

SERMON FOR AUGUST 27, 2023

TEXT:ROMANS 12: 1

THEME: LIVING SACRIFICES

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.

In the name of Jesus:

The modern parable of the chicken and the pig has been used in the business world to speak to someone's commitment to a cause. The parable goes something like this: A pig and a chicken are walking down the road. The chicken says: "Hey Pig, I was thinking that we should open a restaurant." The Pig replies: "Well, what would we call the restaurant?" The Chicken responds, "How about ham and eggs?" The Pig thinks for a moment and replies: "No thanks, I'd be committed but you would only be involved."

It is a modern story about sacrifice, about how one can commit to something without much cost to the person, versus the commitment of someone that would require their very life's sacrifice.

In our text for today, the Apostle Paul says: " 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."

The worship in the Old Testament was rooted in the priest making a sacrifice for the people. There were different types of sacrifices, animal sacrifices for the sins of the people, as well as grain, peace, and thank offerings. There were about a handful of different sacrifices all in total. The greatest sacrifice was made by the priest on the Great Day of Atonement, where a bull and lamb would be sacrificed on the high altar for the forgiveness of sins of the people. The priest would confess the sins of the people for the year, placing his hands on the sacrificial animal, and then the animal would be slaughtered and its blood spread over the altar, to show that the blood of the sacrifice covered the sins of the people in the sight of God.

Of course, none of these animal sacrifices could cover and ultimately remove the sins of the people. That is why all of these sacrifices were ongoing sacrifices, with the great sacrifice on Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement taking place each and every year. These sacrifices didn't remove sin once and for all, they merely pointed people to the Great Sacrifice that Jesus offered on the cross for the full and complete forgiveness of all who trust in Him. One of our Lenten hymns, titled "Not All the Blood of Beasts" puts it beautifully: Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain can give the guilty conscience peace and wash away the stain, but Christ the Heavenly

Lamb takes all our sins away. A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they. “

This is why Paul in our text urges us, in view of God’s unsurpassing love and mercy for you in forgiving you all of your sins, to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God for this is your spiritual act of worship.

You have been purchased and bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus, shed on Calvary’s cross for you. You have been given a new life in Christ in Baptism, which is a life giving water that not only washes away your sins but also transforms and changes you into a child of God. For what purpose? To thank the Lord by presenting your body as a living sacrifice, which is your spiritual act of worship. You live your life unto the Lord. You live your life following the Lord Jesus who died and rose for you. You live your life, not to appease God or to motivate God to be kind and gracious to you. He already is in Jesus! Instead you live your life in thanks to God, daily repenting of your sins and turning to Jesus in faith for forgiveness and strength. This is what Paul means when he writes in Romans 12: 2: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (v 2). You are transformed, daily changed by the power of God in your Baptism to

live your life in thanks to God for what He has done for you and to His honor and glory.

In January 1982, people watching TV had the horrifying and gratifying experience of watching a moment of such real life tragedy and heroism that it's still a living memory for many today. Twenty seconds after an Air Florida flight took off from National Airport in Washington DC, it crashed into the ice-covered Potomac River. The news media is always on hand, covering the comings and goings of important people in Washington, and that day was no different. Immediately, camera crews were at the Rochambeau Bridge on Fourteenth Street, the site of the crash. A live television audience watched transfixed as one passenger, later identified as Arland Williams, reached the rope that a police helicopter dropped to victims in the river. Instead of taking the lifeline himself, he passed it to another survivor nearby. Five times he held the rope in his hand and passed it to other survivors. Before the sixth attempt to save his life could be made, he disappeared beneath the water's surface. The Rochambeau Bridge has been renamed the Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge.

This is what Jesus has done for you, He laid down life for you that you may live. And you have this new life in Christ by God's grace through faith in Him. Even as Christ has laid down His life for you, now Jesus puts you in

places and situations whereby you can show your love for Him by living your life to help those around you. Like the man in the icy Potomac, you have a lifeline from on high. You are called to grasp it by faith, and to give it to others. Christ has come, He has lived, He died, and He is risen again. He has placed His claim on you. You are called away from the self serving, pleasure seeking ways of the world to a lifestyle that conforms to Christ and His love. His love is for you, to grasp and to give to others, to the glory of God and in Jesus' precious name.

Amen