

Sacrifice-Preparation, **Price**, Passion, Prize

A preacher and his chairman of the deacons went deer hunting. A large buck approached the men as they were walking through the woods. Both men shot at the deer and it dropped. The problem was, there was only one bullet hole so they didn't know who actually inflicted the fatal wound. They took it to the state wildlife station to be tagged but they didn't know whose name the kill should be registered under. The agent said, "Let me look at it. Sometimes I can tell." The preacher and the deacon looked on very curiously as the agent examined the prize buck. "The preacher shot him" declared the wildlife agent. "How do you know?" asked the deacon. The agent declared "the bullet went in one ear and out the other."

I hope it is not the case with you this morning or any morning as we consider the price of sacrifice related to us through the alive and powerful, life-changing word of God. Your presence here today is a great start but your attentiveness and response to the message is something you should take very seriously. Your life could change for the good today. Don't let it pass through one ear and out the other.

Last Sunday we talked about the preparation for sacrifice: **obedience** to God's commands, determine the worthiness of the **object** of sacrifice, consider the **output**(cost). Today we're going to look more intensely at the price or cost of sacrifice. And we find ourselves this morning in congruence with an American holiday that centers much around the matter of costly sacrifice, that of our military.

There is one simple yet profound difference between Memorial Day, which we celebrate in May, and Veteran's Day, which we celebrate in November. On Memorial Day, we honor those who have paid the ultimate price by sacrificing their lives while serving in the U.S. military. They gave their lives defending our nation, its allies or nations who were yearning for freedom from tyranny. On Veteran's Day, we honor those who have served or are serving in our military who are still living. (**stand-** have served/are serving)

If you want to put a human face on what we mean when we talk about sacrifice, you would have to search pretty far and wide to find a better example than our U.S. military. They sign up. They are not drafted. And they know, when they sign on the dotted line that they may very likely at some time during their service be called on to put their own lives at great risk in some remote, forsaken place for a cause that is not always as clear as the American Revolution or the World Wars. They understand the nature, spirit and price of sacrifice.

To sacrifice is to give up something for a greater, more noble, purpose. We sacrifice sinful, self-destructive habits for the sake of living a better life for the glory of God. We sacrifice our time, energy and talents to serve the kingdom of God and build His church. We sacrifice a tenth or more of our income for the sake of impacting our community and world with the gospel. Of course the ultimate sacrifice is to offer one's life for the greater good of protecting or providing political or spiritual freedom to a nation, people or individual. The prevailing culture in our nation today wars against the very Christ-like spirit of sacrifice.

¹ What is the source of the wars and the fights among you? Don't they come from the cravings that are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and don't receive because you ask wrongly, so that you may spend it on your desires for pleasure. James 4:1-3 (HCSB)

James nailed our whole culture right on the head. The broad, growing and prevailing sense of entitlement; the government owes me, my employer owes me, society owes me, the church owes me, my parents owe me, my spouse owes me....has led to the over-all rise of the most self-centered, thoughtless, stingy, mean-spirited generation of American people that I've known or read of. I believe our current administration in Washington has encouraged and even provoked this. We need change and we can certainly have some impact in the way we vote next year, but the real change needs to take place right here, in all of our own hearts.

Since our nation's humble beginnings, more than 1.3 million U.S. military personnel have died in combat. Many millions more were seriously injured or maimed. And tens of millions more have put their lives on the line and were willing to die, who made it home in one piece but with the emotional scars of the toils of war? They may or may not have fully understood the price of their sacrifice when they signed up but they certainly understood it by the time they came home.

True sacrifice always comes at a price, and often a very high one. It would logically seem that the greater the sacrifice made,

the greater the potential good that may come of it. I believe that would be the most true in the realm of living sacrificially in God's kingdom.

Consider the Cost of Sacrifice:

Do you have what it takes? "show me the money" You can't sacrifice something you don't have.

25 Now great crowds were traveling with Him. So He turned and said to them: **26** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be My disciple. **27** Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. **28** "For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? **29** Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all the onlookers will begin to make fun of him, **30** saying, 'This man started to build and wasn't able to finish.' **31** "Or what king, going to war against another king, will not first sit down and decide if he is able with 10,000 to oppose the one who comes against him with 20,000? **32** If not, while the other is still far off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. **33** In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not say good-bye to all his possessions cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:25-33 (HCSB)

Please understand. Jesus was not calling anyone to hate anybody. He was calling those who would truly be His disciples

(followers) to sacrifice, relatively speaking to hate even their most prized possessions and relationships for the sake of following and serving Him. He was warning us all not to take this thing of being a Christian, a follower of Christ too lightly. Consider the cost. To follow Christ is not just slipping Him in here and there to your busy schedule. It is to put Him first, love Him first, serve Him first, give to Him first.

