

Jesus and His Sacrifice (Pre-Communion)

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Date: 07 September 2019

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[0 : 00] It's what, four or five years and so many commemorative events to commemorate various aspects of war, of the First World War, we're now coming to the Second World War and all the various commemorative events involved in that.

But, you know, something that certainly struck me in all these events, whether it's Remembrance Day, Fessel Remembrance, various individual events of war, that one thing really seems to be constant in these events and that's the word sacrifice.

Whether we're speaking of those who gave their lives in war, whether we're speaking of the memorials that came up certainly in the 1920s all over the country, the word sacrifice is always there, it's always mentioned.

And very often, you know, the lines that will come out of those who gave their todays for our tomorrows and of course it's quite right that we do remember those who paid the ultimate price in battle, who gave what it was in terms of a physical sacrifice.

But when we think of the Lord Jesus, of course, we're thinking of the sacrifice, the sacrifice of sacrifices. And of course that's what we're here to do, we're to remember the Lord's death till he comes, we're to remember the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus when he gave himself up on the cross for us.

[1 : 29] We remember his sacrifice. We remember what Jesus did in Calvary. When a priest, he offered himself and a sacrifice, he was the one who gave his life for sinners.

And it's so important, you know, if you're a Christian, that you dwell on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. I often wonder, you know, if in even the wider church, if even the very notion, the very aspect of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus has dwelt on us often as we should.

And that's why a time of communion is so important. I can't get my head around it. Even Christians who don't see communion as such an important time, not just in preparation for communion, but actually taking the bread, taking the wine, being nourished by the elements, what we call the elements, the bread and the wine, the sacrament pointing to the Lord Jesus, that your soul being invigorated, your faith strengthened in what Jesus has done for you.

A time of communion is so enriching, or should be enriching for every believer to look to Jesus to see what he has done for sinners such as you and such as me.

And so in these services, whether it's this evening, tomorrow morning, tomorrow evening, we'll be looking to the Lord Jesus. We must. We'll be thinking of him and his sacrifice.

[2 : 59] We'll be again tomorrow dwelling on what he's done for us or did for us in his offering up of himself. And God willing, tomorrow evening, thinking of how we ought to respond to that sacrifice, as Paul tells us in Romans 12, to be, to present our bodies as living sacrifices in light of God's mercies towards us.

But that's for tomorrow evening. So for this evening then, these verses in Hebrews 7, I trust will help you and help me in our time of preparation to remember the Lord's death till he comes.

Because these verses help us to see the cost that was paid for your salvation. I know that you've read these verses many times, you've certainly heard these truths on countless number of occasions.

But you must never lose your focus. Never lose your desire to be reminded of these truths that we read of and know as reality.

These gospel truths that tell us of the great work of Jesus in his being both high priest, offering sacrifice, and being the sacrifice that was offered by himself, by his own accord, for the salvation of sinners.

[4 : 20] So, let's prepare by word. And of course, tomorrow again, we'll be preparing by word and the sacrament to remember the Lord's death till he comes. So let's in our worship focus on Jesus, our high priest.

Those of you who learned your catechisms, remember the question, how does Christ execute the office of a priest? Christ executes the office of a priest in his want, offering up of himself as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God and in making continual intercession for us.

The summary, if you like, of what we're reading here and what we've looked at in the Old Testament in pointing forward to Jesus in his being our sacrifice.

But, you know, let's just think of Jesus, first of all, as priest, how he exercises the office of a priest. I mean, we have no priest. We have a church that has no priest at all.

Why? Because our Lord Jesus is the priest. I mean, yes, in the Old Testament church, in the Old Testament context, in the Mosaic law, there were priests.

[5 : 30] They were God's appointed people. They were those men who offered animal sacrifices, who mediated between God and man. they sacrificed both for their own sins and for the sins of the people.

But, of course, if we're going to glorify the Lord Jesus, if we're going to see him both as priest, the high priest mentioned here in Hebrews 7, if we're to see him as priest and sacrifice, we've got to get our grounding.

We've got to get, if you like, the context of Jesus being our high priest. And that's why we read these verses in Leviticus. Because what we read in Leviticus tells us that animal sacrifices were at the heart of worship, the heart of the Old Testament system of worship.

That's why we read in Leviticus 1 of the whole burnt offering, that sacrifice that was offered by the priest, the priest when, well, when the worshipper was seeking forgiveness for his sins.

And as we read, God gave very specific instructions. You know, if you read the whole of Leviticus 1, we'll see how specific these instructions were. The animal that was to be offered in a sacrifice was to come from the worshipper's flock or herd or to have read later that if he was poor it was a pigeon or a dove.

