've just read a pretty crazy story. And I want to be clear, and I will clarify this a little bit more in just a bit. There are a number of elements that make the story we have read very unique and very specific to Abraham and to what God's doing in this particular moment.

And so we do need to be careful in the way we apply this story to ourselves today. But what we do essentially have here is a pretty hectic story about all-out faith, all-out devotion to God.

[10:09] I don't know if you've picked up on that, as Abraham walks up the hill in obedience to what God has told him to do. I wonder, though, as you hear that story this morning, whether, hearing that story, you feel like maybe you're watching a Red Bull YouTube video.

There's someone there pushing the limits of what it means to follow God, but we automatically characterize him as an outlier, a Fabio Vipma, maybe.

And while finding it very inspiring and maybe even very motivating, we want to get up here and we want to make some changes to our own lives, we automatically draw a little box around what we're comfortable with in terms of our own following God, our own loyalty to God.

And we designate that as the normal because, hey, that's where most of us are. We're not there. We're kind of, this is what normal looks like, rather than that spectacle, maybe, which is clearly not a realistic expectation for the rest of us.

Is it? Or is it? Here's the thing, though. As we're going to engage with the story this morning, it will be very clear that although the story is very unique in some of the particulars of what God is doing in a bigger, redemptive, historical sense and how he's using Abraham and the story he's kind of putting together here in this, it is not at all unique in the idea that we actually do all owe God the same absolute loyalty, the same absolute devotion and trust and obedience that we do see Abraham displaying here.

[11:52] We're going to think about that from a few angles as we go along, but we're going to use the text kind of in its two basic movements as our two basic major movements for the sermon this morning.

In verses 1 to 12, we have the test. We have Abraham being called to do something pretty radical by God. And as we look at the details there, we're going to see what it means.

We're going to see this incredible example on display, what it means to truly trust and obey God.

We're going to see that. As we come to the second part of the story, verses 13 to 19, as we see God switching gears here and bringing us exciting surprise into the story, God bringing provision, the provision part of the story, we're going to see something different.

We're going to see how God makes it possible for us to truly trust and obey Him. So the first half, we can see this picture of what it means to truly trust and obey God.

And as we move through the story, I hope we can have a growing sense of how God makes it possible for us to actually trust and obey Him. So let's spend a little bit of time in that first part, the test.

[13:06] And I call it the test because that's exactly what's happening here. You can take a look at verse 1. It starts with the words, and sometime later, God tested Abraham.

Now, before we do go further, I do need to clarify a few things. Although God does test us from time to time, and Abraham is a model of true faith and obedience for us, we do need to recognize that there is a unique element to this particular public test that is unlike any kind of testing we may experience under God's hand and under His care in our lives.

That said, it is still of great benefit for us, and He's going to say a lot to us. God is going to test Abraham, but the elements of the story are important to show us something very specific.

Now, one of the big differences between you and me in this category of people and Abraham, in whatever category of people he is, is that Abraham is actually an Old Testament prophet.

He's used by God to declare God's Word. God uses him in a special way, and He uses a few people, particularly through the Old Testament, in this way. And the one thing we have to realize about Old Testament prophets is that God communicates His particular message at a particular time for a particular purpose through what they say and what they do very often.

[14 : 30] In other words, He often makes their lives part of the story and part of the picture of what He's trying to communicate. If you were to go further along in the Old Testament, you find another story that is maybe a little bit jarring to our senses.

Hosea is told by God to marry an unfaithful woman who He knows is going to be repeatedly unfaithful. He's told to marry her and to be faithful and continue to shower loyal love upon her and that's meant to be a picture of Israel and their unfaithfulness to God and how God continually moves towards them to woo them back and restore them but they keep running away in unfaithfulness.

It's kind of like that. That's how God uses prophets often in the Old Testament. So the details of this test are very specific. Now that's important because it helps us to make sense of one of the difficulties in the passage.

The elephant in the room. That the test is for Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice to God. Now that is not just extreme but as we sit here with our modern sensibilities that is very jarring to us. And it makes us ask questions about God Himself because we have no category for child sacrifice in our society and if we had to go across religions and across cultures we'd all be very shaken by a call to do something like this for God.

[16 : 02] Now however terrible it is and it is truly terrible we must remember that Abraham in his day in the context of the ancient cultures he found himself there was a category for something like this.

It is very common possibly that human sacrifice took place as a way to appease or pacify the gods or a particular god to push back his anger for something to ward off disaster or to win special attention.

This was not as uncommon then as it is now. And so in Abraham's day as he is sitting there in that context child sacrifice was a real option.

