

Home Group Notes

I hope you're enjoying the Bishop, last one 12<sup>th</sup>. After Easter we move onto Acts 27 probably.

Welcome:

What was the last thing you broke / lost (of someone else's) and what did you do about it? Did that work?

Worship: Try Psalm 50 (can you figure out why?)

Word:

1. Read Leviticus 5.14-6.7
2. Can anyone remember any thing James said?
3. Can you summarise the 4 sacrifices so far (Confession, Commitment, Celebrate, Cleansing Or Atonement, Belonging, Celebrate, Decontaminate – can you see why we could use these headings and can you do better?)
4. What would you suggest for a one word summary for this 4<sup>th</sup> sacrifice?
5. How do you right a wrong?
6. Look at the examples of what needs a Guilt offering what do we learn from them?
7. What's my incentive for being honest? (see 2 Sam 12.6, Ex22.1) and incentive nowadays?
8. How can I view all of my life as a sacrifice and worship?
9. How has this series affected your view of sin?
10. Read Hebrews 10.11-18
11. What does it add to our understanding of Jesus and His sacrifice?

Works: Pray and ask God what you should be doing to try and make things write with someone. Maybe pray the prayer at the end of the sermon – if it seems familiar I took it from Nicky Gumbel's Alpha course.

\*/\*/\*/

I wonder if you've ever **suffered from injustice**? I wonder if someone has ever **broken your toy** and then walked away, no apology, no glue, no new toy, nothing. Or maybe they've broken your toy and said Sorry but you still **feel odd** and confused because they've said Sorry but you're still left with a broken toy.

Have you've ever been encouraged to **Forgive** and **Forget** and you wonder why that's hard to do either especially the forgetting?

Maybe you need to hear about the **Guilt Offering**. This is the **last of the 5 major** sacrificial offerings that the ancient Israelites used. They used them from about **1400bc** all the way through to the life of Jesus and beyond to **70ad**. So that's getting on for 1500 years worth practice and understanding. (actually there would be gaps here perhaps from after Jeremiah until Ezra maybe).

There's a part of us, a **God shaped hole** within us, and we try to fill it with any and everything that we think will **help us get through life** and make us happy and whole people and that act of filling is called **Worship**. But **God comes to us** – and that in itself turns out to be shocking – so many people think that Church and Religion is all about **us finding God**, but in the bible we find that it is **God who comes to us** and we find that **God wants to be a part** of our lives and He wants us to be a part of His life. Instead of being **distant** and up a mountain, God says Build me a **tent** so that I can be with you. And that was the closing part of the book of **Exodus**. Now God says **Enough building!** Let's worship! **I want** you to **draw close to me** (isn't that just amazing (the American word for this is **Awesome**) and **WHEN** you want to then this is how to do it.

1<sup>st</sup> **lets get rid of the sin** that covers your life, lets cover over that with animal sacrifice. Now you are **forgiven**, your sins are atoned for. (chapter 1 Lean on the Lamb). And so you say **Wow**, I want to **offer myself** to God. So we have the **Grain offering** (no blood!) and you commit yourself to God. (chapter 2) And now you can go home. **You can know** that you are at **peace** with God. People today still say How can you know? The ancient Israelite would have been very clear, you do the **burnt** offering, to offer the **grain** offering and there you are **peace** with God. We're going to discover something about **Jesus** that will give us that same assurance. So you have peace with God then we have an **IF offering** – you don't have to do this one. We can **skip** over it. It's a **celebration** that we now have peace with God – the Fellowship offering. So we kill an animal but **God burns up**

**all the bits** that we don't want, the bits that can lead us astray, and He gives us back the meat so we can have a party and tell all our friends and family about the **joy of knowing** that we're at peace with God. Party time! Celebrate!

Of course it's unlikely with you but maybe some of us, even though our sins are atoned for, we've committed our lives to Jesus and we're at peace with God, **some of us still sin**. A lot of us have **no idea** that we're sinning but just because we don't know we've sinned doesn't change anything – other **people are hurt** in the process – we looked at some simple examples of that – of **Apathy** and not speaking up when we should do – sins of Omission – and we looked at having a **casual attitude** to God and worship because if that's how you treat God, how are you going to treat other people and their property? and we looked at the problems of **rashly promising** stuff – Oh lets do lunch, I'll pray for you and then never acting on it. Let your **yes be yes** and your no be no, says Jesus. Or in banking language – your word is your bond.

Now our sins are **atoned** for, we've **committed** our lives to Jesus, we have **peace** with God and don't mind partying about that, **but we make mistakes** sometimes so when we spot them we're quick to say sorry to God.

**But what about** when **real damage** happens? I borrow your toy and then break it, what now?

I give it back to you and say thanks that was such fun, sorry it's broken, **can you forgive me?** And you because you are a good Christian and you know that Jesus has atoned for your sins and that you have committed your life to Jesus and you're enjoying peace with God and you're getting **quicker at saying Sorry for your sins** when you spot them, you say **Yes James I forgive you**. And that's good, you don't want that **bitterness to take root**, you don't need **me having some free rent** space in your head, so you forgive me.