[6 : 49] And, of course, it had to be a male without defect. It had to be from the best of the herd or the best of the flock. And, of course, it had to be alive when it was sacrificed.

And, you know, we read there in Leviticus. It's fascinating. I'm told, and I'm going to double-check this, treble-check this, but told that Leviticus has more direct quotations from God than in any other book of the Old Testament.

You see, because God's directing his people how he's to be worshipped. In other words, the worshipper couldn't worship God in any way he liked. Not in any kind of frivolous way, complacent way, lackadaisical way.

No. Because the sinfulness of man demanded that God be approached in the way that God demanded. And that by sacrifice. Now, God, of course, is the same today as he was then.

He's eternal. And, of course, yes, we read of animal sacrifices then. He's still to be approached through sacrifice. No longer animal sacrifice because Jesus, our high priest, he offered himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for sin.

[8 : 05] And, of course, his offering up of himself as that sacrifice, not just a daily occurrence, it's a once-for-all. So it's got everlasting power.

Power to save. Power that enables you and enables me to come to the throne of grace through Jesus, through what Jesus has done as high priest and offering up of himself. And so at this time of communion and, of course, at every time of communion, we have to be reminded that we come before a holy God, yes, through sacrifice, through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, through him who, as priest, offered up himself on the cross.

And, of course, as a great high priest, I mean, at the same time, he's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That's what the Apostle Peter so wonderfully declared, you are ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or sport.

And if we're to prepare to remember the Lord's death till he comes, if we're to prepare for that, then we have to even see in the bread and the wine that point to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, point to the one who offers himself up once for all to satisfy God's justice, to satisfy the just punishment that God demanded for sin.

And so, we've been reminded this evening, I pray to be reminded tomorrow as well, that our great high priest, the Lord Jesus, he offered up himself so that sins could be forgiven by a holy God.

[9 : 58] He alone is that great high priest. He's the sinner, he alone could do the offering of that sacrifice of himself. Why?

Because he is the righteous, holy high priest and he's offered himself as the righteous and perfect sacrifice. And so, in our time of preparation, even now we can, you know, rejoice in that truth and again look forward to further rejoicing at the table tomorrow.

But, we've looked at, you know, we've looked at the whole burnt offering that was offered and I'll explore that in more detail tomorrow, but, I think we can also look at another example of offering that we read in Leviticus 3, the fellowship offering or the peace offering.

And there's various ways we can look at that, peace offering, an offering of thanksgiving, celebrating thanksgiving and being in the Lord, you know, showing fellowship with the Lord, peace with God and of course offered with joy and, you know, the joy of knowing communion with God and knowing that communion in fellowship with Him and of course pointing to that great reality of the fellowship that we know, you know, in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ because of His offering up Himself as that great peace offering.

You know, I'm sure you notice when we read in Leviticus 1 as well as Leviticus 3, you see the constancy of blood, the shedding of blood of the animal sacrifice, the animal that was presented without blemish, the perfect sacrifice.

[11 : 47] And, you know, when you look at this peace offering, this fellowship offering, then again, the reminder was there that the only way to approach God was by blood, the blood of a perfect substitutionary sacrifice.

And that's why we read the whole of chapter 3 because whether it was the sacrifice from the herd or the sacrifice from the flock or the sacrifice from the goats, the same element, the blood that was scattered, all the, you know, acceptance by God through blood.

and then the offerer knowing that, yes, there he was at peace with God once more. And so, you know, even there in Leviticus, the practice in the Old Testament, the worshippers, being taught the very offering, the very offering of that sacrifice that he gave that spoke of communion with God.

Again, communion with God only through the shed blood of a perfect substitutionary sacrifice. And, of course, surely this brings us to the Lord Jesus.

He's the fulfillment of that peace offering. He's the once-for-all peace offering. He's made possible peace with God that you might have peace with God, that peace between God and man.

[13 : 12] That restoration of peace that was broken when our first parents were Adam and Eve when they fell in Eden. Now, Jesus, the second Adam, the last Adam, he's offered up himself.

And he's offered up himself by the shedding of his blood. And he's restored fellowship between God and sinners. That's what we sing every year, God and sinners reconciled. And that's a reason for you and for me to have joy at the Lord's table tomorrow.

That joy knowing that there's no more enmity between God and yourself, you who are in Christ. Why? Because Jesus is your peace.

He's made it possible for you to know to know God through his shalom, through his being, our peace. Knowing that you have that right relationship with God that can never be broken.