So in that sense he isn't totally shocked possibly by the idea that God could ask that of him. But it is important that we read it in context and we read the story and we get through the end of the story because one of the things that will become very apparent by the end of the story is that although God starts with this test and the test has this chilling command by the end of the story we see a very different picture of God.

It is almost like God is putting this forward and at the end of it he is saying I am exactly the opposite of the supposed deities around you Abraham.

[17 : 29] I do not need to be pacified or placated by a sacrifice of that nature in the way that the culture around you says that the gods need you.

I will not be manipulated by something like that. In fact as we are going to see God offers the provision for the sacrifice in a very dramatic way down the line.

And so the picture although jarring at first is meant to it is meant to confront an idea by contrasting God by his actions who he will show himself to truly be as the story unfolds.

So at least in that sense on one level we need to realize that this is not what it may seem to be in that first encounter as we hear it and in the sort of the gods we put up that may prevent us from seeing and hearing the rest of what is actually there and what the story is actually about.

So it's put you at rest. God does eventually make it very explicit and clear in the commandments he gives and in the unfolding narrative of the Old Testament scripture that child sacrifice and human sacrifice are explicitly condemned and so we see that unity playing out and made clearer as the Old Testament narrative goes on.

[18 : 54] Which means this is the safety rail here because he's never going to test you and ask you to do this. The minute you hear something like that we throw it out that is it's very unique one time thing that is happening here.

Now although the concept of being asked to sacrifice his child may still have been a shock to Abraham I think that his real shock was actually at something attached to that.

It wasn't that he was asked to sacrifice a child it was that he was asked to sacrifice this child Isaac. Isaac was the son that God had promised him and if you've been following along about the story of Abraham in the chapters leading up to this we will know that this comes at the end of a long period of time where God has called Abraham to himself and has been making him promises all really caught up in one essential promise that Abraham I'm going to give you an heir a seed and through the seed I'm going to bring blessing to all the world.

It took a while for that promise to come to be and it's a miracle because Abraham in his very old age and Sarah his wife in her very old age have this son and he is born.

Isaac is his name and it's a promise. Isaac is a gift in his own right as a child in that family but Isaac represents the great promise of God that Abraham this thing that I'm doing is not just about you and it's not just for you this will be for all the world and I'm going to bring a greater promise a greater truth a greater reality that you have no way of even understanding right now out of this all people on earth will be blessed through you and this is confirmed in multiple ways through the passages leading up to chapter 22 where we are now.

[20 : 54] Take a quick look at some details of the story verse 2 God says take your son your only son whom you love Isaac almost like it goes into slow motion here it's very clear that the command God is giving at least in Abraham's mind and as we put the details together will become very apparent to us is in stark contrast or contradiction to the promise he has made do you see the contradiction?

Abraham take your son who I have promised will be the one through whom I will bring blessing to all the world take that son and kill him offer him to me in effect put an end to the promise bring it to a closure that makes no sense in Abraham's mind makes no sense to us how does Abraham respond?

well maybe stop for a second and ask yourself well how would I respond? verse 3 early in the morning why early in the morning? well presumably he had it the night before this came to him early the next morning without delay Abraham moves quickly to do the thing that God asks him to do verse 4 it says it takes them three days to get to where God tells them to go three days that's not an unimportant detail it's hugely important it underscores the resolve of Abraham's faith now put yourself in that situation I'll put myself in the situation and you can live vicariously through me doing that if I'm given this command by God everything inside of me is saying absolutely not no way how could I do that?

everything inside of me is resisting that I'm probably going to procrastinate put it off as long as I can Abraham goes the next morning I've got three days to journey that means I've got three days to think about this to carry this to find every possible way to rationalize not going through with it three days is a long time to find a lot of good reasons why God might actually be saying something else you'd agree with that Abraham gets to his destination three days and he's on track he believes somehow that not even death can stop God's promises God had reminded him in 21 chapter 21 verse 12 that through Isaac your offspring shall be named Abraham believes somehow that no matter what happens to him up on this mountain

God has to have a way of holding the promise and this command to get in such a way that the one does not defeat or destroy the other in fact with hindsight if we were to go over to the book of Hebrews this is exactly how the author of Hebrews interprets Abraham's reasoning over those three days Abraham's making sense of what God might be doing Abraham wrestling with God how do I be obedient knowing that this just doesn't add up the author of the writer of Hebrews says that by faith Abraham when he was tested offered up Isaac he considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead which figuratively speaking he did receive him back how could Abraham move through a period of three days and still get to the point where he's willing to obey God to the very end on this extreme in this extreme action somehow

