



Genesis 22:1-14  
 What's In A Name?  
 The Lord Will Provide: Jehovah Jireh

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This morning we start a new series of messages called, “What’s In A Name?” and I would like to begin with some opening remarks about the series before we dive into today’s passage. In this series we will look at a number of the names of God given to us in the Bible. This series will take us all the way through to the end of this wretched excuse of a year...oh, wow...I am sorry, did I just say that? Let me try that again: this series will take us all the way through to the end of 2020.

Rather than just using adjectives, metaphors, or similes to describe God – though we see those in Scripture, too – the Bible often ascribes names to God based on how God reveals himself and shows himself to be. **So each of the names of God in the Bible gives us a window into who God is and what He is like.** Each one is like a facet on a diamond, or a different camera angle at a televised sporting event. You gain a little more understanding and insight into who God is with each name.

**In our American culture, we tend not to think much about the meaning of a name.** For example, Gwen and I chose our kids’ names because they are all places, or represent places, that are near and dear to us. Blake is named after Blake island in Puget Sound, which can be seen from Gwen’s family cabin on Vashon. Hailey is named after Hailey, ID because Gwen and I met in the town next to Hailey – Ketchum. Ketchum just wasn’t a good girl name. Brooke as a name is less specific, but there is a particular brook we had in mind when we chose it for her name, and also because different bodies of water have been a big part of both of our lives – but we weren’t going to name her “lake” or “pond” or “Puget.” Elliott is named after Elliott Bay because the Seattle region is where we are both from.

Now, all of their names also have meanings, too. Blake means “pale one;” Hailey means “From the hay clearing;” Brooke means “small stream” (never would have guessed that, right?); and Elliott means “The Lord is My God.” Gwen and I might have looked up those meanings when we named our kids,

but their meaning wasn't the driving force for why we chose those names. If it were, then we owe an apology to all of our kids except Elliott. 😊

**But in many ancient cultures, including Jewish culture: the meaning of a name was very important.** It was given consideration when naming a person or a place. We frequently will see that in Scripture in regards to both place names and people names. So the name helps to tell “the story” of a place or of a person. And it's no different with the names of God. They help to tell “the story” of who God is; they help to tell us about God. So, what's in a name? A lot. And yet it takes a truckload of names to fully capture who God is, and we'll look at a few of them in this series.

So with that, let's pray and then dive into the Scripture reading for today: **Genesis 22:1-14. Sermon Series Slide after the passage.**

There was a young woman who once brought her boyfriend home to meet her parents. After dinner, the girl's mother tells her father, who was a wealthy businessman, to find out about the young man. He invites the boyfriend to his home office for a drink and to chat.

“So what are your plans?” the father asks.

“Well, I am a Biblical scholar and I want to marry your daughter,” he replies.

“A Biblical scholar,” the father says. “Admirable, but what will you do to provide a nice house for my daughter to live in, as she's accustomed to?”

“I will study,” the young man replies, “and God will provide for us.”

“And how will you buy her a beautiful engagement ring, such as she deserves?” asks the father.

“I will concentrate on my studies, and God will provide for us.”

“And children?” asks the father. “How will you support children?”

“Don't worry, sir, God will provide,” replied the young man.

The conversation proceeded like this, and each time the father questions him, the boyfriend insists that God will provide.

Later, the wife asked her husband, “So, how did your conversation go with him?” The father answered, “Well, he has no job and no plans, but the good news is that he thinks I’m God.”<sup>1</sup>

**Aside from the humorous ending, this story actually communicates a solid Biblical truth: That God is a “God of provision.” It is a core element of the Biblical understanding of who God is.** We see this throughout the Bible, from the opening chapters of Genesis all the way through to Revelation: God provides. But here in Genesis 22 is the only place in Scripture where this name is given. In Hebrew, the name is “Jehovah Jireh” or sometimes – and really more true to the Hebrew – it is pronounced “Yehovah Yireh”. Now, technically, Abraham gives this as a name for the place where he is and where he experienced God’s provision. But there’s a sense in which it is also, therefore, a name of God. It literally means, “The Lord will see to it.” In other words: “The Lord will take care of it”...or “The Lord will provide.” It’s telling us about God’s nature to provide. And **Abraham experienced God’s provision in a deep and profound way here.**