But that's not the end of it. In order for the healing process to be completely complete **I need to pay** for the toy. I need to **buy you a new** one, or I need to give you the money so you can buy it or something like that.

Welcome to the **Guilt Offering**.

The **Law** here says that I need to **offer a sacrifice** to God – even though **its not God's toy** I broke, I broke your toy, but I still need to have my sins atoned for – even if it was an **accident**, stuff still got broken and that breaks a friendship between you and me, between me and God.

Those of you who are thinking – this is **silly** – it's just a toy – that's fine, we can **up the ante**. I borrowed your car. Is that better now? The **examples** the bible gives us here are to do with **deceiving** your neighbour, **stealing**, cheating, finding lost property and then saying 'Finders Keepers'. You may remember a while back I did a Lego photo shoot of the **Philistines who captured the Ark** of the Covenant and when they sent it back to Israel on a cart pulled by some cows, that with it went a box that had 5 gold rats, 5 gold tumours – the bible calls this a **guilt offering**. In modern legal terms we're talking about **Reparation**, restitution.

God says It's not enough that I give back a new toy, I have to give back a new toy **plus 20%**.

And I have to sacrifice a **Ram** – ooh that's expensive. All the other Sacrifices are **means tested**, this one isn't. If you're rich bring a bull, if you're poor bring a pair of doves. Or they are **Status tested** if you're a priest or a king then the sacrifice should be more significant than if you're an ordinary person.

But here the Law says If you want to sort out this sin then whoever you are, however rich or poor, Bring a Ram.

There is a little **incentive** for you to do this rather than waiting for the law to catch you up – if you found my sheep but kept it as your own and I took you to court – you would have to pay me 4 sheep (2 Sam12.6, Ex22.1)

So think about it, sacrificing a Ram, giving me back my sheep plus 20% in money – that's a lot cheaper than the embarrassment of court and paying 4 sheep. Here's an incentive to be generous and honest from the start!

Jesus says (Mt5.23) when you **bring an offering** to the Lord and you put it on the altar but then remember that your brother has something against you, leave it there and go first be reconciled to your brother.

Most Sermons use this as a way of saying **Get sorted** with your brother **first** before you think you can get sorted with me. But that sounds counter-gospel to my ear. **God comes** and saves us and forgives us and sends us out to make a better world. God doesn't wait for us to get sorted but He comes to us in Jesus, with Salvation and the Holy Spirit. I think that **Jesus** is making a point about how **enormously important** it is to get right with someone you've wronged and not to leave it another moment –

You've been in the queue with your lamb and its heavy and you're **waiting your turn** and you get right up to the priest and the priest says Ok – this is for the guilt offering right? And the priest might mutter something about 'Don't forget to pay the victim the restitution money' – interesting it's **not God** or the Court that gets the **money**, it's **the victim** that gets their toy back plus the 20%. So you raise the knife and you start the sacrifice and there's **blood everywhere** and then you think – But wait, I haven't done the other bit, **here I am saying sorry** to God but I haven't got the money out of the bank, I haven't said sorry to my brother, **I haven't paid restitution**. And now you're thinking well **its too late now** I'll do it as soon as I have finished here and **Jesus says No**, go do it now, not only will God understand, even if the Priest shouts after you, **God not only understand but He approves**.

If we're singing a song and suddenly God says to you – Why are you here when you **still haven't apologised** to your brother and you say Okay God I'll do it later and God says NO, go do it now. If God stirs something up in you, don't delay but grab the moment. Its **NOT saying Go home** you **can't worship** me until you've got this sorted But **Go do it now**, seize the moment. You're in a business meeting but you fell out with your **husband** this morning and you're suddenly struck by the importance of that relationship – don't say to yourself '**I'll do it later**, this meeting is more important'. Say – before we start this meeting I need to make a call. Don't delay.

This is where we Christians are **appallingly hypocritical** – do we really think that by singing and praising that we can **conjure up the presence of God** and avoid apologising to our friends or paying our bills or repairing bridges with our neighbours or meeting family obligations? Maybe we could **come to view all** of that as **righteous worship** – not just the singy stuff we do in church but the **life that we live outside of it**.

Think of **Zacchaeus** – (Lk19.2) – a small, tax gatherer, Jesus comes to him and there's a wonderful moment of healing and salvation and everyone else is shocked at Jesus but Zacchaeus offers to people that he **cheated 4 times** what he took from them – that's not a 20% add on as required by the law - that's a 300% add on (my accountant calculated this). That's what is **supposed to happen** when the Kingdom of God comes into our lives, "I stole this toy from you, here let me give you a whole set of toys".

What do we think of the **meagre offerings** that we give to God? And the **paucity of Time** that we offer Him? At this point of course I should point you to the offertory collection bags and the paperwork where you can renew your direct debits and the list of **Rotas** that we need filling. But instead its more fun to tell you about a **sketch** in which an **African child** outside his hut says to his dad – "I hear there are people in England who don't have a second television, I will fill my bath with **baked beans** and raise money for them"! Well, I thought it was funny.

