

DOES GOD WANT WHAT YOU ARE SACRIFICING?

INTRODUCTION: Last Sunday we noted from Luke 14 that Jesus made some startling statement to the multitudes that were following Him:

--Vs 26. 'If you don't **hate your family**—and your own life also—you cannot be my disciple.'

--Vs 27. 'If you don't **bear your cross**, you cannot be my disciple.'

--Vs 33. 'If you don't **forsake everything you have**, you cannot be my disciple.'

Did Jesus say that to **increase** the size of the crowd? Obviously **not!** He did it to "thin out" the crowd...to "whittle it down" ...to separate the **superficial** followers from the **sacrificial** ones.

What is a **sacrificial** follower? Someone who is willing to give up **family**...and **themselves**...and their **possessions**...to follow God. And even though we spent a fair amount of time discussing these things last week, I felt led to spend a little more time on this topic today. I want us to consider 3 things about sacrifices this morning. **First**, what does it mean to sacrifice to God? I believe there are times when **we think** something is a sacrifice—but it is actually **not** a sacrifice in the eyes of God. **Second**, what sacrifices **please** God. And lastly, what sacrifices **are not pleasing** to God.

1. Sacrifices as defined by God

First off, please know that there aren't any verses that say, '**Here is the definition** of sacrifice.' An on-line dictionary **defines** it like this: "the offering of animal, plant, or human life or of some material possession to a deity, as in propitiation [satisfaction for sin/atonement] or homage [honor]." I'm going to shorten it up and define it simply as "an offering made unto God." So what are some characteristics of the offerings that we should give to God? I'm sure there are more, but we'll look at two.

First, **A. An offering that costs us something**

We are going to be moving around a bit today and won't be spending much time in any one place. Please turn to II Sam 24 and follow along as I read verses 18-25.

--David as the king could have **demanded that Araunah give** him the threshingfloor so he could build an altar to the Lord as commanded by the prophet Gad. In vs 16 and 18 we see that Araunah was a Jebusite. That means he was **not a Jew** and was only in the land because God's people had failed to drive out the Canaanites—which included the Jebusites—from the land.

--David also could have **accepted the gift** of the threshingfloor from Araunah. It would not have been wrong for David to **accept it as a gift**, even though Araunah was probably not a believer in God according to v 23 ("the LORD **thy** God" as opposed to "the LORD **our** God).

--David **didn't demand** it be given to him, nor did he **accept it as a gift**. Instead, David **insisted on paying** Araunah for the threshingfloor...and the oxen—and probably the wood needed to offer the burnt offerings and peace offerings. Why did he insist on **paying**? David himself gives us the answer in the middle of vs 24: "neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God **of that which doth cost me nothing.**"

Why? Because in David's mind, to **give God something** that cost David nothing was **not giving God anything!** It was the **other person's gift**—not his—and that was not acceptable in David's thinking! David wanted to **give to God** and in order to give to God, it had to **cost David himself something!**

Not all sacrifices **cost money though**, do they? Sometimes an offering to the Lord involves giving of our time... or are talents...or both. Sometimes it is doing something that we would rather not do; it gets us "out of our comfort zone," so to speak. We do it, though, because it needs to be done and God has put it on our heart to do it.

--Think of the amount of time and effort athletes train and "work-out" in order to be good at what they do!
--Think of the hours of training people in the military—and the medical profession—do!

Why aren't we just as willing to sacrifice ourselves as the athlete...and doctor...and nurse ...and soldier?

Ryle wrote: “A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing! A cheap Christianity, without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown.” (pg 72)

Not only is a sacrifice an offering that requires a cost, it is also...

B. An offering that reflects our view of the character of God

Turn now to the book of Malachi and follow along as I read vs 6-8. Again, we can't spend a lot of time here, but the point God is making is fairly obvious—if you **wouldn't offer** a defective animal to the governor of the province you live in, why do you think it is **okay to offer it to God**? Not only that, but vs 14 indicates they **had an unblemished** animal they **could have offered** but gave the “corrupt” one to God instead!

Their **view of God** had sunk so low, that they didn't believe it mattered if they **gave God less than their best**! Their attitude was to **keep the best for themselves**—and give God what was **left over** and what no one else wanted! Did God accept what they were giving Him?

Not according to the end of vs 10: “I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.”

What about **us**? We wouldn't **keep the best** we have for ourselves and give God the leftovers, would we? Are you sure? At the possibility of some of you getting upset with me, I'm going to ask some rather pointed questions.

1) If you **stay up later** on Saturday night because you “only have church tomorrow”—and not school or work—are you **giving God your best** on Sunday morning?

2) If you come to church on Sundays **only if you don't have anything better** to do, are you putting **you first**—or **God** first?

3) If you only **put money in the offering plate** if you have enough “left over,” are you seeking first your kingdom—or God's?

