

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Septuagesima Sunday, February 16, 2025
(70 days before Easter)

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 170 (168:7) 156, 371:1-6, 371:7

Lessons: Leviticus 9:1-22, Hebrews 7:23-28, Romans 3:21-26, Matthew 12:1-8.

Text: Hebrews 10:5-18.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ who is our All in All, dear friends,

The word “sacrifice” is a familiar word in the Bible. We read of Adam’s children, Cain and Abel, offering sacrifices to God. The word “altar” is first mentioned after the flood when Noah made an offering to God. All the Patriarchs of Jews, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants offered sacrifices to God. When God later on gave his Law in written form, definite order was established as to how sacrifices ought to be offered, when they should be offered, and by whom. So, to have priests and a high priest, to offer up sacrifices daily and on special feast days, became a way of life for God’s chosen people of Israel in the Old Testament times.

But these sacrifices were not an end in themselves. The Old Testament people did not go to heaven because of these sacrifices. The Old Testament sacrifices only pointed ahead to Christ, the Lamb of God and Savior of all mankind. The apostle Paul writes, ***“These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ,”*** Colossians 2:17.

Our text contrasts the many Old Testament sacrifices of many priests with the one sacrifice of our one and only High Priest, Jesus Christ. So we want to meditate on this truth:

CHRIST OFFERED THE ONE PERFECT SACRIFICE FOR SINS.

1. The **many** Old Testament sacrifices could never pay for the sins of people.
2. The **one** sacrifice of Christ has cleansed all people from all sins forever.

Our text tells us, ***“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.’”*** The thought is this: What the many Old Testament sacrifices of animals could not do because they were imperfect, the Lord Jesus accomplished when the eternal Son of God also became a true man with a body and blood.

The writer continues, ***“With burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased.”*** This statement may sound strange when we consider the fact that God himself established the Old Testament way of worship with priests and sacrifices. This was a part of the Ceremonial Law given to Israel through Moses on Mt. Sinai. Beginning at that time God’s people had priests and offered up sacrifices according to the order God established. The first high priest was Aaron, Moses’ brother. Aaron’s sons were the first priests. Their descendants alone had the right to this office. The men of the tribe of Levi were assistants to the priests. They were not allowed to offer the sacrifices, but had many humbler duties assigned to them. Priests lived according to strict rules, and wore certain prescribed garments as commanded by God. The sacrifices were of many different kinds. There were sacrifices of bulls, sheep, lambs, goats and doves, whose blood was shed in offering them. There were also bloodless sacrifices of such things as wine and flour. There were burnt offerings, guilt offerings, sin offerings, trespass offerings, thank offerings, grain offerings, and fellowship offerings. Sacrifices were made morning and evening every day. On the Sabbath (Saturday) the sacrifices were doubled. There were special festivals with

special sacrifices: New Moon, the Passover, the Old Testament Pentecost, Tabernacles, Trumpets, and the Great Day of Atonement. God prescribed exactly how these sacrifices were to be made.

Even though all these sacrifices were prescribed by God, our text says, ***“First he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them.’ (Although the law required them to be made).”*** Our text also tells us, ***“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”*** These Old Testament sacrifices were not perfectly pleasing to God because they could not pay for man’s sin. Only Christ’s sacrifice could do that. Let us look at the Old Testament sacrifices and see the many ways in which they were imperfect. The animals sacrificed, though they were picked as the healthiest of the lot, were not holy. Every animal sacrificed was still a creature of this sinful world, and therefore not perfect. Furthermore, the blood shed in these sacrifices was not holy for the same reason. The priests who offered the sacrifices were only sinful men. Consider also the fact that especially in later Old Testament times when worship practices deteriorated, the sacrifices were not made with the right attitude of heart. True worship of God from the heart is the only thing that pleases God, but sacrifices offered only ceremoniously cannot please God.

The main thing to be remembered is that all the Old Testament sacrifices could never atone for man’s sins, and they were not intended for that purpose. They were intended to remind the people of those days that the promised Messiah would come to be the Lamb of God to be sacrificed on the cross. The shedding of his blood would cleanse them from all their sins. Their only hope of salvation was in the Christ God promised. Every time a lamb or sheep was offered and the priest put his hand on the animal’s head before it was sacrificed, this symbolized what Isaiah the prophet said of Christ. ***“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all,”*** Isaiah 53:6.