And the bread and the wine tomorrow will bear witness to that peace that's yours in Christ. Christ, our sacrifice. Christ, our great high priest.

[14 : 22] Christ. But I think there's more that we can still see even from what we read in Leviticus. You know, to see how the great significance of Jesus, of Jesus as our once for all sacrifice.

And the significance that has practical implications. And what are, what's the overriding practical implication? Surely it's this.

It's to surrender completely completely to God in sacrificial giving of yourself. And how do we see that? Well, as I say, the Stephen I went to explore that in Leviticus 3.

Tomorrow I'll look at it more further in Romans 12. But let's just, you know, think of what we read in Leviticus 3 that tells of that wholehearted commitment to God, that fully giving of yourself to him in sacrificial, that sacrificial giving.

of yourself. You see, in the peace offering, it was different to the burnt offering in this scene. Because instead of the whole animal, like the burnt offering, instead of the whole animal being placed in the altar, it was just certain parts that were placed.

[15 : 36] You go to Leviticus 3, verse 3, for example, we're told there the fat, the kidneys, the liver, they were placed in the fire of the altar. And we read right at the end, they are the Lord's.

They are the Lord's. They were for God. And you read there also, Leviticus 3, as they were being burned, they were an aroma pleasing to God.

An aroma pleasing to God. And the rest of the animal, as we read there, well, was offered us a food offering shared with the priest. And the question is, of course, why?

Why was it that the fat, the kidneys, the liver, why did they go to the Lord? Well, even think of it, fat, for example, in this time, fat was considered the best part of the animal.

So, in the offering even of the fat of the animal to God, the worshipper was saying that he's giving his best for the Lord. And if you want to look more detail at the other parts, the kidneys, the liver, you know, at that time, people thought of him as we think of, you know, the word heart when we think of, you know, wholehearted giving.

[16 : 45] And I think it was the same sense there, you know, offering God these kidneys, the liver, basically saying, yes, we are giving of ourselves wholeheartedly. Giving the fat, giving of the best, giving of these other parts of the animal.

As it were saying, we're offering up to you all that we are wholeheartedly. And surely, you know, that points to the surrendering the whole of our lives to God.

Giving him the best that we are. You know, surely that sums up even our very worship of God. Surrendering entirely our life to him.

Giving the best that we are in his service. Why? Because he gave up himself wholly, fully, completely. He surrendered to the will of his father fully and holy when he gave himself on the cross.

And we mentioned just a moment ago the pleasing aroma of the sacrifice. In other words, God delighted in what was being offered.

[17 : 55] That, in different ways you can translate the word, it was fragrant, a fragrant, sweet-smelling offering, an aroma. It's the same sense. Think of that, first of all, think of that in relation to Jesus.

Think of his offering up of himself as that once for all sacrifice. That sacrifice was an aroma to God. That sacrifice, if you like, was sweet-smelling.

In other words, it was a delight to God. Paul writes in Ephesians 5 when he writes of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, he said, of Jesus who gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

And if Christ's sacrifice was and is a fragrant offering to God, then surely it has to be the same for you and for me, that it delights you, that you rejoice in that offering that Jesus gave of himself.

You have the privilege of knowing such a great salvation. You can delight in that great salvation because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

[19 : 08] Because he gave himself for you, for your sin, to take your sin upon himself. And so, you know, delighting in the sacrifice of Jesus, well, yes, we respond in thanksgiving and praise, but don't we also, don't you also, have to become a fragrant offering to God.

Listen to what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2, 14 to 15, when Paul wrote of believers, he wrote of believers who spread the fragrance of the knowledge of Jesus everywhere.

And then he says these words, for we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. That's something really just to dwell on for, not just for a moment, but for a while.

If you're a Christian, you're united to Christ. You've received saving grace, and it's been through the great high priest having offered himself for you. And so, when you're united to Christ, you're to reflect him.

And you might say this, not simply to shine for him, but actually to be those who, you might say, emit a fragrance, who emit that fragrance of Christ's peace to others.

[20 : 26] And you're witness for him. And what you say and how you conduct yourselves, even one with another, even before those who are believers, or as Paul says, or those who are amongst the perishing, you still are to show forth the aroma of Christ, to be like Jesus, to be a living sacrifice in Christ's service as you show forth the love of the Lord Jesus to others.

And so, I hope, you know, this evening that we have looked at that connection between what we read in Leviticus, first of all, the priests, the priests of the Old Testament law, and that connection between these priests and the priest of the New Covenant, the Lord Jesus.

