

I Did It My Way

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[0 : 00] My Way is a song that was popularised in 1969 by Frank Sinatra. His version of My Way, in fact, spent 75 weeks in the UK Top 40, a record which stands today.

And what is interesting about this song is that it is the most frequently played song at British funeral services. It beats songs like Always Look on the Bright Side of Life by Monty Python and Simply the Best by Tina Turner, which are also quite popular funeral songs, by the way.

And although this particular song became Frank Sinatra's signature work, his daughter Tina says that Sinatra came to, in fact, hate the song. He thought the song was self-serving and self-indulgent, and as it turns out, it wasn't played at his funeral.

It portrays a life that is lived by my own rules. It's lived my way. I live life my way, my agenda, my standards.

I want to do what I want without any sort of constraints by anyone else. It pretty much sums up the attitude of the Western world with its rampant individualism.

[1 : 14] As it turns out, although Sinatra hated the song, it was a favourite of former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. He used to play the song with increasing volume from his prison cell while he stood on trial for crimes against humanity.

He too did it his way. And as we look into Leviticus 8 to 10, we'll see that God expects people to approach him his way, God's way.

But as we will find out, his way leads to joy. To do it your way, our way, any other way, in fact, leads to death. We're spending, as Sam has indicated, six weeks in this strange world of Leviticus.

Last week we saw that Genesis introduces to a ruined race because of disobedience to God's word. Adam and Eve are thrown out of the Garden of Eden, out of God's presence, a paradise which God had created, was lost in Genesis 3.

Exodus introduces us to a redeemed people who are miraculously rescued from slavery in Egypt by God. God gathers them as his people and makes a covenant agreement with them to be his special people through Moses.

[2 : 36] And this leads us to Leviticus, where God reveals how his people are now to live in this new relationship and how it works out in every detail of life.

They're to live as new people, living distinct lives amongst the nations. And the immediate background to Leviticus is Exodus 25 to 40, the last bit of the book of Exodus.

And it's all about the construction of the tabernacle. And the word tabernacle means dwelling. The tabernacle was meant to symbolize the paradise that the human race had lost back in the Garden of Eden.

And we saw that many of the details of the tabernacle reflected the details of the Garden of Eden. And by the end of Exodus, the tabernacle is built.

And God is again dwelling amongst his people. But there's a problem. As we saw last week, Moses is standing outside the tabernacle.

[3 : 38] God has taken up residence in his dwelling, the tabernacle, but there is no way yet that he's open for humanity to approach him, much less to have any relationship or fellowship with him.

And so how does one get inside? How does one get back into paradise with God? God, what's missing from this new creation, this tabernacle which symbolized new creation, what's missing from it is the pinnacle of the first creation.

People. People aren't there. And God intends to solve that problem. And we saw that right at the beginning of Leviticus when God speaks to Moses and he says, when an Adam among you brings an offering.

Now that's the crisis that sets up the beginning of Leviticus. And the first ten chapters addresses this crisis of how the tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, the tabernacle as it's called in Exodus, becomes the tent of meeting, which is what it's called at the beginning of Leviticus. These chapters are about how the dwelling of God becomes the tent where God meets in fellowship with his people. And this is crucial. This is a crucial point.

[5 : 05] Because the covenant relationship that God established with his people requires far more than just an awe-inspiring reality of God's presence on earth. Its chief purpose is for humanity to fellowship with its creator.

Last week we saw the various sacrifices that were required of God. Today we are going to focus in chapters 8 to 10 and see that a mediator needs to stand between an infinitely holy God and finite sinful human beings.

There needs to be someone in between. Chapter 8. It is Aaron who is set apart, consecrated as a high priest. He's ordained as a high priest. Aaron and his descendants are to play the role of the new Adam in this new creation, in this tabernacle drama of system of worship.

Aaron will be the mediator between God and his people. He is the link that turns the tabernacle into the tent of meeting. The link that mediates fellowship between Israel and the God of heaven and earth.

Now I think as we think about the idea of mediator, it's really important for us to grapple with this. You see, one principle of professional mediation is the assumption that the mediator is an independent individual whose goal it is to achieve a mutually satisfying outcome for two parties which are having biff with one another.

[6 : 52] And if we think of Israel's priests as a literal mediator in the modern sense, we will get the wrong impression. The chief role of priestly mediation was not between two aggrieved persons but with only one offended party.

God alone had the right to be offended by the disobedience of his people. God was faithful, he was loyal to his people but they were not loyal to him. And what's more, the priestly mediator was himself a sinner and required a resolution to his own offense against God before he could represent the Israelite individual or in fact the nation before God.

And so this priestly mediator was not to seek a compromise, he was not to enter into negotiations and try and nudge God a little bit this way a little bit that way.

There's no two way street here. There was no negotiations to be sorted out. As we say today, it was God's way or the highway.

Now at first glance that might seem a little bit tough, a little bit strict, you know, God demanding complete compliance. I mean, you know, what if we, you ought to have a little bit of negotiation here. What if we just negotiate a little bit and maybe 90% might do?

[8 : 23] God says, no, it's his way or the highway. The most notable phrase which is attached to the activities of chapters 8 and 9 is the phrase, just as the Lord commanded.

God expected his word to be obeyed just as he did in the Garden of Eden. And yet, from our modern sense, we approach that and we go, you know, let's find a middle ground here.

Wouldn't it be a bit more reasonable, maybe even loving of God, if God wasn't so uptight on complete obedience? Maybe a little, he's a bit too rigid here.

Maybe we could just negotiate with God. I remember many years ago sitting, talking to a person about the Christian faith and I said, so, you know, what would happen if God all of a sudden appeared to you and stuff like that or you died now, went to front God and he said, well, you know, I'd take a six-pack with me.

And he said, we'd go out back door of heaven there somewhere, sit on the step and we'd have a few beers and we'll negotiate. He said, it'll all be fine. It'll all be fine. You see, what we're going to see is that the tabernacle, its sacrifices, the priests, were in fact God's gracious bending towards sinful men and women.

[9 : 49] You see, without this provision, the provision that God initiated, without this provision, they would have faced the consequences of unforgiven sins, permanently cut off from God and the blessing of his presence forever.

And so, in chapter 8, we have the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests. These are the new Adams in this new paradise sacrifice. And what we see here is this elaborate process.

There's robes and sacrifices. And it lasted about a week while they camped in the grounds, the courts of the tent of meeting. Back in 1997, December 1997, I think it was December sometime in 1997, I got ordained as a deacon in the Anglican Church.

I was ordained, I was set apart for ministry in the worldwide Anglican Church. And so, it's an ordination process. My ordination process took about an hour and a quarter, something like that. And I didn't have elaborate robes. I had these things that I had to wear. And they're nice, aren't they? And the most significant thing of this is this thing here, in my opinion.

[11:07] This thing here. This symbolizes, this is called a preaching scarf. This symbolizes my chief duty. The thing that I was set apart for was to bring the word of God to God's people, to his creation, to continually proclaim the gospel everywhere.

And so, in my ordination, I wore this thing. Now, in my ordination service, and I'm pretty sure this didn't happen to Aaron, but it happened to me. I was, what I had to do was, I wore this garb on, and I'm not used to wearing dresses, not before and not since.

And I wasn't used to wearing this. And what happened was, you had to kneel before the bishop, the bishop lays his hands on you, he prays for you, and sets you apart for ministry within the Anglican Church. And as I came and knelt before the bishop, what I didn't realize was that I'd actually stepped on the bottom of these things, and I knelt down.

And when I went to get up, I went bang, and I went forward, and I landed in the bishop's lap. He wasn't sure whether to lay hands on me again at that point or what to do.

I was terribly embarrassed because I'm like, I can't, I sort of had to grab hold of him in order to get my feet off these things. And it was incredibly embarrassing.

[12:18] The bishop didn't know what to do, but the archdeacon over the side here who was leading the service was killing himself laughing. He thought it was the funniest thing he'd seen at ordination service. Now that didn't happen, Aaron, from what I could tell from the text here.

