

Abraham grows in love. Abraham grows in his relationship to God. Abraham shows us the beginnings of that long journey that leads to us too realising our life in God, in Christ, with the confidence to ask of God, in Christ, anything we want or rather anything asked in love. For the striking thing about Abraham asking is that he is not asking, immediately that is, for something for himself but for the salvation of others, for the innocent certainly but as a collateral good, for the obvious sinners also. Is anyone 'good' apart from God then comes to mind, so we also see the beginnings of that long journey to Christ who died for us all as sinners, and that long journey to understanding that it is not our good deeds that will save us but our faith – with the good deeds following in its train. So it's a journey in faith. Abraham dares to approach God again and again because he is beginning to understand God differently – not only as the distant, terrifying lawmaker and judge but also as the creator God who loves us, who has created us out of love for love – and so he is able as he gets to know God better to appeal to this better side, as it were, of God. This is an insight the disciples are gradually beginning to understand too in their following of Jesus – that God is still no less lawmaker and judge but a loving father to us also – willing to relate to us in a way that only a parent can, with an unconditional love because he is our maker, with a love that the act of creation makes non-negotiable – God stands to us as creator, as father, whether we like it or not, or dare we say, whether God likes it or not. And so God listens to his children, to their persistent cry for help, and sends his Son to save us and sustain us, as that daily bread without which we will founder, with that pledge of life in, through and with him which is also non-negotiable – for he stands to us as God stands to us also as the maker of a New Creation. Through our baptism into his death and resurrection we are re-created in Christ – the one thing, the one person needed – the one God who alone is good with echoes there of Martha and Mary, the one persistent in prayer, with her focus on the one thing necessary, the one good person, and the other mistakenly assessing her relationship to God through the good deeds she has done. Both are of course needed but works without faith are as barren as faith without works as James will remind us. So where does that leave us today – with the forgiveness of sins which is not the same as allowing the perpetrators of sin to continue in their sin but rather to show them too that there is cause for hope for all of us in a God who has created us for good and not evil and will re-create us in Christ eternally if that is our desire, if that is what we want. If it isn't we'll get that instead, so be careful what you ask for.

Br John Mayhead  
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour