

1 Peter 2:4-5

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[0:00] What an incredible day, not only for us again, but for you. You know, when I think of what Paul did around the world, how he ministered, what he did, that's what he calls us to do.

As we just mentioned in this ordination, Paul said without blushing, follow me as I follow Christ. He was not saying that he was the model of perfection, but he was a model of grace. Paul knew what he struggled with.

The deep recesses of his heart. That's why he would say in certain scriptures that who will set me free?

Who will set me free? Thanks be to God in Christ Jesus. And so Paul was very real that he was only human, but he has been called by God for a very special leadership task.

[1:13] That did not make him more valuable than everyone else. It simply said, I will give my best effort to be an example of what Christ in a life looks like, and I will give my very best to expound the word of God so that you too might follow.

One of the things that an ordination like today can be confusing in some people's minds, and this is all throughout America and quite frankly in the world that I go to, and that is that there are some people that are so close to God, we call them clergy.

And the rest of us, well, that's a different matter. Someone has said that clergy are paid to be good, and all of the rest of us are good for nothing.

But you see, that's a misunderstanding of a key biblical teaching and doctrine. And that doctrine we began a month ago, which is that all of us who were believers in Jesus Christ have been called to a holy priesthood.

In other words, there's no clergy, laity divide. That actually happened much after the first century in which Paul lived.

[2:55] As a matter of fact, we don't even find the word ordination until about the third or fourth century. They so focused on the holy priesthood of all believers that they said these leaders are called to lead, but they're not the priest.

We are all priests before God. It was probably around 1000 AD that there even became something else that those that we call priests, meaning that they're the clergy, they get special privileges that the rest of us don't.

And it's a sad movement when the church of Jesus Christ moved away from the doctrine of a holy priesthood.

The priesthood of all believers. And so let's look at 1 Peter 2 briefly. This is the passage we began a month ago.

And we even read today while we were singing our praises to God. Peter said, As you come to Him, that's Jesus, the living stone, rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to Him, you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

[4:47] One of the things that Peter did by offering us this word from God is he demolished an Old Testament concept that the priests serve in the tabernacle or the temple and everyone else is excluded.

He took this new way of Christ through the gospel that all of us now become priests. And a priest could only offer sacrifices as God determined it.

And Peter said, Now you get to do that. You get to offer spiritual sacrifices, not physical ones. Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24.

And the disciples came up to Him and said, Can you tell us when things are going to happen and even the end of the age? And Jesus begins to describe what would happen.

And in the near end of the age, He said there will come a time in which this temple will be destroyed. And that happened in 70 A.D.

[6:09] And from that point on, there is no physical sacrifice that is ever given in the name of Yahweh or Jehovah.

That became an end. And if Jesus died around 30 A.D., maybe 33, He gave one generation the opportunity to repent and become part of His new work.

Where all would become priests and they would not offer physical sacrifices, but spiritual ones. With this, Peter is offering a new way open to all of us.

Whenever we think about a clergy-laity divide, excuse me, we are thinking more about a different dualism.

Secular and sacred. There are those who are in the ministry, they get to do the sacred stuff. And then everyone else who goes to work Monday through Friday and sometimes longer, Monday night through and continue on.

[7:30] Well, they're doing the secular stuff. But everybody who is called a pastor or an overseer, well, they, oh, they're the sacred ones.

And what Peter did in this passage was demolish the sacred and secular. In other words, he's saying that you, as a believer priest, your entire life is holy.

Your entire life is sacred. When you get up on Monday morning and you go to work, you're doing a holy work. It's not just those who get to do ministry.

So when we ordained and commissioned Mike for this work, we are not saying, like is common in churches, you're the minister minister, and we are the minister to.

We're saying that is not it. We are all priests before God, but we need people to lead us.

[8:42] As we look at the New Testament, there are seven sacrifices that are clearly using the terminology sacrifice, and so we can say there are seven spiritual sacrifices.