And he was being, he had a slightly different job than I have here, but he had a very, very significant role. He was, as I said, the new Adam coming into this paradise.

And up until this point, Moses had been the mediator between God and his people. And now the role of the high priest will become the most significant relationship in God relating to his people. In chapter 10, God, for the first time, starts speaking directly to Aaron. It is a significant honor. And all the expectations of the ordination service in chapter 8 and the very first worship service in the tabernacle in chapter 9 is expressed in chapter 9, verse 4.

It says, For today, the Lord will appear to you. You see, they knew the cloud had descended on the tabernacle.

[13:33] What they hadn't seen, they hadn't seen the glory of God. They hadn't come face to face with God. That's the expectation here.

This is the opportunity that God gives for, this is the way forward for people to come into his paradise sacrifice. And the climax of the ordination service and the first worship service is, and in fact, the climax of the first nine chapters of Leviticus is there in verse 22 of chapter 9.

Aaron lifted his hands towards the people and blessed them. And having sacrificed the sin offering, the burnt offering, the fellowship offering, that is, he did all the offerings he was required, he stepped down. Moses and Aaron then went into the tent of meeting and when they came out, they blessed the people and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.

Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and they fell face down.

Let me tell you, we read those verses really quickly, but it is very, very difficult. In fact, I want to say it's impossible for me to overstate the wonder of what's just happened there.

[14:49] The crisis which is there at the end of Exodus has now been resolved as two human beings are allowed into the very presence of God for the first time since the flood.

First time since the flood. Fellowship has been restored. And notice three things. Firstly, that entering into the presence of God is allowed only after the sacrifices have been performed. Sacrifices first. Secondly, notice that this is a corporate experience. The phrase the people occurs four times from verse 22 to the end of that chapter.

While Marozos and Aaron are given entry into God's presence, the purpose of them being given entry into God's presence is for the sake of the people.

Their entrance means that all the people get to see the glory of God. And thirdly, as a result of approaching God in accordance to His word, God's glory is revealed and the response of the people is joy.

[16:01] This is the moment they've been waiting for for so long and it's met with the most fitting response. They shout for joy and they fell on their faces.

That's the goal of the tabernacle. That's the goal of the tent of meeting. God's glory being revealed and people responding in appropriate joy, praise and humble praise.

So, it was difficult for me to overstate the, this being, just how much euphoria and joy there would be at this moment. And it's also incredibly hard for me to overstate the crisis that immediately followed.

One crisis is resolved and another one has begun. they go from ecstasy to agony.

You see, like their father who was high priest, Nadab and Abihu were also priests. And we read in chapter 10, the very first verse, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu took their senses, put fire in them, they added incense and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord contrary to his command.

[17:25] God. It's, it's incredibly puzzling to know why these guys did this. These guys had a privileged upbringing. They witnessed God's revelation of himself to Israel through, if you like, rinkside seats, front and center, you know, box seats, A-grade box seats.

They had been among the select group that approached Mount Sinai. When Moses went up to speak with God, they had spent a week communion with God and preparing for his service in the, in the tabernacle courts.

They had seen the fire come out from the Holy of Holies, the most holy place with their very own eyes. You see, these guys are not rookies.

They're not, you know, they're not, teenagers, you know, in the service. They're not brand new. They're not just straight out of college kind of stuff. Perhaps they were carried away by all the excitement.

They wanted the experience to continue, so they attempted to duplicate the experience of duplicating the glory of God by revealing God's fire, which inevitably they actually did.

[18:36] perhaps they might have been a little bit tipsy. The excitement and the euphoria of the moment led them to drink a little bit too much communion wine. I don't know.

I mean, verse 8 of chapter 10, so the very next time that God speaks, He says, don't drink wine when you come into my presence, so maybe they'd had a bit too much. Whatever they were thinking, it seems that they believed that the specific command to present the offerings in a precise way that were prescribed by the Lord were not necessary to follow in this moment.

What they offered was referred to by Moses as contrary to God's command. Nadab and Abihu decided to approach the Lord on their terms, their way.