And I hope we've seen the connection between the animal sacrifices, and of course, the greater, infinitely greater sacrifice of Jesus. us. And that's why, you know, it's so important that we do take time to look at such as the book of Leviticus, because I pray that as reading these passages in Leviticus, seeing the connection with the Lord Jesus, as we see in Hebrews 7, that these words will have helped you, not just in your preparation, but actually helped in your worship even tomorrow.

Because tomorrow you'll be bringing to your mind, bringing to your heart, the one who was that whole burnt offering, and the one who was, that peace offering.

That as we've seen the Lord Jesus this evening as our great high priest, the offering of himself as sacrifice, that that was well-pleasing to God. So dwell in these truths, meditate on these truths, bring these truths with you as you remember the Lord's death tomorrow, in this very room, in this very place of worship.

[22 : 26] Because what we're doing is truly, and must be, to honour our Lord and Saviour. Because, you see, what we've been thinking of the Lord Jesus, yes, in his sacrifice for us, speaks of no greater love than the love of the Lord Jesus who laid down his life for his friends.

sins. So remember our great high priest. Yes, remember his sacrifice for us. And remember this also.

You know, animals that were sacrificed, they remained sacrificed, they remained, like wholly burned or wholly consumed. And even the priests that offered these sacrifices, they lived and they died.

Think of the Lord Jesus, our once-for-all sacrifice. Yes, he died, he was that were consumed, but he rose again. And he ascended to heaven. And as our great high priest, he's not dead, he's alive.

He's alive forevermore in heaven and alive interceding for you at the throne of grace. So tomorrow, you will remember, God willing, remember the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the cross.

[23 : 39] And you'll be worshipping not a dead Christ, but you'll be worshipping a living Christ, the living Lord Jesus. The one whom Apostle John saw in a vision, in his vision of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, as you read in Revelation, the Lord Jesus looking, the Lamb looking as if it had been slain, yet standing in the midst of the throne of God.

So we give thanks for that sacrifice and we praise God. Praise God for the willingness of Jesus to be that high priest, that willingness of Jesus to offer himself on the cross.

And yes, rejoice that that sacrifice was acceptable to God. And in that rejoicing, then strive, strive, yes, to live by sacrifice, by sacrifice and surrendering your life to the Saviour.

It's a renewed opportunity that we have every time, whether we celebrate the Lord's table, the number of occasions that we do here or are limitedly, some places more frequent elsewhere.

But every time it's the Lord's Supper, when the Lord's people gather together at the Lord's table, that should be a prospect that should gladden the heart of everyone who knows the Lord Jesus as his or her Saviour.

[25 : 02] But remember this, it's all very well coming to a service such as this. It's all very well physically coming to the table. But surely what must be said of such crucial importance is that you fix your eyes on Jesus, that you see no one else except Jesus only, and that you worship the Lamb, and that you recognise that in that sacrifice that we've been thinking of this evening, it was the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God, the one who had no blemish, no blemish of sin, the one who knew no sin and yet was made sin for us, so that you who are a sinner might not face the justice of God against sin that well, Jesus paid the ultimate price of and for.

And I pray that none of us will ever, ever take for granted the blessing of the Lord's Supper, but that you who will be at the table, and yes, of any who will be still looking on, that you'll never give, never stop giving thanks for the blessing of the privilege of remembering the Lord's day.

And I pray that in that blessing that you have and you will have tomorrow, that you'll have a renewed love for the Saviour, and that you'll have that renewed hope of everlasting fellowship with the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest, and that your faith will be strengthened, your faith mature, and that you'll grow in trust in Him who calls you to follow Him as you journey to your heavenly home.

Amen. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, our Heavenly Father, as we reflect on all that we have considered this evening of the Lord Jesus, as our great High Priest, who offered Himself as that once-for-all sacrifice.

May it be, Lord, that we truly have imbibed the gospel truth of the Saviour, that we have truly been nourished by that truth, and that we will have that greater resolve to fix our eyes in Jesus, and not be distracted by the things of the world.

[27 : 25] May these things of the world be strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. Hear us, Lord, as we wait upon You. Hear us, Lord, as we depend upon You.

Hear us, Lord, as we commit our lives to You in thanksgiving for all that You have done for us, in and through the Lord Jesus. Hear us as we continue to praise You now.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Let's close in Psalm 4, on page 4.

Psalm 4, and we'll sing from verse 4 down to verse 8. In anger do not break God's law, consider and be still, present a righteous sacrifice, and wait upon His will.

4 to 8, Psalm 4, to God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.