**Forgiveness** is still hugely important – giving it, receiving it. But **Restitution** is a different matter and that still needs dealing with. On **Good Friday** we will celebrate Jesus who dies as the Sacrificial Lamb. He dies in my place that my sins might be atoned for. Here we see Jesus as the **burnt offering**.

My response to that is as St Paul says – Offer yourself as a **living sacrifice** (Rom12.1-3).

The **Risen Jesus appears** to the Disciples and says **Peace** be with you and He breathes on them His Holy Spirit (John 20.21). So we see the 3<sup>rd</sup> sacrifice the Peace offering.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Sacrifice, the Sin offering – sometimes called the purification offering (Lev12.6) – St John says "If we **confess our sins** God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness" (1Jn1.9). And so we come at last to this last 5<sup>th</sup> sacrifice, the Guilt Offering.

It's been an **exhausting series** of sermons but put yourself in the **messy shoes** of the priest. He gets up at dawn and works through the day and its sacrifice after sacrifice. There's blood and guts everywhere. It's exhausting. And it's constant on the go.

I wonder if you're **screamish** about blood? I don't like slasher movies, I found the gore in **Mel Gibson's film The Passion of the Christ** – there's just too much **ketchup** being used, I find bits of it difficult to watch. Do you think that God likes looking at blood? Do you think all these **sacrifices have been for Him**? You don't like blood, why on earth would God want to see lots of blood everywhere. **Maybe He doesn't** like blood everywhere, maybe when He sees blood He feels the same way that we do – **repulsed and unable** to look at it – What does the blood **symbolise? It's our sin**. Is there any chance that we could **learn to look at our sin** the way that we already see blood? Is there any chance that God already looks at our sin the way that we look at blood? God is good and pure and holy and we have such a **slapdash attitude** to our sin. Maybe we could come to view our sin, the way that we view blood.

Let's have the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading – Hebrews 10.11-18

The **furniture** in the temple area is very prescribed (basins and altars and tables) and one thing that's **missing is a chair**. There's no rest for these priests – constantly people are coming and with their animals, their grain offerings, their sin and guilt offerings. There's no let up. When the **hot and tired** priest had finally done all the burnt offerings, then comes all the grain offerings and all the peace offerings and all the sin offerings and finally all the guilt offerings. When the **last Ram for that day** was finally offered up. It would be about **3 in the afternoon** (Rob Bell came up with this time, I haven't been able to work out where and why he got it from but it's credible – this way the priest can clean up, get ready for the next day before the sun goes down. Mark 15.39). The **Priest would close up** shop with a loud cry and he would stand and say "**It is finished**". Or literally 'It has been paid in full - Today we have done what we have done and we have drawn close to God and we have Peace with God and our sins are forgiven now Go Home. **It is finished**, the price has been paid in full.

**But the next day**, the priest gets up and here we go again. Day after day. Do you think that these priests ever got tired of their work? **Incredibly monotonous**, incredibly bloody, relentless day in day out. It's **as if these sacrifices** don't seem to change anything.

Deep in the Old Testament, in Isaiah, the prophet said Look out for a **suffering servant** – he will oppressed, crushed, pierced, by His wounds we are healed, like a lamb to the slaughter, the LORD makes His life a **Guilt Offering**. (Isa53.10) A Guilt offering? That's Jesus – **Isaiah is talking about Jesus** and Good Friday and he calls **Jesus our Guilt Offering**. So there's the ancient priest and he's thinking to himself **there's got to be a better way**, wouldn't it be great if we could have one sacrifice? Wouldn't it be great if there could be just the one sacrifice **made once for all people**?

Jesus **dies on the cross** and as He dies his final breath is "**It is finished**" Jesus offered Himself as the One sacrifice for sins and then what? In the Hebrews reading we heard that **Jesus sat down**. That's it we're done. Peace with God. The price **paid in full**. It is finished.

This whole series has been **about Jesus** and about what Jesus has **done for us in his life** in his death. It's all about **us knowing** that we can be right with God through Jesus. It's all about **knowing that we are have Peace** with God.

If you don't know that peace, if you've not committed your life to Jesus, if you've not come to the place where you see **Jesus as your only hope** then let me urge you to Prayer and to receiving Jesus as your friend and master and saviour. Maybe pray this prayer with me now, maybe pray something like it later on.

**Let's Pray:** Lord Jesus I am **sorry for the things** I have done in my life, for when I have not chosen to do the right thing and for when I have chosen to do the wrong thing. Please forgive me. I now **turn away** from those things which I know to be wrong. Thank you that **you died on the cross** for me so that I could be forgiven and set free. Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your Spirit. I now receive that gift. **Please come** into my life by your **Holy Spirit** to be with me forever. Thank you Lord Jesus. Amen.