And the Lord even warns Aaron, the high priest, the holiest man in the land, that he cannot enter God's presence whenever he likes, however he wants to.

A friend of mine works, in fact, did work for a large multinational corporation. He was the head of a team. One of his teams was a bit of a problem to deal with that he led and he discovered that this team member one day.

[20:01] Instead of reporting an issue with him directly, he went over him and went over his report and went over him and knocked on the door of the CEO of this large, we're talking thousands of employees in this company, thousands of employees, knocked on the door of the CEO.

The CEO opens the door, says, come on in, and sat down. This guy made his complaint and the CEO took a bunch of notes, who do you report to, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, wrote it all down and then he said, I'll stop you there.

He said, we have a system in place that you haven't followed. How dare you knock on my door and come to me with a complaint like this, jumping over all of our systems.

You have ignored the way to approach the CEO, if you like. He was marched out of the office. My mate found out about this because he got a phone call from the CEO immediately and said, this bloke on your team?

Yep, he does. I want him gone in three months. Out of here in three months. You cannot approach God any way you like.

[21:21] So verse 2, fire came out for the presence of the Lord and consumed them and they died before the Lord. You see, the fire that had generated such joy and such blessing for the people just

moments ago was now a source of death and fear.

And the tragedy of this whole affair is in verse 4, Moses summoned Mishael and Eliphaz, that guy, sons of Aaron's uncle, Uziel, and said to them, come here, carry your cousins outside the camp away from the front of the sanctuary.

And so they came and carried them still in their tunics outside the camp as Moses ordered. Nadab and Abihu were cut off from God in the most dramatic way and now they're removed from the presence of God, even removed from the presence of his people.

What we're meant to see here is that Nadab and Abihu are in fact thrown out of paradise again just as Adam and Eve were when they disobeyed God's word. And so what we're left with here is this is a moment of euphoria and so has God's plans of how people will approach him, has it failed? Has this whole sacrificial system, the way that God has constructed for people to have fellowship with him, that people might see his glory, that people might be at one-ment with him, have atonement, has it failed?

[22 : 51] Is the human race forever doomed now from this moment to be in a situation that Nadab and Abihu are currently in, dead, out of the presence of God, forever?

We saw last week that the sacrifices were insufficient and now the mediators we see, the priests themselves are flawed.

I mentioned last week that Leviticus is a blueprint of something that's greater to come and when you've got something that's greater you don't need the blueprint anymore. God's disclosure of himself to his people has its fullest expression in the person of the Lord Jesus.

We see this as the beginning of the New Testament. If you go to the beginning of his biography on the life of Jesus, John makes an incredible claim. He says, in the beginning was the Word.

That is, this Word existed before anything was made and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning and through Him, that's through the Word, all things were made.

[24 : 00] Without Him, nothing was made that has been made. That is, this Word who existed before time is God and He is the Creator, the Maker of the heaven and earth.

And then down in verse 14, we see something startling about this Word of God who is God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth. It says, this Word became flesh and made His dwelling amongst us.

And the Word dwelling there is quite literally the Word tabernacled amongst us. God came and tabernacled amongst His people.

The God who reveals Himself decided to come into His world to reveal His glory in all its splendor, tabernacled amongst us, dwelt amongst us.

He turned up. And it says there, a little bit further on, we have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

[25 : 05] And you ask yourself the question, who is this Word who is God who existed before creation, who created everything, who came and dwelled amongst us and is full of grace and truth, who reveals the majesty and splendor of God?

And verse 16 of John 1 tells us, from the fullness of His grace, we have all received one blessing from another. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

You see, the big issue of Leviticus is how is it possible for a human being to be in the presence of God? And here we are told that the Creator God became a human being to come into our presence, to dwell amongst us.

And it says that we see His glory, which means that when Jesus arrived, God's character was on full display for the world to see. That's what John 1 says.

He came to His own to reveal the presence, to reveal the character and the glory of God, but they rejected Him. What John 1 says is the transcendent God, the one who dwells in invisible light has made Himself known, become visible.

