

Third Lenten Service – Lenten Theme: O Christ, the Lamb of God

Text: Numbers 28:1-8 (NIV)

¹The LORD said to Moses, ²“Give this command to the Israelites and say to them: ‘See that you present to me at the appointed time the food for my offerings made by fire, as an aroma pleasing to me.’ ³Say to them: ‘This is the offering made by fire that you are to present to the LORD: two lambs a year old without defect, as a regular burnt offering each day. ⁴Prepare one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight, ⁵together with a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives. ⁶This is the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai as a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. ⁷The accompanying drink offering is to be a quarter of a hin of fermented drink with each lamb. Pour out the drink offering to the LORD at the sanctuary. ⁸Prepare the second lamb at twilight, along with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering that you prepare in the morning. This is an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

Theme: A Lamb that was Holy and Wholly Given to the Lord

I am very glad that I am a pastor in the New Testament era, and that I wasn't a priest in the Old Testament era. I write sermons, prepare Bible studies, and make visits. In the Old Testament era the priests were basically butchers. They killed animals, skinned them, gutted them, and burned them on the altar. It was a dirty, messy, and gory job. They must have come home covered in blood and smelling pretty bad after a day at work.

Tonight's text describes the morning and evening sacrifices at the tabernacle. There was to be a sacrifice in the morning and another at twilight. Each time a perfect lamb was to be given as a burnt offering, along with a grain offering and a drink offering. As I thought about this daily burnt offering, it is a lamb that was holy and wholly given to the Lord.

I. These daily burnt offerings were “holy.”

They had to be perfect lambs. It says that they had to be one year old lambs without any defect. These were lambs in the prime of their life. They were also the best of all of the lambs that they had. This was the same as the Passover lambs. They were also one year old lambs without any defect. God would not allow them to give lambs that were weak, spotted or had any kind of blemish. They had to be perfect. They had to give the very best.

This was an example of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Peter writes about Jesus, *“It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you by your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”* Christ had no sin. He was perfect. However, He was even more precious to God than gold or silver is precious to us. He was also more precious than the prize lamb of a shepherd. Jesus was God's beloved Son, His only Son, whom He loved more than anything. God gave His dearest treasure for us. Christ willingly allowed Himself to be sacrificed for us. When He shed His blood on the cross and gave His life for us, he was a holy offering, the most holy offering that was ever given. He was God's own perfect sacrifice, chosen before the creation of the world, for the forgiveness of all of our sins.

II. The daily burnt offerings were also “wholly” given to the Lord.”

The burnt offerings were completely consumed. That was not the case with the other sacrifices. With those sacrifices the priest received a portion of the meat. That was part of how they were paid. The person who brought the sacrifice sometimes received some of the meat from some of the sacrifices for a festive meal with family and friends. These were similar to our offerings. We give our gifts to the Lord. The pastor is paid from those gifts. We all receive some services back from them. Other people are also helped through the gifts. The burnt offering was different, however. It was given wholly to the Lord. The entire sacrifice was consumed on the altar. It would be like if you put your money in the offering plate, and we burned the entire collection.

Jesus was also wholly dedicated to the Lord. We sing about that in the hymn, “Come, Follow Me the Savior Spake...” where it says, “**My heart, My mind, My strength, My all, To God I yield, on Him I call.**” Jesus dedicated His entire life to His Father. Every part of His life was to do the will of His father. In John 6 Jesus said, “³⁸ *I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.* ³⁹ *And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.* ⁴⁰ *For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*” He would often tell His disciples that it was necessary that He go to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and rise again. He followed His Father’s will to the bitter end. It was not easy. In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed that there would be another way, but He ended that prayer with the words, “Nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done.” Jesus gave Himself wholly to the will of His Father, even when He was beaten and mocked, even when He was nailed to the cross, even when people all around Him were challenging Him to come down, until finally Jesus was totally consumed. He died, and hung dead on a cross.

But when He died, He said, “*It is finished.*” The sacrifice was complete. His life was not wasted. It says in our text that the daily burnt offerings were an aroma, pleasing to the Lord. God accepted Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as the payment of all of our sins. He proved it when Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. His resurrection is the assurance that we will also rise and live with Him for all of eternity. Jesus gave Himself wholly to the will of His Father, and by His obedience, He has saved us from death.

III. Each day began and ended with this sacrifice.

This reminded Israel of God’s presence with them. God received the sacrifice in the morning and again in the evening. They were reminded that they were God’s people when He accepted these sacrifices.

It is good for us to also remember our Lord in prayer every morning and evening. In the *Small Catechism* Martin Luther writes that we should begin the day with the sign of the cross as a remembrance of our baptism into Christ. Then he suggests that we say the invocation, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” He suggests that we then say the creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and possibly his morning prayer. Then go joyfully to our working, singing a hymn. He suggests something very similar in the evening, and then that we go to sleep in peace. Our morning and evening prayers remind us that we have been baptized into Christ. He is our Savior. We

are His people, and nothing can ever separate us from His love.

When you contemplate the sacrifices of the Old Testament, it is amazing how much they all pointed to Christ. In this daily burnt offering, we see an example of perfect lambs, which were completely consumed and an example of how the Savior would be holy and wholly given to God's will. May God keep us in that faith, so that in Christ we are holy, and that we know that we wholly belong to God.

Amen.

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