The life of Abraham is recorded in Genesis 11:26-25:18. Fourteen chapters of the Bible devoted to the life of one man. Abraham's name was originally simply Abram, but he changed his name after a profound encounter with God. Abraham had several events in his life that demonstrated his trust in the Lord and His provision. The first was when he picked up and moved, as God led him to a new land. Genesis 12:4 says it quite simply, “So Abram went, as the Lord had told him.” Later on in life, however, was the event that secured his place in the faith hall of fame, the one that we read this morning.

And as we read: Isaac lived because God provided a ram for the sacrifice, but this story is still a little harrowing. When Abraham was heading to the place where God led him for the sacrifice, his own son, Isaac, looked up at him and said, “Dad, we have the wood, and we have the fire to start the wood burning...but where's the ram for the sacrifice?” That must have been a challenging moment for Abraham. But Abraham replied: **“God himself will provide a lamb for a burnt offering, my son” (Genesis 22:8).** And sure enough, in the nick of time, God provided for the sacrifice. Now I realize that

for some people, this story is scary. It sounds horrific: that God would ask someone to sacrifice their own son, and that it got to the point that it did. But: **Asking someone to do something that they wouldn't naturally do is exactly how you find out the level of a person's trust/faith.** And Abraham showed his trust in God through this event.

Let me give you a less extreme example: when our son Blake was younger – 7 or 8 – he liked doing magic tricks for Gwen and me. There was a trick I used to do with him where I'd make a quarter “disappear” somewhere on his body, and then it would “appear” somewhere else. I always did it by slapping the quarter, onto his body where it would “disappear”. A frequent pairing was for it to disappear into his forehead and come out his ear. Well, Blake wanted to try that trick on me one time in one of his magic shows. I remember being chosen from the audience of two to kneel in front of him, and him telling me to hold still. I quickly asked him what he was going to do. He told me he was going to make the quarter disappear into my forehead, and he was giggling and laughing as he said it. I immediately told him that I didn't trust him. Blake's pretty coordinated and all, but I had visions of a smashed nose or a quarter stuck where my eyeball belongs. But I realized that as a parent, you have to put a certain degree of trust in your kids, and this was perhaps our parental duty. So I told Gwen to come take my place. Just kidding...So I finally did it, and it turned out that as far as getting the quarter accurately onto my head, Blake knew what he was doing – though he had trouble making the quarter “disappear” into my forehead and I think it fell onto the ground or something like that.

We've all been in situations where we've had to put some trust in someone and do something that wouldn't come naturally to us. And that's a little like the trust that Abraham puts in God: **Abraham does something that goes against his natural instincts, as an act of faith, trust, and belief that God would provide.** And as we see, God's intention all along was, in fact, to provide for Abraham.

It occurs to me that we often say “God will provide” when we really have no other choice. Quite frankly: **It's easier to say these words – that God will provide – and easier to believe them, when stepping out on the ledge of**

**faith has kind of been forced upon us.** Like when a job is taken away from us, when our loved one dies, when the doctor says “it’s cancer,” or when a pandemic arrives. In these kinds of situations, what else are you going to do besides trust God? That’s not to say there’s no action on our part or that there’s nothing for us to do: but the leap of faith has already happened, and we live into it and trust God in that process.

**But what about when the leap of faith is before us and we have a decision about whether or not to take it? Do we trust then that God will provide?** Isn’t that a more difficult place to believe that God will provide, when you’re willingly, voluntarily, stepping out in faith? For instance, you might be pretty comfortable in your life right now. Not that everything is perfect as you sit here in church with a mask on, or watch from home in your jammies isolated from community...we all are forced into the pandemic and the response to it. But for a lot of us, things are pretty decent and you don’t have a big desire for major personal change. Or if things aren’t decent for you, you can remember what it’s like to be in that place where you just want things to continue “as is.”