[26 : 35] And then we see in verse 12 of John 1 that those who believe in His name, that it's the name of Christ, He gave the right to become children of God. You see, not only does God come and tabernacle, not only does Jesus become the tabernacle with His people, but He opens up the way for intimate relations that we might become children of God.

And how does He do that? Well, Leviticus, sorry, Hebrews 7 explains it in the language of Leviticus. It says, Now there have been many of those priests and since death prevented them from continuing in office, but because Jesus lives forever, He is a permanent priesthood.

Therefore, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him because He always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our needs, one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

So Jesus is the tabernacle, the place where God dwells, the place of meeting. He is the perfect high priest. He is not flawed like the other priests.

He lived the life of perfect obedience to His Father. And what's more, it says there that He's a high priest who's still alive. He's not dead like the rest. He has a permanent priesthood offering as a mediator between us and God forever.

[28 : 05] And unlike, it keeps going on in Hebrews, it says, unlike the other high priest who He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins and then for the sins of His people, He sacrificed for their sins once and for all when He offered Himself.

So He's the tabernacle set up as the place where the sacrifices are met, where the mediator would go in. He's the mediator who offers the sacrifices and He is the sacrifice Himself.

He offers the perfect sacrifices, the perfect priest. The contrast is significant. Under the old covenant, the priest would slaughter an animal, would sprinkle its blood, he'd be required to do it again and again and again and again and again.

In fact, to symbolize the never-ending nature of the work of the priest in the old covenant, if you look at the construction blueprints for the tabernacle, there were no seats in the tabernacle.

That is, the priest was not meant to sit down. They were never to have rest from their work. It was to happen again and again and bungee on and bungee off and fly in and fly out and just again and again and again and again.

[29 : 29] However, Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice. He took His own blood in the very presence of God. the heavenly sanctuary and He did it once for all and then it says, He sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven.

The job's done. Nat and I have just ended a new phase of life. For the first time in nine years, we get a day off together, actually it's six hours, with our kids.

All of our kids are now at school and so a lot has changed, we've noticed, since kids arrived and one of the things, it's not just sleeplessness, that's one thing, but one thing that particularly notice is the inability for us to have an ordered house for any longer than 20 minutes.

That's one thing we've noticed. With kids, cleaning becomes a meaningless, repetitive task. The house never remains clean for any length of time.

I'm astounded that you get how quickly toothpaste ends up on the vanity mirror, even when teeth haven't been cleaned.

[30 : 36] I don't get it. I really don't get it. You wash everything in the laundry pile and you'll still discover clothing on a shelf, there'll be some in the backyard, even in the fridge.

I mean, it's, go figure. And before those clothes are even dry and packed away, there are more clothes to wash. That's, that's what the sacrifice, the Old Testament's like.

Never ending. Never ending. No time to sit down and go, oh, it's fine. You read the newspaper. Jesus appeared once for all to do away with the sin by the sacrifice of himself.

We don't have to go through meaningless repetition of ineffective sacrifices. We can trust in Christ's effective sacrifice once and for all, a sacrifice which does not need repeating because he did the job first time.

And that's why Jesus was able to say a little later in John's Gospel, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through me.

[31 : 44] There is no basis for acceptance apart from the reality of God offering himself in Christ as the purging and the reconciling offering for our sins.

It means that all peoples, different ethnicities, languages, and cultures have a common place at the foot of the cross. There is no other way to the God than through Jesus.

Now you might be sitting here tonight thinking this is all nice but great way, great connections in terms of how we get to God but why would I want to meet with God?

I think that if you listen to the secular press that seems to be a more popular option nowadays. It would be easy to conclude that our society, that in our society that unbelief is on the march, religion

is in significant decline and yet belief in God still makes sense for four out of five people in this world.

And there's a whole number of reasons why that is the case. And one of the most significant reasons is that deep down, deep down in the core of our beings, there is this sense of the transcendent.

[33 : 11] There's more to this world than this world. A Harvard professor, James Wood, in a New Yorker article titled, Is That All There Is?

tells of a friend of his who's an analytical philosopher and a convinced atheist who sometimes wakes up in the middle of the night haunted by questions like this.

