



JEHOVAH JIREH

Very few people can afford to give expensive presents these days. In fact, most people spend a lot of time shopping for the least costly items – stuff manufactured with cheap labor in other countries. We still have to get used to this new reality of tight-money economy. An average-income family can no longer afford to give expensive Christmas gifts.

Where did this idea of giving and expecting expensive presents come from? What about God? Does He expect costly gifts from His people? The Bible contains stories of people whose giving to God cost them a lot. Jesus praised the widow who gave her last “mites” – two copper coins of very little value, but it was all she had to live on (**Luke 21:2-4**). He honored Mary’s act of worship which involved a very expensive perfume, costing Mary her life savings (**John 12:1-8**).

God is not a stranger to high-priced gifts. The truth is He gave the most costly gift ever – Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son (**John 3:16**). He did this to save sinful humanity. In doing so, He demonstrated to all creation that His love for us knows no bounds. The gift of Jesus Christ to humankind shows the immeasurable immensity of God’s generous heart.

Because God created us in His own image and intends to restore us to godlikeness, He wants us to experience and actualize His love in our relationships, first with Him and then with others. So, when God asks us to offer Him something that is costly to us, it is His way of sharing with us His own experience of love-giving. When He gives us His love, He also gives us the capacity to love like He does. Along with this capacity to love, He also gives us the resources to give costly gifts of love.

The Dome of the Rock, one of Islam’s most sacred mosques was constructed in Jerusalem in A.D. 691. It actually sits on top of Mount Moriah (the site where Solomon built the temple, **2 Chron. 3:1**), where God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (**Gen. 22**). This was the first instance in the Scriptures that man was required to give God a costly gift.

One day, God said to Abraham, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering.” There is no question that what God commanded Abraham to do was not only difficult, it was very costly. Simply stated, he was being ordered to kill and burn up his only son on the altar of sacrifice. Abraham could have thought that what God was instructing him to do was barbaric and paganistic. Why did God want him to do this hard, unloving thing?

Isaac was no ordinary person. Besides being the only son of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac was the “promised son.” To Abraham, Isaac was the central essence of God’s covenant with him. Through his only son, God promised to bless all the nations of the earth. Abraham loved Isaac not only because he was his only son, but also because Isaac was God’s miracle – a gift to an old childless couple. Abraham and Sarah treasured Isaac not only because of what he meant (as the promised means of blessing), but also because of where he came from. Isaac came from God! He was God’s gift to them. They valued the gift because of who the Giver was.

This story shows that Abraham was no ordinary God-fearing person. He was a friend of God. He had a “power lunch” with God. God confided in him his plans for Sodom and Gomorrah. Why, he even managed to negotiate better terms for the wicked cities before their eventual destruction (**Gen. 18**). As God’s friend, he could have asked to be delivered from such an impossible assignment. But Abraham knew that God is good and all-wise and all-powerful. Most important of all, he knew that God could be trusted. *“It was by faith that Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice when God was testing him. Abraham, who had received God’s promises, was ready to sacrifice his only son, Isaac.”* (**Heb. 11:17** NLT).

In spite of the difficulty involved, it was by faith that Abraham saw God’s greatest test for him also as a gift. It was God sharing His Father’s heart-throb for His only Son. By asking His friend Abraham to sacrifice his only son, God shared with him His own experience of sacrificing of His only begotten Son. On Mount Moriah God gave Abraham the privilege of friendship without boundaries. Between them nothing was off the table. As friends they would not withhold anything from each other. They could ask each other anything. And as friends they would value the givers more than the gifts. On Mount Moriah Abraham finally saw God as the costly gift-giver that He is. Isaac was God’s gift of love to Abraham. But the greatest gift of love – Jesus Christ – would come later through Isaac’s bloodline.

Abraham did not need to sacrifice Isaac. There was already “a ram in the thicket.” (**Gen. 22:13**) He understood that day that there was only one sacrifice that God would accept as a ransom for sinful humanity. The true sacrifice would be what God would provide Himself – His only begotten Son. On Mount Moriah Abraham learned that the sacrifice that God demands He Himself provides. So he called that place “Jehovah Jireh” (The Lord Will Provide).

When our Mount Moriah experience comes along, how will we see it? Will we view it as God demanding of us a costly gift that we cannot afford? Or will we see it as God sharing His gift of love with us? It is my prayer and hope that we will see our Mount Moriah tests as God-given opportunities to experience our Jehovah Jireh.