

Coach House Church BEACONS

SUBSTITUTE

13TH JULY 2020

It wasn't long ago that I appeared last, but don't worry, you haven't missed anyone, it's just that I have subbed in for someone else!

I don't know about you but when I think of a substitute, I think of football teams and the substitutes who make the bench for an important game. They are not seen as one of the first eleven, not quite good enough to make the starting line-up.

When I was swimming at national level, I had a 2nd, a stand in – someone who would compete if I wasn't fit enough or able to make a championship event. My understudy for my swimming event, eventually took over from me when I got bored and stopped competing and a few years later appeared in the full-blown Olympics...while I sat at home. Oh, what could have been!

Sometimes a substitution can be a tactical decision and not based on just ability. Occasionally a team selection is made in order to negate another teams' strengths and a player is sacrificed in order to make sure the team can stop the other team playing.

One of the most devastating times I saw this happen was when Stockport County, the team I support, sacrificed a player and his position to negate the star player of Manchester City ... a certain Georgie Kinkladze (yes it's going back a few years before Stockport's dramatic decline from 1st division to their current non-league status!) county's player Tony Dinning, was given the role of not having a defined position. His job was to track and stay with Kinkladze for the entire game...wherever Kinkladze went, then Dinning went also. What this meant tactically was that we reduced the football to 10 vs 10 and without Kinkladze able to orchestrate City's play they went to pieces and were truly awful. County were 3-0 up at half time and we were in dreamland. Pure tactical masterclass.

But hey – we are not here to talk about football are we – although I could talk you through this demolition of City in quite good detail!

Being a substitute is also a test of character. How loyal to a club will you be if you are continually left out of the first team until you are deemed ready ... what if someone comes in for you and offers first team football at another club? Being a substitute can often define a person's loyalty.

The definition of substitute is 'one who takes the place of another' or 'something replacing something else'

One of the most well-known occurrences of a substitution can be found in the Bible in the first book of the Old Testament – Genesis. It concerns Abraham and his true son, Isaac.

The story can be found in chapter 22, but probably needs a quick explanation of what has happened up to the point we join the story.

Abraham has been called by God to become the founder of the Jewish nation. He is married to Sarah and God has promised that their son would be blessed and the promises God had for His people would come through their son. However, Sarah was unable to have children so Abraham had a son through his servant girl Hagar. This was not in line with God's promise and eventually aged 100, Abraham fathered a son with Sarah, who was 90! Mind boggling and nerve tingling in today's world! In order to test Abraham's character and obedience, God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah. This story is in Chapter 22 and if you know it, you will already know, that Abraham took the long journey with Isaac and was prepared to offer his son as a sacrifice, when God stopped him and provided a substitute in the form of a sheep.

This all sounds very blood thirsty and barbaric to us, but this was all to find out if Abraham would be obedient, after all, Adam and Eve had failed to follow the instructions and Noah and his sons had been found wanting. There was a glimmer of hope in Noah's son Shem and it is from his line that Abraham comes through, which is the result of a promise given to Noah But that is another story for another time!

Let's get back to our substitute sheep.

It was never Gods intention for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, it was all a test, after all, Gods promise that through Abraham and Sarah's son Isaac would come an everlasting covenant (or promise) I think you can see where we are going with this?

If Isaac was sacrificed then there was no child for the covenant line of promise to come through. It was over Kaput!

But never the less, Abraham was found willing. He even had the fire going ready for the sacrifice, when God stopped him and provided a substitute.

Abraham would not have known it then, but we can see it clearly, that God was demonstrating that it was always His intention to provide a substitute for mankind. God was showing us how He would bring about the everlasting covenant for His people one day, and therefore for you and I, by the provision of Jesus.

But how is Jesus a substitute?

Well the Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death.

This can be found in Romans 6 v 23

'For the wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus our Lord'

Did you see the substitution?

We live a life of sin, which means that we deserve death and yet God in His mercy, substituted Jesus to die for our sins, so that the penalty could be lifted and instead we would have eternal life!

How can people say that God is not a God of love?

'For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten son, so that all who believe in Him, should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16)

We have had certain death and destruction substituted for life and eternity with God. But someone had to pay the price and that price was too high for me or you to come up with. Only Jesus met the standard that God demanded.

It is the greatest substitution ever made. One so amazing , so divine that we know it as Amazing Grace.

Amazing grace – undeserved merit – that’s what it is.

It stings me when people cannot see how merciful God is towards His creation. We deserve nothing but wrath and punishment for the way we behave – even the best of humankind falls short of the standard of God.

But instead, we are given the opportunity to respond to God’s provision by believing and confessing our sins – practically accepting the state of ourselves and realising that we can do nothing in our own strength or goodness. This is called repentance and simply means being honest with God and accepting who we are and who He is and being sorry for what we have done. God knew that we could do nothing of ourselves to merit His goodness and mercy, so that is why He provided Jesus who could.

Jesus lived a perfect sinless life and then gave His life in order to cancel and pay the debt that God demanded for all human sin. That sacrifice in our place, that substitution, becomes the greatest ever act of kindness and love and gives me hope and assurance of a life to come in eternity with God.

Are you willing to accept God’s substitute – the greatest tactical switch ever, the best plan to defeat an enemy, the costliest price ever paid – but the most beautiful act of grace and mercy ever expressed. How amazing that Jesus was obedient unto death, He knew the master plan and followed the instructions perfectly. He waited until the time was right and then pulled off the plan that God had had all along.

Jesus death so that I can have life. What a substitution!



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