And then let’s say an opportunity comes along to serve God on staff in a church or a Christian non-profit in a position that lines up with your gifts and skills and passions and would be a great fit for you in so many ways...but the pay is a significant cut from what you currently make. No one wants to be foolish, of course...and sometimes there’s just no way for something to work out, but: **Do we trust that God will provide in that situation?** Perhaps through a second, part-time job? Or could God provide in other ways, such as giving you peace with a different lifestyle that spends less so that the reduced salary would work for you?

I have a friend who, about 15 years ago faced this exact scenario. He was very involved in youth ministry in his church as a volunteer and had for several years at that point. An opportunity came up to go into youth ministry in a paid capacity – but the salary would have been significantly less. He didn’t step out and do it. I’m not criticizing him or saying that he didn’t trust God in making that decision or that he was wrong for making the decision he did. There were a lot of factors to weigh. But this topic of “trusting God’s

provision” was definitely part of the conversation he and I had when he called to talk with me about it as he weighed his options.

**The message of Abraham is that God provides.** We often think of Abraham as a model of faith – Hebrews 11 (faith “hall of fame” chapter) lifts him up as an example of living by faith. But more importantly, the message of Abraham is that *God provides*. God provided for him when he picked up and moved to a new land; God provided a family when it seemed impossible; God provided the ram for the sacrifice. This is who God is; it’s in his name. In fact, 2,000 years ago, God provided the sacrifice again, putting himself in Abraham’s shoes, and sacrificed his one and only son, Jesus. God bore that pain and that loss because of his deep and abiding love for people like you and me. God provided there and God continues to provide in so many ways.  
**Do we trust that God will keep providing?**

Each year at about this time, we have the opportunity to consider how much we trust God to keep being Jehovah Jireh. There certainly are other ways that come about each day...but there is one in particular that we each do, and do together as a church, as we turn in a financial pledge card for the following calendar year. And really, at the heart of it is believing that God is still the God who provides. No one forces any of us to turn in a pledge card or to actually give financially to the church. It’s not something that happens to us like illness or death and we have no choice but to trust God and his provision. This one very clearly falls in the “free will” category, where it sometimes is more difficult to really take a step of faith that God will provide as He always has. So it’s really a question of: Do we believe God will continue to provide?

Malachi 3:10 is an oft-quoted verse that reminds us of God’s provision and lovingly challenges us to trust that God will still provide. This is God speaking through the prophet Malachi: **“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it’” (Malachi 3:10).** A tithe, as many of you know, is defined as 10% of a person’s income – or in their case it was crops or animals, and so forth. It was all done in God’s name, for the sake of

supporting the Levites (the priests) and their families, and other ministry expenses. No, that didn't include phone or electric bills, or other modern expenses. But there were other costs associated with worship or other ministry endeavors, that the tithe supported.

**The point is, God is saying “Hey! Give as I command, and trust me: I will provide!”** And so that's the step I invite you to take, and we all do together as a church. Obviously, simply turning in a pledge card isn't *actually* giving; that's something you then follow up with on a regular basis. And a person can give whether they've turned in a card or not. These cards, however, do help us in planning for next year, and they serve as a sign of our commitment to God and the ministries of Rose Hill. By the way: your pledge is seen and recorded by one person in the church – who is not me. So that information is completely confidential. And next Sunday, for those of you here at church, you are invited to turn in a pledge card as a part of the service. They have been mailed to the church family with an accompanying letter from me. If you did not get one, you can pick one up here in the church lobby or they're also at the church website. In fact, this year we have a new way to do this: you can go to our church website and fill out an electronic pledge card and send it in right there from the website. It also is completely secure and confidential.

You see, like the man in the story I started with who interviewed his future son-in-law: God wants to provide, and that's good news. In fact: **God's promise is that He will provide. It's in His nature and in one of His names: Jehovah Jireh. “The Lord who Provides.”** He has already provided so, so much in your life, and He will continue to. Just as Abraham experienced the truth of God's provision, may the rest of this blessed 2020 and may all of 2021 – and beyond – be filled with experiencing God's complete provision as well: from your finances all the way to the cross of Christ. Let's pray...Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> I'm not original with this. It's widely available on the internet and slightly varying versions.