[24 : 46] Abraham had able to reconcile what he'd come to know about with his God and his God's faithfulness to keeping his promise to arrive at a point where he wasn't just acting with blind faith God you said it I'm going to do it and there's nothing more to it it was God you said it and I'm going to do it but it was deeply rooted in a coherent thought that said God must have a way of keeping his promise that my action of obedience is not going to undermine or overturn or jeopardize and the only way you could make sense of that would be that God is going to resurrect Isaac because if he doesn't the promise ends and God is not going to break his promise this wasn't just a little promise this was the promise that had become his identity the promise to which he had looked and had grown to look and knew the whole world eventually would look towards in some way or another even though he didn't know the details and particulars of everything he knew that God would have to have a solution and in his mind the only thing that made sense was that

Isaac lives at the end of this however it plays out but I'm not in control over that I need to be obedient to what God has told me and I'm going to trust him and I'm going to let him be in control I'm going to submit to him the climax of the story comes in verse 12 what a relief do not do anything

to him now I know and take note of this phrase now I know that you fear God because you have not withheld from me your son your only son and yeah we are shown what the great purpose of the test was Abraham didn't know it was a test it would be nice to know oh it's just a test I get to the top God makes it all clear it was just a test it didn't feel like just a test but we have shown what the purpose of the test was now I know that you fear God your fear of me will be shown to be true that little phrase fear of God can be a tricky thing to understand when we hear the word fear we associate it with the word terror that is entirely right in many ways terror of judgment

God is holy majestic in ways we cannot even understand that's not what it means here the other meaning of the word fear when it's spoken in terms of fear of God like we have here is this idea of treating God as God seeing him as God and putting him above all else there's a reverence and an awe associated with it and accompanying that is a loyalty and a love and an obedience a trust and it's in these words that we suddenly realize that even though this test is very specific to Abraham the thing that is found to be true in Abraham is meant to be found true in each one of us he isn't meant to be the outlier in this sense the Red Bull extreme video a life lived out in complete loyalty to love for the one true

God the fear of God is what that phrase is saying that's meant to be true for all of us that comes throughout the scripture 10 commandment starts with these words in Exodus 20 verse 3 you shall have no other gods before me it's the same idea there's nothing else that's meant to be higher in your loyalties or your affections or your subservience to you it is me I am the one true God and that is true for all of us not just Abraham and in this test the story Abraham's example God gives us a vivid picture of what this looks like the fear of God is an abstract concept this picture gives us the details it gives us the concrete bits that make us understand what it is what is the fear of God concretely it's trust it is obedience but it has the question how do you put God first in your life well the passage gives us the answer trust and obey you can think of it like a little dance and again I'm the last person speaking to you about dancing just as I'm the last person you should be speaking to you about mountain biking because I have unlike mountain biking maybe I might want to have aspirations for something I have zero aspirations when it comes to anything related to the dance floor my wife married me despite that fatal flaw in this person that'll make sense if you realize she grew up in Stellenbosch if you grew up in Stellenbosch you dance you've all been in Stellenbosch the word for it is called soki for the Americans amongst us you can ask someone what soki means just now I literally have a phobia when it comes to dancing I'd rather be in the middle of the dance floor not dancing I'm more comfortable doing that than attempting to dance I'm the last person who should be talking to you about dancing but I'm going to anyway if I had to call the fear of the Lord was a dance like the waltz or the whatever the fear of the

[30 : 26] Lord the steps of that dance it's just a two step dance it's a nice easy one the steps would be obedience and trust trust and obey obey and trust trust and obey that is what the dance looks like that is what life in harmony with God looks like when you're dancing with God you're trusting and obeying that's what it is but here's the problem when I read a story like this I still feel like Abraham is the Red Bull video superhero the outlier the unachievable example because I know my own heart and I know how much I struggle with that dance even though it's supposedly so easy that's what they tell you when you go to stand and watch it's easy it's not easy I know how much I get the stance wrong trust and obey I know how scared I am of what

I may lose if I'm going to be obedient to God in an area of my life I know how afraid I am to trust him I know how much I actually prefer the comfort of partial commitment to Christianity that still allows me to feel like a reasonably good person in other words I like being in my average Christian box with everyone else there may be a part of us that hears the story of Abraham sees the example and says that's right that's the bar I'm going to go for it if Abraham could do it so can I that may be you this morning problem is even if it is you it's not going to be too long before you realize again that we can't do it perfectly and maybe that's what the story is actually meant to do for us this morning maybe it's not meant to say to us here is Abraham see the bar see the example now go out there and be like him maybe it is to show us this rare picture of a human getting it right for a brief moment showing us the standard but as we hear it like when