This concept of the great cost of sacrifice is easier to understand and apply for some in this world right now, today, particularly in predominantly Muslim countries. To become a Christian is to do exactly what Jesus was saying: forsake family, job, reputation, possessions, even health and life itself. Their culture demands it. Their culture strips those things away from them the moment they become a follower of Christ.

We should understand that we should do the same thing. We should be at least willing, not by force of an opposing culture, but by choice, led by devotion to Christ, to pay whatever price, give up whatever is necessary, forsake the loves of our lives, for the higher goal of the calling of Christ Jesus.

You've got the resources to make life impacting, world-changing sacrifices for the kingdom's sake.....but

Are you willing? You can't sacrifice something, even if you have it, if you're not willing to give up or part with. You understand the principle. You get it. Sacrifices are an important, integral part of a committed, growing Christian life. But, are you willing? Will you forsake that sinful habit or give up that secular commitment for some thing more

sacred and Christ-honoring? Are you willing to sacrifice your time, energy and abilities for the greater good of impacting your community for Christ's sake? Are you willing to sacrifice your spending habits or personal ambitions so that you can be a part of supporting the church's kingdom work in this community and the world?

When the people of Israel were traveling through the desert under the leadership of Moses, God gave him clear instructions regarding the building of a portable tabernacle that would serve as the center of worship and sacrifices. But where would the materials come from? The people.

⁴ Then Moses said to the entire Israelite community, "This is what the LORD has commanded: ⁵ Take up an offering for the LORD among you. Let everyone whose heart is willing bring this as the LORD's offering: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁶ blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen and goat hair; ⁷ ram skins dyed red and manatee skins; acacia wood; ⁸ oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; ⁹ and onyx with gemstones to mount on the ephod and breastpiece. Ex 35:4-9 (HCSB)

There was no question that all the materials needed were among the possessions of the Israelite people. And, most everything of value in their possession was given to them as they left by the Egyptians who were so glad to get rid of them that they paid them to leave. But Moses understood as He was led by the Spirit to write that even though the Lord commanded this offering to be taken, each person's heart must be willing. I'm sure some gave a lot while others gave little or nothing. Maybe 20% gave

80%. It all came down to who was willing to give. The resources were there, but were the people willing? Would the tabernacle be built?

22 Both men and women came; all who had willing hearts brought brooches, earrings, rings, necklaces, and all kinds of gold jewelry—everyone who waved a presentation offering of gold to the LORD. **Ex 35:22** (HCSB)

6 After Moses gave an order, they sent a proclamation throughout the camp: “Let no man or woman make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.” So the people stopped. **7** The materials were sufficient for them to do all the work. There was more than enough. **Ex 36:6-7** (HCSB)

The offering was taken, sufficient amounts of all materials needed were received, and the tabernacle was built because the people were willing to sacrificially give their new found wealth for the greater, higher cause. They weren't just willing, they did it!

Will you pay the price?

You may have the resources and be willing, but you just don't get around to doing it. Have you ever saved up the money and even went and bought the materials to do a project but then just left it all sitting there in the garage for weeks, months, years?

Just do it. This probably one of my greatest frustrations as pastor not only with the church but even my own self. I hear a lot of talk. I preach a lot of sermons. I see a lot of head nodding. I

experience a good bit of affirmation, but I don't see a lot of doing.

Jesus expressed His similar frustration with Peter

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He asked Peter. "So, couldn't you stay awake with Me one hour? **41** Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
Matt 26:40-41 (HCSB)

Paul was frustrated with himself.....

19 For I do not do the good that I want to do,... **Romans 7:19a (HCSB)**

James was frustrated with the church

22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. **James 1:22 (HCSB)**

We have the resources. We are rich. Most of us are willing at least to acknowledge what we need to do. But, the crowd thins out drastically when it comes to doing, putting hands and feet to our wills, to actually making sacrificial offerings of our time, talents, and treasure.

5 Why should I fear in times of trouble? The iniquity of my foes surrounds me. **6** They trust in their wealth and boast of their abundant riches. **7** Yet these cannot redeem a person or pay his ransom to God— **8** since the price of redeeming him is too costly, one should forever stop

trying — ⁹ so that he may live forever and not see the Pit.
¹⁰ For one can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless also pass away. Then they leave their wealth to others. ¹¹ Their graves are their eternal homes, their homes from generation to generation, though they have named estates after themselves. ¹² But despite [his] assets, man will not last; he is like the animals that perish. ¹³ This is the way of those who are arrogant, and of their followers, who approve of their words. *Selah* Psalms 49:5-13 (HCSB)

Make three sacrifices:

Worldly affections-

Time and energy-

Money and resources-

Pray about and consider these all month. Present your sacrifices to the Lord, formally or informally, on Sunday, November 27. Fast and pray from 6PM Saturday until 6PM Sunday. Present your sacrifice to the Lord in the morning or evening. 6PM testimonies and fellowship meal.