Let us now concentrate on this precious truth: **The one sacrifice of Christ on the cross has cleansed all people from all sins forever.**

2.

It was part of the plan of God for man’s salvation that his one and only Son would become a true man with flesh and blood and that he would be the sacrifice for man’s sin. This was God the Father’s plan from eternity. Jesus, the obedient Son, was perfectly willing to carry out his heavenly Father’s plan. So our text says, ***“Then I said, ‘Here I am – it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.’ First he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them’ (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, ‘Here I am, I have come to do your will’ He sets aside the first to establish the second.”*** Here Jesus the Messiah is quoted as it is written in Psalm 40. He indicates his willingness to be the Divine Substitute for sinners and give himself as the Sacrifice for sin. This willingness our Lord manifested all through his earthly ministry and especially in his suffering and death. During his ministry, Jesus told the Jews, ***“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life --only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father,”*** John 10:17-18. In the cruel agony he suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane just before he was betrayed, Jesus said to his heavenly Father, ***“Not my will, but yours be done,”*** Luke 22:42. This willingness of our Savior makes his sacrifice a perfect one, one acceptable to God the Father.

When Jesus came to make this perfect sacrifice for sins, the Old Testament covenant of sacrifices commanded in the Ceremonial Law was replaced by the New Covenant in Jesus’ blood. This is said in the Words of Institution in the Lord’s Supper: ***“This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remissions of sins.”*** The old way of inadequate sacrifices under the Law was replaced by the one, eternal and all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

This one willing sacrifice was sufficient. Our text says, ***“By that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*** We have been sanctified, made holy, once for all time by the one offering Christ made when he sacrificed himself on the cross. We are cleansed from all our sins. Our text emphasizes again that what the Old Testament priests with their many sacrifices could not do, Jesus with his one sacrifice has done perfectly. Our text says, ***“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”*** Now that Jesus has completed this work of redemption, he waits with expectation until all his enemies become as his footstool. He is the Victor over them. His work of redemption has won the victory. This victory Jesus declared when he descended into hell.

The wonderful objective fact that one sacrifice for sins for all people and for all times is sufficient, is the Gospel truth of our text that God wants us to hear and believe. ***“The Holy Spirit testifies to us about this. For he says: ‘This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.’ Then he adds: ‘Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.’”*** The New Covenant or Testament of God’s grace in Christ God wants inscribed on our minds through the proclamation of the Gospel message. It is a message that can be accepted only by faith in Christ. It is a most precious message that gives full assurance that all sins, all unrighteousness, all iniquities, are forgiven and forgotten, never again to be remembered against us by God.

Our text concludes with these words, ***“And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.”*** Any additional offerings for sins are useless and senseless. Here we may learn clearly how false the Roman Catholic teaching about the mass is. Their worship centers about what is called the mass. They teach that in the mass an unbloody sacrifice is made for the sins of the living and for the sins of the dead. This is horrible blasphemy, for it is saying that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross was not sufficient to pay for our sins. That church has priests to offer up an unbloody sacrifice for sins, day after day. They say that the bread and wine is changed in substance to be the body and blood of Christ (the teaching of Transubstantiation). There is no comfort whatever in such a religion, because no one is assured of sins forgiven once for all by Christ’s **one** sacrifice. Not even in death is a person assured of all sins forgiven. Rather it is taught that there is some imaginary place called purgatory where a person still has to be purged from some sins.

Oh, how we should thank God with rejoicing that we have been delivered from the terrible errors of the Roman Catholic Church! What blessed joy we may have that Christ **once for all** offered the **one**, perfect sacrifice for **all** sins for **all** people. Trusting in Jesus by faith we may live and die in peace, knowing that eternal salvation is ours.

*“Jesus, the Lord, the mighty God,
An all-sufficient ransom paid.
O matchless price! His precious blood
For vile, rebellious traitors shed.”* (The Lutheran Hymnal 141:3)
Amen.

Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for March 18, 2007.