I watch the Red Bull video I see the gap and at the very same time as I'm seeing the standard the inconsistencies of my own heart are being exposed to me maybe that's what I'm supposed to get from this story this morning that would make sense because if I were to go to the New Testament and I read a passage like Romans chapter 3 in verses 9 in verse 10 he says these words he says

Jews and Gentiles all people are under the power of sin as it is written there is no one righteous not even one verse 11 there is no one who understands there is no one who seeks God verse 18 listen to the words there is no fear of God before their eyes in other words this is our natural condition we do not fear God we do not love him we are not absolutely loyal to him even if we see it as a good thing and even if we try to make strides in that direction even if we get as good as we possibly can we eventually have to admit that we cannot do it consistently we cannot do it perfectly because that struggle of the heart is always real and is always ours and so for the wonderful model of faith that Abraham is his life bears testimony to this very same reality in fact if you were to go look at some of the other details of his life even our best moments aren't perfectly sustainable that's why the second part of Genesis 22 is so important for us this morning the part about God's provision because it's in this part of the story that we find God laying a platform for something radically different a new reality whereby we can be set free from the power of sin as Romans 3 described it and to make it possible for us to truly trust and obey him let's take a quick look at verses 13 to 18 again the first thing to take notice of in verses 13 and 14 is that used to us in

God's unfolding revelation for the first time a substitutionary sacrifice in the place of Isaac and that is a theme that gets developed very very much throughout the rest of the Old Testament and into the New Testament in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament temple and the Day of Atonement and what it means to live in relationship to God and how we are made right with God so it's a very important first step to take notice of in this passage the idea of a substitute something in someone's place the ram in the place of Isaac the second thing to take note of is verse 18 do you notice the words that God uses that are used here the promise is declared again the promise that Abraham was holding on to in the very beginning from Genesis 12 Genesis 15 Genesis 17 is repeated through your offspring all nations on the earth will be blessed in other words whatever is happening in the story we know that it is not restricted to just what's happening there is this pointing forward we are alerted to the idea this is going somewhere this is part of something else part of a bigger story and our senses need to be we need to see that we need to take note of that the third thing to take notice of and this is not immediately apparent from the words that I'm going to tell you because you wouldn't have the cheat sheet that I have in front of me to know it but that substitutionary atonement idea that substitutionary sacrifice idea that we see here in a root form it becomes a central theme in the

[37 : 15] Old Testament but throughout the Old Testament this is the only time where we see God himself providing the sacrifice every other time we see the people of God bringing something to be sacrificed this is the only time we see God himself provide the sacrifice important to know that God and I want to alert you to one more little phrase which has significance in verse 14 and then read it to us Abraham called that place the Lord will provide and to this day he said on the mountain of the Lord it will be provided I want you to take all those thoughts I want to hold them together and I want to tell you another story about a father who leads his son up the hill the story happens many years later it happens in the

New Testament when the promised one that seed of Isaac of Abraham Isaac and wherever that line is going is made is revealed his name is Jesus Christ and as climactic as this story is it's really the first part of a great story that God tells through the pages of scripture leading up to a moment that looks and tastes and feels a little bit like this but we begin to see this is only a shadow of a father who leads his son up a hill carrying a cross on his back his only son as a sacrifice and we're told in the pages of the new testament as a substitutionary sacrifice in other words in the place of and the new testament will make clear in the place of you and I and on that hill as the sacrifice in a sense is prepared the story would lead us to the point we're waiting for the knife to be stopped except in that story the knife is not stopped and

Jesus dies on a cross now I want you to just feel something of that for a second in a way that this story we've just read helps us to feel when when we hear the Easter story we hear the story of Jesus on the cross we hear it as a story and it may be jarring in its imagery it may be moving and inspiring in many ways too but very seldom have I heard that story and has my heart felt something of what God's heart must have felt on that day Genesis 22 put yourself in the place of Abraham because that's the closest example the closest reference point we have and imagine his heart breaking when you look at the cross that sanitized cross and we see the blood and the guts but hidden from our eyes is the broken heart of the father who does not make an excuse and who does not hold back his hand but for the redemption of a people who have no other hope the willing son

dies feel the heart of the father and know that in his mind's eye he sees his son but in his son he sees his church he sees every person for whom

