

October 5, 2014  
Sermon for LWML Sunday  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Ephesians 5:1–2

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Ephesians 5:1–2 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God, our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rich blessings and congratulations to the women of the LWML, our Lutheran Women in Mission, this morning as we celebrate and investigate how we all by faith in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ are enabled to be fragrant sacrifices and offerings before Him in both His Kingdom and in the earth.

The book of Ephesians, written by Saint Paul, to the saints of Ephesus in the decade of the 60's is one of the letters that Paul wrote from a jail cell in Rome. He writes, despite his own problems, a word of encouragement to the saints.

Paul understands this, that since his conversion on the Damascus Road his life has been one of great trial and tribulation. When Saul met the Lord Jesus whom he was persecuting, he was in his own words a premier Israelite *“circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law blameless”* (Philippians 3:4b-6).

Paul had come to the realization what all the faithful in Christ have come to understand under the power of the Holy Spirit. We understand that none of our labor is acceptable to God. We understand that none of our carnal, fleshly work is acceptable in His sight.

All our works are as filthy rags before God (Isaiah 64:6) although some men may be very pleased and impressed with our achievements. None of our earthly works rise to the Lord Jesus as fragrant offerings or are acceptable to our Father in heaven as pleasing sacrifices. Our God sees all our work as filthy rags, not one worthy of meriting any attention from Him.

In a sermon on this text proclaimed on the Third Sunday in Lent by Dr. Martin Luther these words were spoken, "This expression Paul takes from the Old Testament. There the temporal sacrifices are described as being 'a sweet-smelling savour' unto God: that is, they were acceptable and well-pleasing to Him; but not, as the Jews imagined, because of the value of the work or of the sacrifices in themselves. For such thoughts they were chastised by the prophets often enough. They were acceptable on the ground of the true sacrifice which they foreshadowed and encircled."

Dr. Luther well understands that none of our works reach God as fragrant sacrifices and offerings. Those kinds of offerings never did reach the Lord even in the Old Testament.

Dr. Luther continues in saying, "They [Israel's sacrifices] were acceptable on the ground of the true sacrifice which they foreshadowed and encircled. Paul's thought is this: The sacrifices of the Old Testament have passed. Now all sacrifices are powerless but that of Christ Himself; He is the sweet-smelling savour. This sacrifice is pleasing to God. He gladly accepts it and would have us be confident it is an acceptable offering in our stead."

Once again we are faced with the reality of our fallen condition. We are at once sinners and saints. We have the terrible stain of sin upon us and at the same time have the wonderful promise of resurrection glory upon us through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

This wonderful fragrant and gracious sacrifice on our behalf is the one that God receives as a fragrant offering and sacrifice. This is the ultimate sacrificial offering but there are many others worked by our Lord Jesus in obedience to our Father. Remember?

In the beginning the Holy Spirit comes to a virgin named Mary and a Son is born to her and Joseph who is named Jesus. Prophecy proclaims the birth of this Child and angels sing the birth of this Child. The shepherds and wise men rejoice at the birth of this Child and our Father receives this miraculous birth as a fragrant sacrifice and offering.

This Jesus at eight days old is dedicated back to His Father in the rite of circumcision, a fragrant offering to the Lord. There is a wedding that is running a bit short on wine. Jesus turns water into the best wine and the Father catches that scent as a fragrant offering. And there is more!

Blind people see, deaf people hear, lame people have their limbs restored, sick people are healed, lepers are cleansed, seas are calmed, demons are cast out, mute people speak, the hungry are fed, demon possessed are delivered, captives are set free, severed ears restored, and if that were not enough, resurrection and life become the new normal.

Our Father receives all these acts as fragrant sacrifices and offerings. They reach to His nostrils and the Lord rejoices, the angels dance, the Holy Spirit rejoices because our Father is well pleased, the incense has been lit, the fire is burning and the perfect sacrifice, the perfect offering is so sweet and fragrant a sacrifice to the Father that it has the power to cover and remove the sin of all humankind for all time.

That is the plan and design of God. That Jesus Christ, the perfect fragrant sacrifice and offering, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world in whose book the names of all who live and die and rise by faith in Christ Jesus have been written. (Revelation 13:8) And not only are their names written in the book of the Lamb and in the heart of the Father but their works of faith, good works prepared beforehand in which they walk, rise to the throne of our Father as fragrant sacrifices and offerings.

Understand that when you in obedience to Matthew 28, As you are going, make disciples and share the Gospel with some soul in need of encouragement- the Father receives that as a fragrant sacrifice and offering.

When you, water-baptized, blood-covered, Holy Spirit-filled, consecrated, and anointed Daughters of Zion in the LWML, give your pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars, your mites, in the interest of missions, our Father receives every single sacrificial mite as a fragrant sacrifice and offering.

When we all in faithful obedience, study the Word of God, when we dwell together in unity, when we faithfully hold the confessions of the church in this perverse generation, when we speak faith, when we love one another;

fragrant sacrifices and offerings rise up to the nostrils of our merciful, holy, and gracious God and Father.

I The Gospel of Saint Mark chapter sixteen verses sixteen through eighteen give a wonderful witness when they tell us: “*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*”

Our baptismal faith rises up to our Father as a fragrant sacrifice. Jesus goes on to tell us , “*These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.*”

Every act of obedience, every work of the saints of God, every act of faith, every word spoken in faith rises up to the Father as a sweet-smelling savor and sacrificial offering.

We have the awesome privilege of bringing joy to the heart of our Father by not simply performing deeds of which He would approve but also in the words of Saint Paul to the Romans in the twelfth chapter, “*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*”

So, dear saints of God, let's strive with all our Holy Ghost-inspired and Spirit-filled faith to infuse the heavens with fragrant sacrifices and offerings by not simply doing, but by being those sacrifices and offerings in the nostrils of our loving God and Father.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

*S. D. G - Soli Deo Gloria*  
To God alone be glory

2014 LWML Sunday Sermon  
"Fragrant Sacrifices and Offerings"  
Ephesians 5:2

1. None of our labor is acceptable to God.
2. Jesus is the sweet smelling sacrifice pleasing to God.
3. When we work in Jesus' name, the Father receives those works as fragrant sacrifices and offerings.