We looked at this last time and we looked at the first four. We don't have time today to go back over those, but just in summary, when we proclaim the glory of God in Jesus, now, whether that's singing his praises as we did today, or we witness at work or whatever, when we proclaim that in the face of Jesus is the exact glory of God, that is a sacrifice that God accepts from you and me.

When we surrender ourselves, Romans 12, 1 and 2, and put ourselves on an altar of a whole offering, but it is a whole living offering, then that is a sacrifice.

God wants you to be as close to him as possible, and the way we do that is surrendering all that we are. When we bring the gospel to other people, Paul says that is a sacrifice.

God accepts it from whoever, whoever brings the gospel to others. And then when people come to faith and we strengthen their faith, this is a sacrifice God accepts from his believer priest.

[10:25] And with that in mind, let's move forward today with this. The fifth of the sacrifices is actually giving to missions. We read this in Philippians 4.18 where Paul is telling the Philippians, you have given to me so that I can do the work of God.

And here's what he said. I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.

and here's how he described those gifts. A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And so I want to say to Shoreline, you have been very gracious.

My relationship and my wife with you began because Brittany and Mike are here. And for the first two years, our relationship was so pure in prayer, it was beautiful.

But then after those two years, you decided to give in missions. And I declare on the authority of God's Word, this is a sacrifice.

[11:52] God accepts. If we look further in Philippians, here's what we find. That Paul tells them, it was kind of you to share in my trouble.

Missions is not easy. But he never asked for money. We never find Paul having a fundraising campaign for ministry.

He did for needs of others. And that is found in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. But he did not go to Philippi and say, I want you to support the work in Ephesus.

He didn't ask them, they volunteered it. And so following that same way, we don't ask for money. We just simply lay before God the mission and see how he provides. So Paul calls this in Philippians 4 verses 14 to 16 a partnership.

[13:01] It's the word in Greek koinonia. it's the word we get fellowship. We are joining together. So whatever Paul does as they give, it's as if they did it.

It's a partnership together. He repeats this more than once in Philippians 1, 3 through 5 that he was actually writing this letter as a thank you note for their partnership in the gospel.

You have partnered and there are great promises God wants you to know. As we see these promises in Philippians, we see in Philippians 4 17 to 18 that Paul says look, do I need money to do missions?

Perhaps. But I want to tell you that isn't what I'm after. I'm after something for you. I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

That's what I want most. And that's an interesting concept. I want you to be fruitful.

[14:30] And then he says in Philippians 1, he says, I thank God who is going to continue the work until the coming of Christ. Now a lot of people interpret that, that God will continue to work in me.

That is true. But that isn't what he's saying. Here's what he's saying. you Philippians gave, I did missions, and all of this is coming into your investment account in heaven that will be rewarded one day.

And here's what he's saying. That reward will continue to increase until Jesus comes back. Let me ask you a question right now.

How many of you, if you know any of your heritage, would say you are from European extract? Raise your hand high.

All you Europeans. Okay. Very good. Now Paul was also doing ministry in Asia, particularly Asia Minor.

[15:41] If you're Asian, and that's your, raise your hand. Anyone here? Okay. Very good. I don't know if there's more here, but we're either most likely Asian or European if we look back far enough.

Now listen to this. When the gospel came to Philippi, it came to Europe for the first time. Prior to that, no gospel in Europe.

And when Paul went and preached at Philippi, only two people responded. A woman and a man. One man, one woman.

And look at what is happening today. The gospel that first came to Europe is continuing to spread. And that gospel that came to Asia is continuing to spread.

And guess what Paul is saying to the Philippians? All of this comes to your account. So guess what? If you, European or Asian, share your faith with someone and they put their faith in Christ, ka-ching in heaven for the Philippians.

[17:01] Their investment is still paying off. And one day, when we come to the Bama seat, or the judgment seat of Christ, and he tells us, you have followed me, this is when those rewards will be fully known.