Christ dies on that glorious day he sees you and he sees me that little two step dance I told you about earlier in my Salamote was a wonderful time except for those moments we went to a lot of 21sts there were haste dances eventually went to weddings everywhere you went it was dancing I couldn't escape it I never learned how to dance the soki I mean my wife was very sneaky sometimes she got me onto the dance floor and I had no option because then it would look worse for me to abandon my wife on the dance floor than to look terrible soki with her on the dance floor I never learned how to soki despite that the trust and obedience dance harmony with God we get to participate in that dance because Christ danced perfectly in our place first as he went up the hill as he died on that cross and as he calls us to follow him and as he says come and receive what I've done for you as you look to that cross as you see what I've done for you to bring repentance and faith to bring you harmony with God because you could never do that dance properly as I restore you to your dancing partner and as I call you to enjoy because trusting and obeying is not how you're going to earn harmony with God Christ has done that for us now I call you to enjoy harmony with God and grow in trusting and obeying there's a new little dance you need to learn that goes along with that that is going to help you to do that dance properly it's also a two step dance one thing I noticed when I was in Stellenbosch is that the people who could silk you really well the ones who could spin you around and literally throw the girl into the air catch her again that was the fancy stuff maybe that was the trust and obeys stuff there was a very basic something they were doing before then and if someone got a little bit lost in their dance weaves they could go back to this basic pattern and to the untrained eye it would look seamless and flawless and they could go back to the first things the basics

[43 : 43] I want to suggest to you that in the gospel as God calls us into this renewed dance with our father the dance that teaches us is another little two word dance and it's these two words very similar to trust and obey but I think you'll see how they're going to make the link and get us to where we need to go here it's these two words faith and repentance very similar but I want you to see how different the starting points are and I want you to hear this this morning if you are a person who's been a Christian for a long time and you've trusted in Jesus for a long time I want to hear this and if you're maybe sitting here this morning and you're hearing this for the first time and you're thinking well what does it mean to follow Jesus where do I start it's the same for you repentance and faith very similar how do they the same and I do the faith part kind of matches up to the trust part the repentance part matches up to the obedience part works like this how do we walk in relationship with God well I know my heart

I know my need for the Saviour Christ has died for me he has made me a new creation this is incredible but my heart still needs a lot of work and I still get the trust and I stuff wrong a lot but I aspire I want to go I want Christ to change I want to be what God has called me to be in Christ how do I get how do I do that dance I do that dance by rehearsing these two basic first steps over and over again that they become the pattern of my life where will those lead me they will lead me to the change of heart that says I can obey God and I find that I am obeying God more they will lead me to the understanding of the father the one whom I can trust this is how it works when I come and I respond to Christ for the first time the bible says I need to confess my sin

I need to repent I need to admit that I get the obedience dance wrong why is that important well it's honest and it puts me in a place where I can receive help from God I can't do when I'm trying to make it all right on my own but it's not on its own that I do that step I have to take the next step with it the step of faith what this is saying just like actually very similar to Abraham it says God you have given me a great promise in Christ you have promised that I am a new creation you have promised me that my sins have been taken away as far as the east is from the west you have told me that I am your child you have told me that a day is coming when all things will be made new including me I will be made new in the image of Christ when I sin when I struggle and I take those first two steps of repentance and faith I settle my heart and my mind and my identity in the place they need to be settled in Christ himself and from that place

God leads me to pursue obedience because when I repent it also means I'm turning towards something else what God is calling me to when I express faith and I realize Jesus you alone you alone I hold on to that promise I'm not worthy but I hold on to that promise well my trust and understanding of God himself is growing each and every time and so what you should see in the

Christian life the one who's responded to Christ is this I trust and I obey and as I get that step wrong I repent and have faith again God lifts me up and reminds me of who I am in Christ and I take a step further and I swing Nicolette a little bit quicker this time around in obedience and faith and I take a little wobble and I trust in a van I steady myself and as life goes on that dance becomes more beautiful more harmonious

I'm more in step with my father who is leading me in that incredible dance how do we follow God we want to trust and obey but we start with repent and have faith we look to Jesus and God will work this out in us for his glory and I hope that as you read the story again at some point that you will not just see the outlier the red bull expert achieving something that we never can and to find renewed hope in the promise of Christ and his ongoing work in our lives to lead us to that place of glory for his glory and by his grace let's pray together as we end there our father we thank you so much that we come to you and as we pray this prayer of thanksgiving lord as we give thanks for

[49 : 14] Christ as we give thanks for your grace to us as we give thanks oh lord that you do not deal with us as our sins deserve because in Christ you already have dealt with our sins as they need to be lord we come before you and we come humbly the story makes us humble but it also makes us hopeful lord and so we thank you god that as we come to you now we can know that we are your children that we can know that we are redeemed that we can know that we have this identity and we can sincerely pray help us to follow you knowing that you will answer that oh lord lord would you teach us to dance in that sense would you grow us in obedience and faith and trust and repentance would you grow us in holiness would you grow us in the image of our saviour that we might enjoy you and love you in increasing measure each day and we ask this in jesus name amen