

5th Lenten Service – The Sin Offering

Leviticus 4:27 - 31 (NIV)

²⁷“If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD’s commands, he is guilty. ²⁸When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering for the sin he committed a female goat without defect. ²⁹He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. ³⁰Then the priest is to take some of the blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³¹He shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.

Theme: I Didn’t Mean to Do It!

I can remember several times as a kid when windows were broken at our home, and it was my fault, kind of. If my brother would have hit the baseball, it wouldn’t have broken the basement window behind him. I also remember figuring that the basketball wouldn’t break the garage window, but after it went through the basket, it went through the garage window. I am sure that I said something like, “It was an accident” or “I didn’t mean to do it,” but that never seemed to help. My parents weren’t very happy about those broken windows whether I meant to break them or not. That is the kind of sin that this evening’s text treats those “unintentional” sins.

I. There are times when we do bad things that we don’t mean to do.

There were several laws about that in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 19 describes a situation in which someone goes into the forest to cut wood. When he swings his axe, the head flies off of the handle and kills his partner. This is an unintentional sin. Another example of one of these sins is in Genesis 20:9 when King Abimelech took Abraham’s wife Sarah into his harem. Abimelech didn’t know that she was Abraham’s wife because Abraham lied and said that she was his sister. In Numbers 22:34 Balaam kept beating his donkey because it wouldn’t go any further; however, the Angel of the Lord was standing in the way. When Balaam realized this, he said, “*I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me.*” This Hebrew word for sin is “shgaga.” It is only used 19 times in the Old Testament and refers to an inadvertent or unintentional sin. You did something wrong but didn’t mean to or you were misled.

Do we ever commit those kinds of sins? My guess is that we do so all the time. There are things that we have broken like those windows, that we never meant to break. There are times when we hurt someone’s feelings very badly, but we never meant to be hurtful with what we said. Sometimes we meant to help, but we just made the situation worse. We didn’t pay attention for just a split second, and suddenly we are in a fender bender. We thought that there was enough money in the check book to cover that check. We forgot to pick someone up or we left them behind. Sometimes we take something the wrong way, and we lash out at someone even though it was a misunderstanding. We do things that were an accident like when I stepped in a basket of eggs that my grandparents had just gathered. We forgot our homework at home. The alarm clock didn’t off so we didn’t get up in time.

I could think of many examples of times when we do something or say something that is hurtful, but

we never meant to do it. Some of them are relatively minor, such as when I broke those windows, but sometimes they can be very serious. It could end up making you lose your job at work. It can ruin a friendship. Sometimes people even get seriously hurt or even killed. We often call them mistakes, but they can be devastating.

Sometimes these are the sins that trouble us the most. I can still remember those three windows to this day. Just thinking about this also brings the time to mind when I closed the car door on my grandmother's fingers. I still feel horrible about that to this day. Think about it. Do you remember the time when you wanted to hurt your brother, and you really gave it to him or do you remember that time when you didn't mean to hurt him but accidentally did? Do you remember the time when you have reason to be angry or the time when it was all a big misunderstanding and you really put your foot in your mouth. It is often these unintentional sins that we remember for years. How could I have been so dumb? That thought keeps coming back over and over again.

II. That is why it is important that we confess these sins also.

This chapter of Leviticus gave laws for Israel with regard to these sin offerings. A priest was to sacrifice a bull. If it was a sin of the whole congregation, a bull was also to be sacrificed. A leader of the people was to sacrifice a male goat. A common person was to sacrifice a female lamb or a female goat. It is interesting what the person did. They began by laying their hand on the head of the sacrifice. The laying on of hands is often mentioned in the Bible with regard to the Holy Spirit or gifts of the Spirit being given to someone, such as when Moses laid his hands on Joshua (Dt 34:9) or when pastors are ordained. (1 Tim 5:22) In this case however, the person was imparting their sin to the sacrifice. Their sin was given to someone else. Then the animal was slain, its blood was placed at the altar, and its fat was burned on the altar. Then it says in each of these cases, "*The priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.*"

This is an interesting picture of Christ. Our sermon hymn says, "**My faith shall lay its hand on that dear head of Thine.**" By faith we as Christians give all of our sins to Christ. He is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. All of our sins were placed on this sinless lamb of God. Then He was sacrificed on the cross in our place. His body was given, and His blood was poured out for us. Through His perfect sacrifice our sin is atoned for. It is forgiven.

That is a wonderful thing for us to know as Christians. We don't have to bear that burden of guilt for those sins that we never meant to do. We give them to Christ, and trust that God forgives them all. Rather than being defensive and saying, "It wasn't my fault!" "It was a mistake!" we simply confess, "I am sorry," and in Christ God forgives that sin.

But what about the people who won't forgive me? What about the damage that we did to our own lives and the lives of others with these sins? God makes provision for that too. In the Old Testament if someone inadvertently killed someone else, there were cities of refuge where they could live where they would be protected from those who sought revenge. The Lord also protects us today when we confess these sins and trust in His forgiveness. Initially it might cause something very bad to happen, but God's love is still there for us. Even these sins cannot separate us from His love. He promises to work all things for the good of those who love Him. He promises to still keep us in His protecting care.

“I didn’t mean to do it!” Those words probably come from the lips of each one of us far more than we would like. The good news for us as Christians is that we don’t have to deny those sins, try to excuse them or bear the guilt of them. We lay them on Christ, the Lamb of God. He takes them all away. May God grant each one of us the peace of that forgiveness also for these unintentional sins in Christ.

Amen.

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Order of Worship
LENTEN MIDWEEK 5
“The Sin Offering” – March 24, 2010

OPENING HYMN - 449 “O Sacred Head”

INVOCATION

L: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

L: Behold the Lamb of God

C: who takes away the sin of the world. [John 1:29]

L: Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

C: God Himself will provide the lamb? [Gen 22:7,8]

L: The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are;

C: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. [Ex 12:13]

L: This is the offering made by fire that you are to present to the LORD

C: two lambs a year old without defect, as a regular burnt offering each day. [Numbers 28:3]

L: Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it up as a whole burnt offering to the LORD.

C: He cried out to the LORD on Israel’s behalf, and the LORD answered him. [1 Samuel 7:9]

L: He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering...

C: In this way the priest will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven. [Leviticus 4:29,32]

L: Lord, have mercy.

C: Christ have mercy.

L: Lord, have mercy.

Psalms 40:6 - 12 (NIV)

- ⁶ Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but my ears you have pierced; burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.
- ⁷ Then I said, "Here I am, I have come—
it is written about me in the scroll.
- ⁸ I desire to do your will,
O my God; your law is within my heart."
- ⁹ I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly;
I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD.
- ¹⁰ I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation.
I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.
- ¹¹ Do not withhold your mercy from me, O LORD;
may your love and your truth always protect me.
- ¹² For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.
They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me.

OLD TESTAMENT READING - Leviticus 4:27-31

EPISTLE READING - Hebrews 10:1-10

THE PASSION OF OUR LORD ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE

GOSPEL READING - Luke 23:1-25 *Jesus before Pilate*

SERMON HYMN - 431 "Not all the Blood of Beasts"

SERMON

OFFERING

HYMN - 451 "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE

LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION

P: The Lord bless you and keep you.. and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN - 606 "I Lay My Sins on Jesus"