4) If you “don't have time” to read God's Word, aren't you really saying that it is not important enough for you **to make time**?

Warned you that I'd be doing some meddling, didn't I? Here's one that might really **get me into trouble**:

5) What about our Sunday afternoon service? Whether you stay or not is obviously up to you but let me remind you of a couple of things:

--I understand that sometimes there are work issues...and health issues...and children need naps.

--I also want to remind you that I **have been where you are**—a member of a congregation—way longer than I've been a Pastor in the pulpit! I've only been a Pastor **for 5 years**—but have faithfully attended church **for 37 years** prior to becoming a Pastor. And I raised 5 children...and had a job...and had houses I was working on, so I know first-hand some of those obstacles you face.

--One more question along these lines before I move on. With all that we seeing going on in our world, is the day of Christ's return **getting closer**—or farther away? A rhetorical question, right? **Closer**, of course!

Here's a verse from God's Word that you might not be familiar with:

Heb 10:25 “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: **and so much the more**, as ye see the day approaching.”

Again, you can be **mad at me if you want**, but I didn't put this verse in the Book—God did! I'm not try to brow-beat you, but I'm **exhorting you** like the verse says. God says we should be coming to church **more often**—not less!

What does God say about sacrificing **to** Him and **for** Him? First, it requires a cost. Second—whether we realize it or not—it is a direct reflection on how we view God! Is He worthy of our best—or only our leftovers? Since God indeed is worthy of our best, let's be honest in our evaluation of what we are “offering” Him!

Next let's consider...**2. Sacrifices desired by God**

Please turn now to Romans 12:1-2. Here we see God desires that we be

A. A living sacrifice

Not going to spend much time on this one because it is similar to what we talked about last week. **Presenting yourself** as a living sacrifice carries the same idea as what Jesus said in **Luke 14:27** “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”

The cross in Jesus’ time—and when the Bible was written—was not a **nice piece of jewelry people** wore. Instead, it was an instrument of **death**. To bear our cross means **to die to self**—to bury ourselves, so to speak. Here are 3 take-aways from this verse that I want us to see:

1) We are to be a **living** sacrifice. We are not just to “die to self”—and **do nothing!** We are to turn ourselves over to God to **live for Him**...to **serve** Him...to be **listening to** and **obeying** His voice.

2) We are to be a **holy** sacrifice. Just as we know from what we looked at in Malachi that God does **not want lame, sick, or torn animals offered to Him**, He does not want us to be **defiled by the filth** of the sinful world that we live in. God says as much in vs 2 “And be not conformed to this world...” Don’t be pressed into the mold of the world so that it pollutes you and stains you!

3) We are to be a **willing** sacrifice. The end of vs 1 says, “...which is your **reasonable** service.” It is **reasonable**...it is logical...it **makes sense** that you should **live for God** because Jesus died for you! Not a new thought, of course, but it is something that we should keep before us in our thinking. Woe unto us if we get “used to”—and take for granted—the truth that **Christ died for us!**

Next, let’s turn to Hebrews 13:15. Here we see... B. The sacrifice of praise

Vs 15 “By Him...” Who is the Him? We know from vs 12 and 13 that the “Him” is Jesus.

By Jesus—because of Him—we need to offer “the sacrifice of praise to God.” How often?

Continually! Not just when our circumstances...or finances...or health...is good, but **all the time**.

Eph 5:20 “Giving thanks **always for all things** unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;”

Some of you may be thinking, ‘But Pastor, you don’t **have** my life—or even **know** my life!’

To which I reply, ‘You are correct!’ But I also know this: **Rom 8:18** says that if you are a child of God, “...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

All the **problems of this life will fade away** and probably won’t **even be remembered** when we are in the presence of Jesus and enjoying the bliss and glories of heaven. *When we’ve been there—10,000 years—bright shining as the sun; we’ve no less days, to sing God’s praise, than when we’d first begun!*

Are you a thankful person? God’s desire is that we offer to Him the “sacrifice of praise” continually.

In vs 16, we have another sacrifice that God refers to: C. The sacrifice of doing good and sharing with others

First, doing good. How do we know that “doing good” is a sacrifice that pleases God? Because that is what the verse says! We also know that that is what Jesus did! **Acts 10:38** “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: **who went about doing good,**”

This is not the only place in the Bible where God tells us to do good. **Galatians 6:10** “As we have therefore opportunity, let us **do good unto all men**, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

Doing good to others—helping meet a need like providing a ride or a helping hand with something—is a sacrifice in which God is well pleased.

In verse 16, we see a **second** sacrifice that God is pleased with: “to communicate.” **Communicate** here is **not referring to talking**; it is not about passing information from one person to another. It comes from the Greek word “koy-nohn-ee’-ah” and is often translated “fellowship.” Here, though, it carries the idea of **sharing** in meeting the **financial** needs of others.

