

“The Living Sacrifice to God”

Pentecost 15

1)

Romans 12:1-8

2)

September 13, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

What does making a sacrifice look like? First thing to come to mind is the sacrifices that I make for my own kids. We give them the best of the food or the opportunity to go through line first. We get them from point A to point B, perhaps in your schedule maybe it’s to a sports game or an after-school activity. Husbands and wives make sacrifices for each other. Not taking a job knowing that it would move your family across the country. Perhaps you see a story in the news or you know someone who makes the sacrifice of offering a kidney for a loved one.

Sacrifices come in all shapes and forms, and in many ways wouldn’t we say or just summarize it by saying it means putting someone else first? I think about sacrifices because of what we heard in our second lesson when the Apostle Paul didn’t just simply ask us but he said I urge you therefore I urge you dear brothers and sisters in Christ offer your bodies as a living sacrifice is holy and pleasing to God message your spiritual act of worship. This morning we wanna ask and answer that question **what does a living sacrifice to God look like?**

Now you hear that word sacrifice and I would imagine that your first thought is well this is what the Old Testament believers did. They would bring their grain offering or sin and guilt offerings to the tabernacle or temple as a sacrifice to the Lord. This would be their first fruit offering. Like we take an offering today and we give our best to God. For OT believers or those at the time of the apostle Paul, anyone in the vicinity of the tabernacle or temple would have been able to smell the stench coming from the altar because the sacrifice wasn’t living, it was dead. A living sacrifice to God would have been paradoxical.

It would’ve been the case when all set it to his Old Testament to his a present day hearers. What does a living sacrifice to God mean?

Therefore

Because it's a word that we don't want to forget either. Everything I told you all of Christian doctrine and teaching – Romans 1-11 – teaching is one through 11 all of this and everything I'm about to tell you hinges on those first 11 chapters.

Think of all of God's promises in Romans one through 11 – Romans 3 – **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God who have been justified freely by his grace.**

Romans 6 – **The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Romans 8 – when Paul talks about the internal struggle that you have with your sinful nature of saying **therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** The apostle Paul is saying that if you want to offer a living sacrifice to God you have to believe in something called justification by faith – faith in your Lord and savior Jesus Christ that he did indeed die and it's an accomplished fact that he died on the cross and take away your sins and mine and for the sins of the entire world. Do you believe this?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Isn't it great to know that there's no sacrifice that you and I could ever make that would be a payment for sin? That we don't need to do anything to please God.

Think of the next phrase – **in view of God's mercy.** God would send his one and only son to pay for our every sin. Aren't there times in our lives when we try to make a deal with God? Oftentimes it's in our prayer life. We make a statement – God, if you do _____ for me, then I will _____. Aren't we worshipping the first half of our statement, placing that above our trust in God? Our children? Money? Career?

We heard about it in the gospel lesson today when Jesus had said "What can a man gain – the whole world yet forfeit his soul? Here the apostle Paul in this section of scripture tells us offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. He doesn't mean just a little part of us like we can drop money in the plate and then I'm done with church or being a Christian and I don't need to revisit this until next Sunday.

God tells us that he wants our whole body – offer our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God. You and I were made holy and our acts are pleasing in God's sight not because of what we've done but because of god's mercy – **in view of god's mercy.**

Every time you enter the sanctuary, what do you see above the altar? The cross is at the center of everything that we are and everything we do. A lot of people in this world do good and great things and we would never question their motives. “Good” is relative in our own minds. God didn't just give a good gift for us he gave us the perfect gift. He gave his one and only son Jesus to die on the cross to take away our every sin. It was is what moves us and motivates us.

² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

On the news – you see people fighting; evil in this world; you see hatred, you see anger, you see jealousy. And you don't even need to turn on the news. What happens our own homes and in our own hearts? The devil is at work and working overtime in this world to take over and capture our soul. The apostle Paul gives us a warning this morning – “**Do not conform to the pattern of this world.**” You see what the stars in Hollywood do, you see professional athletes, you see people that make news. God tells us to not follow the world. Rather, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. To offer a living sacrifice holy and pleasing to God? Continue to come back to the source of everything good. Those good things, those great things, those wonderful things, those marvelous works of our Lord – appear and shout out to us every time we open up the Bible. Don't do it just once a week or even just a time or 2x/week. Follow God's word. And hear the good news – how you are dearly loved; how your Savior laid down his life for you.

It's a difficult thing to do isn't it? We have friends we have family we have other people that influence us in life. Oftentimes we are faced with making difficult decisions. Do I follow my friends? Do I follow my family? What would God have me do? God doesn't give us a guilt trip in order to follow him. Paul simply says it here as we

said in verse one – **I urge you...offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God.**

⁴Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

This is a great place to look at – what does the body of Christ look like? It's described as a body with many parts. We may think of our congregation here at Messiah. What gifts has God given me? This list is a good place to start – if you have the ability to teach; if you have the ability to serve; or to leadership or the ability to give. God says do this. Excel at it. And it's not just for us here at Messiah, this is an encouragement for all believers everywhere.

And in some ways we have missed that aspect of the body of Christ over the last 6 months of the pandemic. Not all of us having the opportunity to worship here at Messiah regularly. For example, today we would normally celebrate Welcome Back Sunday – worship, bible class in between services, and Sunday School. But things just quite aren't the same. I pray that God continues to have that longing inside each and every one of you – the desire in your heart – not to come to church to say oh what can I get out of worship. Rather, to think more in terms of what can I give. By giving of yourself to others. God tells us in Hebrews 10 – **Let's not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another all the more as you see the day approaching.** When I see you on Sunday, it brings joy to my day and is the highlight of my week. Think about what you can give to the body of Christ. What can you do locally – in your community or neighborhood? Maybe it's the neighbor across the street or down the road, and you make a few meals for them b/c they have cancer. Maybe you offer a ride to a friend b/c their car broke down. Maybe it's a family member, sibling or spouse who is in need,

or you simply cheer them up and encourage them. This is how we **offer our bodies as living sacrifices**. In everything that we do to say thank you for what God has done for us.

The living sacrifice to God.? Do you know what it looks like?

We go throughout this week and let's say you would forget, look to the cross – in view of God's mercy – where Jesus laid down his life for you. No fear, no guilt over our sin, no fear of death itself. Eternal life is our promise and guarantee. What should we do with this life of ours? How can we offer our bodies – our heart and soul and strength and mind – everything that we are and everything that we have to our Lord?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Amen.

Let's pray – Dear Heavenly Father, you give us a sometimes daunting challenge – to offer ourselves to you. We know that we cannot do it on our own. We ask you, to help us and strengthen us to offer everything that we have and everything that we are to you – as we say thank you, for you loved us first. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. ⁴ Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same

function, ⁵ so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. ⁷ If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; ⁸ if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.