And what is true of the Philippians is true of all of us. That there is an investment program in the sacrifice of giving to missions that will never lose its reward.

But it's not only just about reward. Look at Philippians 4, 19-20. It comes with a promise. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. And so this sacrifice, I want you to keep this in mind, the sacrifice of giving comes with a promise.

And that is God is going to watch over you. All because we give. Does that mean we never face a financial hardship? No, it doesn't mean that.

[18:24] This prosperity gospel that is it's horrible all around the world. And I want to tell you this is not how to get rich quick.

But we are talking about a promise that God will be faithful. And as we give the sacrifice of giving, he will meet us in our time of need.

We may, like Paul, go hungry. He went hungry. But he didn't die. And God supplied everything he needed.

Let me just help you just a moment if we could go to the next slide. Recently, before having a little bit of time off with the family, I was in Uganda, and I've shared with you how central and crucial Uganda is.

You can see South Sudan to the north. I'll be there in October. Congo, over to the west or to the left, I'll be there, Lord willing, in January.

[19:37] Rwanda, I was in a few years ago, down south. Tanzania, headed there this next trip. And Kenya, we've got incredible work going on.

All of this flowing from Uganda. And I'd like you to see something, that one of our key manuals is God's plan for his disciples, and it's something for all of us here.

But if you look on the left, this is the new Acholi translation. We have our materials in over 30 languages, and how can we do that in print?

Because you give. So that training for disciple making continues to go forward. Here's what it looks like. We find groups of people who are embracing a discipleship plan of God.

And these people are amazing and extraordinary people. People who can't even read English, but have English copies and are working to finish God's plan for his disciples.

[20:54] They do it not so that they can get some kind of certificate, which they get, but so they can be effective in ministry. And what we find is that as we work together, the boom of the Holy Spirit comes on these people.

These people that you're looking at are some of the poorest in Uganda. They're in West Nile, and by God's grace, I'll be back with them in December or in January.

Not only is that one of the nations, but also Pakistan. And as Dave has already mentioned, I'll be in Pakistan coming up. And I just want you to see again how strategic it is.

The most difficult mission field in the world is India, perhaps, because of all of its language and culture barriers. And then on the other side, Afghanistan and Iran.

This is some of the most difficult places to be a believer. And yet we'll be working right there in Islamabad and working with people who are suffering.

[22:09] I don't know if you've seen the news recently, but people in Pakistan, churches have been burned, houses destroyed, and people's lives threatened.

That happened in the last two weeks. We're going in where these people are suffering the most. I've probably shown you this before, but I just want to remind you on the left there is the 23rd Psalm in Urdu, their language.

And on the right, the word joy. And this is a joy that is in some of the poorest homes as they trust in Christ.

But far greater than just a few ministries to people and to families, here's what's happening. We are training leaders who can train others.

on the left is a young pastor who is in the first day of our training already teaching his fellow pastors.

[23:19] On the right is our key leader named Vicki. And I can only say that when we don't record or publish.

He is a man who is willing to serve with his life. He is on my left in the picture. On the right is his wife Anita.

And here is what this servant of God has said. I know one day they will kill me. But I'm willing to follow. We'll be back with him Lord willing.

I leave on Labor Day and be with them the first week of September. they always treat me so kindly that they send all kinds of clothes back and so I dressed Marcia so that we can give them a picture. We have embraced your culture and we love you. Giving to missions is a sacrifice that God accepts and adores.

[24:26] But here's another one. Giving to those in need. And this is clearly laid out in Hebrews 13 and 1 Timothy 6. Both using the terminology of sacrifices.

So when a church has a benevolent fund or you give privately and without any fanfare no one knows that is a sacrifice that God takes and holds very dear.

And just like giving to missions it is one that has a promise. And that promise we find in 1 Timothy 6. And that is that those who are generous and ready to share store up for themselves as a good foundation for the future so that they take hold of what is truly life.