The same word is translated “contribution” in Romans 15:26 and “distribution” in II Corinthians 9:13. It refers to putting money in the offering plate when a special collection is made to meet a financial need. Are we willing to do that? We need to be! Why? Because God is not **just pleased** with these kinds of sacrifices—He is **well pleased!**

Lastly, let's look at **3. Sacrifices despised by God**

God is not pleased with all sacrifices; some He actually *despises*. In fact, He calls them *an abomination!*

A. Sacrifices despised by God because of *who* gives it

Please turn to Proverbs 15:8 "The **sacrifice of the wicked** is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." First, what is an abomination? An *abomination* is something that God hates—it disgusts Him—because it is offensive to Him and His character.

This is a fascinating verse—in my opinion, anyway! Think about what it says! God hates what the wicked offers Him—but delights in what the upright asks from Him! Stated another way, God says I would rather have *a request* from the upright than *a gift* from the wicked!

Why? *What* was the wicked *offering to God* that God found so disgusting and offensive? We aren't told, are we, and *that is the point!* It doesn't matter what was given; what matters is *who* it was from!

Who is this gift...this offering...this sacrifice *from*? The *wicked*! But *who* is the wicked? *What did this person do* to be given the title of "wicked"? *What sin did this individual commit* that moved him from the category of "average" into the category of "wicked"?

Listen carefully. From God's perspective, there are *only two groups of people* in the world. They have several descriptions—labels—but there are only two. Here are their labels in the NT:

--Born again—or not born again.

--Believer—or unbeliever

--Converted—or not converted.

--Not condemned—or condemned already.

--Have the Son—or have not the Son.

--Righteous—or unrighteous.

--Saved—or unsaved.

There are more, but I believe you get the point!

In the OT, there are *also only two* groups of people—but they don't have nearly the same number of labels. Most often they are called "the righteous" and "the wicked." We see these two categories in Gen 18 when Abraham is asking God about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. **Gen 18:25** "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the **righteous with the wicked**: and that the **righteous should be as the wicked**, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

We also know these are the *two designations* of people God uses in the book of Proverbs. The word *wicked* is used 95 times in the book of Proverbs—which is 3 times as much as "wicked" is found in the entire New Testament! Wicked, then, is simply the OT designation for someone who is *not a child of God*.

What this verse is saying, then, is that the *sacrifice of unbelievers* is an abomination to God. He hates it!

Turn now to Proverbs 21:27. Here we see... B. Sacrifices despised by God because of *why* they give it

"The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" Again, we see that God hates what the unsaved—what unbelievers—offer Him. *Why*? Because of *who* it is from!

But God hates it *much more* because the wicked *brings his offering to God with a wicked mind!* What does that mean? It means he offers it with *evil intent*. What is his intent; what is his motive? We aren't told, but here is my guess—the wicked believes his gift to God will *appease* God.

He believes his gift will *make up for his sin*; he believes that somehow God will be *satisfied* with the sacrifice he has given, and that God will *accept him and forgive him*. And although we don't know for sure that that is what *this man* is thinking, we do know for sure that that is how *some men think* because Jesus told us they do!

Notice on your outline **Mt 7:22-23** "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

There are people—sadly many, many people—who believe that on judgment day when *they remind Jesus* of all the so-called "good" that they did *for Him and in His name*, that He will be *satisfied*...and *forgive* them...and *let them into heaven*. But instead of hearing "Come on in," they will hear "Depart from me."

Why? Because they *rejected God's way* to have forgiveness of sins—Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross—and counted on their deeds...their efforts...their offering...their sacrifice. And because they had rejected God's way, God rejects them!

What about you? What are you counting on to get to heaven? If you are counting on you and what you sacrifice, you are saying that the sacrifice of Jesus was not good enough. And He will say to you, “Depart from me!”

PRAY

So, what is it that God wants you **to do today**?

I believe we need to each ask ourselves this question: *Does God want what we are offering Him?*

1. Believer—child of God—are you offering God your best—or giving Him your leftovers? Are you giving yourself to Him as a living sacrifice? Are you offering to Him the sacrifice of praise continually? Are you doing good—and giving financially to the needs of others?

2. To the unbeliever—to those who are counting on their sacrifice to get them to heaven—you already know that **God does not want what you are offering**. Your sacrifice is an abomination to Him.

There is only one sacrifice God will accept from you and it is this—the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. Ps 51:17 says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

God despises the gift of the unbeliever—but God delights in the unbeliever coming to Him in humility and repentance. “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.”

Come to God **empty-handed** and broken hearted—He will give you forgiveness and mercy.

Come to God **full-handed** and hard-hearted—He will reject you for rejecting Jesus.

It is really that simple...