How could it be that this world is the result of an accidental big bang? How could there be no design, no metaphysical purpose? How could it be that every life, beginning with my own, my husband's and my child's, and spreading outward would be cosmically irrelevant?

Wood himself is a secular man, an atheist, and yet he admits that as one gets older and parents and peers begin to die and the obituaries in the newspaper are no longer missives from a far away place but local letters and one's own projects seem more pointless, such moments of terror and incomprehension seem more frequent and more piercing.

I could give you a long list of names of people saying exactly the same thing, people like Steve Jobs battling with his own death saying, surely this is not it, is it?

[34 : 43] See, in our secular culture where science and technology trumps faith, there is a growing sense of science and technology while contributing a whole lot can't address the big issues of life.

If everything has to be scientific, has to have a scientific explanation and proof, then this not only banishes God from the world but it also banishes things like love, hate, meaning, which is a world and can I say a world self-evidently not the world that we live in.

There must be something more and Jesus made the claim that he is the one who connects you with the something more, with the heavenly father, with the maker of heaven and earth, the one who has all of history, as we just had a brief look at tonight, all of history, all time and eternity in his hands, the one who delights to fellowship with his creation.

And if you are sitting here tonight, you have that sense that something's missing, I would implore you to investigate Jesus. You'll be amazed at all the things he said, all the things he did, and the perfect life he lived.

Try and pick up. Try and pick holes in his life. Now, if you're a Christian then, on the other hand, and I want to mention four things of application here very briefly.

[36 : 14] First, realize that Jesus' sacrifice cleanses you through and through. This is not some sort of external washing that makes you look okay to the naked eye. It is an internal washing that means that you stand up clean, pure, right under the all knowing eye of God.

When God himself comes looking for your sin, for your blemishes, he can't find anything. It's all being taken away.

Secondly, be thankful. The best way to apply the truth of the passage that we've seen today is to go home, to sit down in a quiet spot and praise God for what he has done for you.

At the end of Hebrews, again, in the context of talking about the sacrifice of Jesus, it says this, through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that openly confess his name and do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

What are the sacrifices God is pleased with his people? The sacrifice of thanksgiving for what he's done. thirdly, please note that if you're in Christ, you have a new designation, you've got a new role.

[37 : 46] It's alluded to in Hebrews 13, but made explicit in 1 Peter 2 verses 9 and 10, it says, but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood.

If you are in Christ, if you're united to the perfect priest, the perfect mediator, you too have become a priest, those who put their trust in Jesus are now designated priests, so that, the reason is, going on in 1 Peter, it says, so that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

You have been redeployed in Christ's service as a priest standing in his presence, giving praise to him and declaring to the nations the praise worthiness of Christ.

The Christian church is a kingdom of priests. with Jesus as their benevolent ruler and they're called to mediate the gospel of the good news of Christ to the world and to each other.

That's your role. That's the role of the church, to mediate this gospel news to the world and to each other. This is not just a role designated for people like me who have to wear funny dresses occasionally.

[39 : 03] every Christian is called upon to be a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations, to declare his praiseworthiness to the nations.

Finally, realize that you have unlimited access to the Father's presence. What a privilege that is. What a privilege that is.

I mean, what some of us wouldn't give to be able to get on the end of the phone to the most powerful person in the world. I'm not sure it's Don Trump anymore. But wouldn't it, I mean, what we would give in order to swing something our way.

And what a privilege it is to be able to go in the very presence of God, the one who made this world, and to be able to do it at any time and to be able to call him Father, I'm your much loved child, Father, to be able to speak to him.

Now friends, can I make, can you make sure that you that you use that privilege? Don't believe the lie of the devil that says that you're not worthy to go there and you're not worthy to call him Father and he's not interested in hearing from you.

[40 : 16] And in fact, he's probably ignoring your prayer request anyway. It's not on the basis of your worthiness that you approach, but on the basis of Christ's worthiness.

In Christ, God sees you as perfectly righteous, as perfectly obedient to the covenant, and so you're always worthy to approach the Father through the Son.

Say, Father, Father, what a privilege. Use it. Father. For sale.