You see so much of the time here in our own country is caught in material pursuits. But what Paul says is there is a life and it is beyond living more comfortably and having more things.

It's about generosity and giving and helping in a time of need. Let me just share with you that you're giving very privately to those who have a need is a sacrifice and you're a believer priest.

[26:03] Let me give you the last one. The last of the seven is praising God and praying continually. Praise is called a sacrifice and all of us who have praised God in the midst of hardship know what that means.

I don't thank God that I'm suffering. I thank him for what the suffering will do in me. I don't praise him because life is hard but I praise him that he remains consistent regardless of what happens in this life.

And so the writer to the Hebrews says when we praise God continually this is a sacrifice of a believer priest. And the prayer concept is found in Revelation chapter 5 where in the midst of the most horrific suffering the world has ever known there are believers who have died for their faith and they have prayed and others have prayed and God collects all of that in a bowl and he calls it incense or a sacrifice that only a priest can give.

No wonder God tells us to rejoice always. To pray without ceasing to give thanks in all circumstances. Why?

Because we are believing and we are priests. And then as I already shared with you in Hebrews 13 let us pray for the leaders of Shoreline.

[27:56] Let us call on God that they walk with a holy and clear conscience and that they might be fruitful and protected that their ministry in leading us would go well.

Let us praise God and pray not only for them but let's take the next slide and let us pray for missions as I've already mentioned.

Here is where I'll be going not only Pakistan on the left but then I will come to Zambia and then Malawi and then from Malawi I will go to Tanzania and then down to South Africa.

Five countries in about two and a half weeks. Three of the countries are follow up. Two of them Tanzania and South Africa or vision casting to find leaders.

I am convinced this will go nowhere unless we pray. So may we pray continually not only for the leaders here in our ministry here but our ministry to the world.

[29:22] And then last of all pray for yourself in this next slide a man who served in what is now Pakistan his name is John Hyde he was such a man of prayer they called him praying Hyde and in 1904 because of the influence of his prayer ministry the Punjab prayer union was begun.

And here is what they question. Are you praying for a quickening in your own life in the life of your fellow workers and in the church?

That's a question. Let us pray for a quickening. Number two are you bringing or excuse me longing for greater power of the Holy Spirit in your own life and work and are you convinced that you cannot go on without this power?

I need you Lord. Number three will you pray that you may not be ashamed of Jesus? Number four do you believe that prayer is the great means for securing this spiritual awakening that not only we need but our country?

Number five will you set apart one half hour each day as soon after noon as possible to pray for this awakening and are you willing to pray till the awakening comes?

[31:05] Now I'm not suggesting that noon is a magical hour but they wanted to make sure that they said here's a measurable thing you can do.

For us it may not be noon it may be early in the morning but let us follow the Punjab prayer union we're praying for the leaders here in the ministry of this church we're praying for missions but may God help us to pray for ourselves that we too would bear fruit of our holy priesthood and so here we are seven sacrifices all for us to give because we're a holy priesthood and as we ended last time so we end with this one in the worship service in heaven they sang a new song and here's what they're singing in heaven worthy are you Jesus to take the scroll a scroll that had seven seals on it some

believe it's not fully defined in the book of revelation but some say it is the deed for the earth he is able to take the earth because he created it and he came and died for it worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God and they shall reign on the earth let us just bow our heads for a moment and let us just reflect on the awesome honor and privilege that we receive in Jesus to be a holy priesthood set apart by God through the blood of the lamb and now he gives us the honor of impact in this world and all of the sacrifices all point to impact

Lord we come to you and we thank you for every rich and immensely valuable position and practice we have in Christ to be a holy priesthood we thank you for the leaders here including Mike and Brittany but we pray we would not leave the responsibility of priesthood to them but that we would go forth holy in your sight how we thank you and now Lord by your spirit would you grant us grace to offer spiritual sacrifices that make you happy and joyful grant us grace in Jesus name amen