

In my personal Bible reading earlier this month, I was reading through the book of Leviticus. The first seven chapters of Leviticus deal with instructions on the various offerings of grain, sheep, goats, bulls, and birds that the people of Israel were to sacrifice to God. When one reads through the Bible, it's easy to be intimidated by such a section of Scripture. It's easy to have your eyes glaze over and start dreaming of what's next in your daily routine.

Yet as the darkness gathers around us, we reflect on who is offered up on Calvary as our Lamb of God who doesn't simply replace the arcane sacrifices offered up of old but fulfills them. His sacrifice is the ultimate fulfillment of what was promised in the Old Testament.

As we consider the man who hangs on the cross for you this day, trust in Him. Believe in Him. Believe that His sacrifice is sufficient. It is enough. **TRUST IN JESUS WHO FULFILLED THE OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES.**

First, I. In Jesus, you have access to God. Throughout John's account of the crucifixion, there is discussion of whether Jesus is a king. In fact, the sign above the cross said king of the Jews. You don't simply call up a king to talk to him. He is separated by moats, walls, and guards. Yet this king walked among His people, and He hung there as commoners walked by and wagged their heads at him.

In the Old Testament, the Lord lived in the Temple. He was behind walls, curtains, and guards. The holiness of God separated Him from the rest of the people. How can a holy God dwell among a sinful people? He dwelt among the people as they brought sacrifices to Him for God to cleanse them.

You couldn't come into the temple lightly. You came with an offering of livestock. Depending on your level of wealth, it was either a bull without blemish, a male sheep or goat without blemish, or a turtledove or pigeon. There was a specific way in which it was to be slaughtered, and the entire animal would be burned up. It was in this way that the people of God could offer a pleasing aroma up to their Lord.

How do we gain access to the Holy God? We have access through Jesus Christ who sits not on a throne of gold but on a throne of the cross, whose crown is not bejeweled, but is one of thorns. His cross grants us access through the forgiveness of sins as He took upon our sins once and for all, better than any burnt offering of livestock did in the days of Moses. Jesus now stands as our great high priest who offers up prayers for us continually, even as He prayed for humanity as He suffered there on the cross.

Second, II. In Jesus, you have daily bread. **“Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”**” Yet it was He who said from the cross, **“I thirst.”** The one who is living water thirsted. The one who is the bread of life was brought to nothing.

Yet even in His death, He provided for those around Him. His garments helped clothe a soldier who cast lots for his clothing. He provided John as a guardian for His mother Mary even as He was dying. Even as He suffered, He didn't stop caring for me and for you.

In the book of Leviticus, the grain offering was an offering of flour, bread, or whole wheat offered to God. A portion was burned up for the Lord, but the remainder was for the priests who served in the temple to feed them and give them their daily bread.

The author of Hebrews reminds us, **“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”**” As we gather during this most holy of weeks to worship God and bring before Him offerings, we know that we need not fear poverty, lack, or hunger. If Jesus took care of those around Him even as He suffered on the cross, how much more will He take care of you as He sits at the right hand of God and has all authority in heaven and on earth.

I know this is a busy time. I know there's stress to see family, go to worship services, and to just get by week by week, day by day, but stop and focus on your daily bread, your grain offering, whose sacrifice once and for all brings life to the world.

Third, III. In Jesus, you have forgiveness. On the cross Jesus said, **“It is finished.”** He meant it. The struggle against sin and death is finished. The sacrifice for the removal of all the sins of the world is completed. This is what we celebrate on a day like today. We see our sins on the cross, and our lives are never the same.

After His death, the soldier pierced His side, and blood and water sprung out of His side. The water, the blood, and the Spirit all testify. This water comes to us in the waters of baptism as we receive this washing for the forgiveness of sins. This blood comes to us as we receive Christ's true body and blood in, with, and under bread and wine.

The Bible tells us, **“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”** The Lord instructed His people to give three types of offerings for sins: for unintentional sins, for intentional sins, and for acts of betrayal. Each had different sacrificial requirements. Again, the usual livestock are to be offered up, a young bull, a goat, a sheep, two birds, an offering of flour, or a ram. All of these sacrifices sought to give God's people the forgiveness of sins and restore their relationship with the Lord.

So too, the one who hangs from the cross dies for your sins, both unintentional and intentional. He dies for the sins everyone knows about, the sins only you know about, and the sins you committed that you don't even realize you

committed. He has died for your acts of betrayal, the times when you denied knowing Jesus just like Peter did, the times you acted like Judas.

To think that sins had a price attached to them in the Old Testament times, giving up a goat or ram was no insignificant price to pay! Because Christ was offered up at Calvary, we no longer need to do things to appease the Lord. The full price has been paid. **“It is finished!”**

Finally, IV. In Jesus, you have peace. Isaiah prophesies of Jesus saying, **“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”** His punishment has brought us peace. This peace is peace with God, and because we have peace with God, we can have peace with others.

This peace offering of a bull, cow, sheep, or goat was offered on a special occasion. The fatty portions would be burned up and sacrificed to God, but the rest would be set aside for both the priests and the laypeople. This was a sacrifice not to make peace happen between God and man, but to give thanks for the peace that was already established between God and man. The peace offering was the only sacrifice that involved a communal meal. Everything had to be eaten and any leftovers were burned. God ate the fat, and the worshippers ate the rest.

Jesus’ sacrifice on Calvary brings us peace, and we can enjoy with thankfulness the life that flows from the forgiveness of sins. In fact, on Sunday in Church we will be celebrating Holy Communion, which is also known as the Eucharist. The word Eucharist means thankfulness. We get a chance to eat a meal with God as we partake of Christ’s body and blood, in with and under bread and wine.

Certainly not sacred in the same way the Lord’s Supper is, but afterwards children will celebrate a feast of sweet things as they hunt for Easter eggs, and we will celebrate a potluck after worship. Please consider bringing a dish to pass and celebrate with thankfulness the light and joy we have in the Lord which allows us to enjoy simple pleasures such as a shared meal.

As the darkness deepens this evening and we go home in silence, we can go home with peace. We can go home with a somber thankfulness borne out of the realization of how much Christ has sacrificed to bring us peace. Your home life may be crazy, an illness may keep you up at night, or the news may get you tossing and turning in bed, but despite the worst the world has to throw at us, we know this is certain. **“In [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.”**

Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice. He fulfilled all of them. Look no further than the man who hung there on Calvary.