The Lord Will Provide

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. Yahweh Yireh. While Hebrew is certainly a difficult language to get a handle of there are certain words and concepts that are easier to grasp than others. Yahweh Yireh is one of those word combinations that, once understood, is easy to remember. It is amazing how the stories of the Old Testament not only interact with the new, but also in our own lives as well. On Wednesday our hearts were once again broken by an unspeakable act of violence. It seems as though not a month can go by without some news of disaster. Yet would you believe that the crime rate has consistently fallen over the past 20 years? It’s true. Our streets are safer now then they have ever been. Yet it seems as though acts of terror like the one carried out on Wednesday happen almost every day. I’m honestly curious as to why that is. I think part of it is that no matter what side of the issue you wind up on, it is upsetting to us when innocent lives are ended. There is no doubt that what happened in Parkland Florida was just that, a targeting of innocence. I remember when I was in school there was one instance where someone got the bright idea to write a threat on the bathroom wall. Now the difference between my high school campus and a lot of others is that mine was an open campus with 9 buildings. Naturally there were a lot of vantage points from on top of buildings and also from the woods that were behind the school. Honestly I think that this threat was done in order to get a day off of school. But that’s not how things worked out. Instead we had school but with a bunch of extra security precautions. You see I grew up in an upper middle class area, so the idea of metal detectors at school was definitely not something that we were thinking about as a necessity. Needless to say that there was no shooting at my high school thank goodness. But that just goes to tell you that we have a sense of security when it comes to certain things and I have noticed throughout my relatively short time on earth that sense of security has been whittled away piece by piece, bit by bit. One of the first scandals that I can remember was the impeachment of Bill Clinton. I can remember even then that people were wondering if there could be any trust between the president and the people. By the way I think that every single president has invoked this question in one form or another. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 certainly shook our sense of security. So much so that the ramifications of that day are felt even now every time you want to travel. My point is that the reason these events have such an impact is because they shape our sense of security. For example, no child or parent should ever have to fear school and today my heart goes out to those who have lost that sense of safety.

Imagine how Isaac must have felt. His sense of security was absolutely stripped from him. Everyone talks about this story from Abraham’s view point. Now yes I understand that there were great implications at stake with regards to the promise that God made to Abraham but remember who we’re talking about here. We’re talking about God. If he really wanted Abraham to sacrifice his only son so that he could give him another one, that is something entirely within God’s power. Remember that Isaac was born after both Abraham and his wife are well into their 90s so it isn’t as if they are unfamiliar with the power of God. But imagine being Isaac. Imagine being put in that situation where suddenly you remember, “Oh darn we have to go back. We obviously forgot the sacrifice!” Yahweh Yireh. The Lord will provide. That’s what that phrase means. That’s the response that Isaac gets. Now imagine the trust that Isaac has. Not only does he have to trust that there will be a sacrifice but what the heck his dad just tried to kill him. Isaac, being young, could’ve probably knocked down his father and run away. Yet we do not read that. We read about a person who trusts that his father won’t kill him, even though it seems that is entirely going to be the case. Yahweh Yireh. That’s the name that Abraham gives to that place, “God will provide.” There are two common misunderstandings about this story that I think are important. First it’s the age of Isaac. Many tell this story as though Isaac is a little boy and indeed the language used would have us believe so. Even if he was 17, there certainly was a point where he must have realized that there was something going on. The second misunderstanding is that after this Isaac and Abraham were all honky dory. That’s not true at all. In fact, apart from the death of Sarah and Abraham’s own death, they have very little to do with one another. Abraham’s guilt over the situation leads him to help Isaac find a wife, but it’s clear that this interaction put a strain on their relationship. After all, of course it would. That’s one of the many things that I love about scripture is that it introduces you to these figures who are supposed to lead God’s people and accomplish great things in God’s name, and it shows you that person has a strained relationship with their parents. Rebekah, Isaac’s wife, constantly lies to hers. Jacob tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the inheritance of his older brother. The one consistency is that God has used sinful people to accomplish His work and his will since the beginning. The same is true now as God uses us. We know that God does use us and to what ends well that is where our uncertainty lies as we do not know what is ahead. Much like Abraham and Isaac in fact. Both had very different things at stake here. Abraham had the promise that God would use him to be the father of many nations and Isaac stood to lose his life. Now I’m certain that our lives don’t have those kind of stakes. Yahweh Yireh. The lord will provide.

The one thing that we certainly do understand about this story of Isaac and Abraham is that it is a test. It is stressful, the drama being pushed to the last possible second. But we hear from James, “**Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.**” This verse reminds me of my conformation verse, Revelation 2:10, “**Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.**” A crown of life is our reward. That is what awaits us. Certainly there will be trials and tribulations along with pain and suffering along the way. After all, that’s how life is here on earth. But James tells us that those who withstand the test will receive the crown. So what sort of advice do you think that James would have for us for when life sends us a test we don’t think we can handle? You know a situation much like those faced by the parents of those students murdered earlier this week. Yahweh Yireh. The lord will provide. After all he says, “**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.**” I’m sure that both Abraham and Isaac had a moment where they felt as though there was no way they could overcome their situation. I’m sure that even Jesus felt that way, in fact we know that he does. He prays to his father, “If you are willing take this cup from me.” If you are willing father, take this suffering away from me because I don’t want to do it! But then he finishes the prayer, “But not my will but yours be done.” I don’t want to do this father, I don’t want to die, I don’t want to suffer. But I will because you ask it of me. Even our text from today tells us that during his time in the desert, the time we commemorate at lent, Jesus had angels ministering to him. Yahweh Yireh. The lord will provide.

In our lives it may seem as though God falls silent. It may seem as though God is distant from us. Yet God is with us. God has sent us his word, so that we may hear, read, and learn about the ways in which God has brought his creation back to him throughout the history of life of earth. God has sent us his spirit which we can lean upon to trust in God’s promises. And God has sent us his son, who has provided us with everlasting life. God will provide. That much is certain. In many respects God has provided us with so much already. Just google some pictures of national parks or outer space and become awestruck by how awesome this creation is. Remember the joy that comes when a child is born or you accomplish one of your goals. God has provided so much for us already through the forgiveness of our sins through Christ’s death and resurrection yet often times, when we’re struggling we forget that. When we get frustrated we forget that. Well folks that’s what makes us human. Yahweh Yireh. The lord will provide. Through our trial and tribulation the lord will provide. You see one of the things that James says is that in God “there is no variation or shadow due to change.” That’s the one thing about God. He’s consistent. He has not changed since the beginning. He has always provided for his people and he will continue to do so, even in our darkest hours. Now may the peace of God which surpasses our understanding keep and guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus now and forever. Amen.