



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 11, 2013

Midweek Advent Worship

Sermon Text: [Leviticus 17:1-12](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 89](#)

Scripture Lesson: [Hebrews 9:11-15, 19-28](#)

Zion at Your Shining Gates is Your Ultimate Sacrifice

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Most of my children seem to like the kind of movies I can't stand. Slasher movies. Horror movies. A lot of blood and all that kind of stuff. There are enough creaks in that old house, I don't need to go watch those creaks turn into creatures that jump out and splatter blood everywhere. That's just not for me. Maybe you like those kind of movies. I never cared for that stuff. I went to it as a high school kid because I was supposed to, but I never liked it.

But when you hear those descriptions that I read to you from Hebrews and all that talk about blood, and then what I just read to you from Leviticus, when you read in the Old Testament, it sounds like God was a director of one of those movies with this blood everywhere, doesn't it? He spends a lot of time talking about blood. They spend a lot of time putting blood on the altar, at the base of the altar, on the horns of the altar. They spend time sprinkling blood (as you heard in the Hebrews reading) on the people after they ratified the covenant. On all the things they dedicated when they dedicated the tabernacle, they spread blood on that. If you've been reading the *Today's Light Bible* readings (we just finished up Leviticus and Numbers a little bit ago), it's just over and over in there. There were all these regulations and the offerings and what they were to do with these sacrifices and just blood everywhere.

The Lord repeats himself over and over in Scripture. The Lord repeats his commands over and over in the books of Moses for a number of reasons. One, I think because he knows we are sinners and we tend to be real forgetful about what God's will is when it comes to making a choice between God's will and our will. We are inclined to go with our own will, so he continually reminds us what his will is. And also because he wants us to see that blood pays for sin. He was pretty clear on that when he gave these commands in Leviticus, right?

"...the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." It's obvious that the blood of these animals that they sacrificed day after day didn't take away the guilt of sin because they had to keep doing it day after day after day. As it said in Hebrews, the high priest had to keep doing it year after year, go into the Most Holy Place with the blood on the Day of Atonement and sprinkle that blood around. They had to do that over and over and over.

I believe it was also done over and over and over so that it would point ahead to the sacrifice that was to come, which was the Messiah. The Messiah would come and by his blood, his blood shed, he would take away sins that these animal sacrifices could only point to.

God was very serious about what he wanted them to do. It said that if you didn't do what he said, you were to be cut off from the people. When you read through Leviticus, sometimes cut off from the people means separated from the people for a time. Sometimes it means (in context you can see by what God describes) put to death. God was very serious about them understanding this lesson that sacrifices had to be made in a certain way and that the blood was so important that they couldn't take the blood and do what the peoples around them did when they worshiped. The drinking and eating of blood was something that was in the worship of all these false gods that were around them and the Canaanites. That's why God tells them they can't eat blood, because it's the blood that atones for sins. So they weren't going to make any blood sausage. That wasn't going to happen because they were not to eat blood. It says if someone eats blood, cut them off from the people. God was serious about teaching that blood makes atonement.

The sacrifices... the people evidently had been offering them out in their fields, and he says "You can't do that anymore. I don't want you going and making sacrifices on your own out in the fields. I want you bringing it to the priest, who is my representative, that is, to the LORD. The priest will slaughter them there and then all the blood will be drained there." Then part of the fellowship offering was cooked and the people would eat part of it. The priest would eat part of it. The fat and the other parts would be burned as an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

If you were an Israelite and you were growing up where you were wandering in the wilderness around that tabernacle (every sacrifice had to be made there, every animal had to be slaughtered there), can you imagine the sound? Can you imagine the sight of animals with the blood dripping out of them by that? Then the picture of the burning flesh that you would see on top of the altar? In a whole burnt offering, everything was consumed. Day after day these priests would busy themselves with slaughtering and offering countless, hundreds, thousands, millions of animals during the 40 years that they wandered in the wilderness. The blood drained out when they were in a place there for a time, can you imagine what that would start to smell like and what it would be like? It was all saying that sin is a terrible thing. "The only thing that takes away your sin and your guilt before me is the shedding of blood."

It's a gruesome picture. But it's reminding the Israelites and us that the One who would come into this world to be the Messiah was not coming to set up an earthly kingdom and rule in glory here, like we talked about last week. His kingdom would extend and it would go forth because he would sacrifice himself to take away the guilt of sin. I don't know if they understood this all the time, but God was driving that point home day after day after day for them. And God was making the point that blood takes away sin, and their greatest need was that Messiah who would come and be their righteousness so

that their sins would be forgiven and remembered no more, as it said in Jeremiah. If that's the case, you would hope they would take God's Word and put it together and see that the coming Savior would have to shed his blood. If they didn't understand it, in that reading from Hebrews God makes it very clear to them. My Messiah has come and he gave the sacrifice that paid for all sins of all time.

Just stop and think about that for a minute. When it comes to animals and sacrifices and things like that, our animals in farms today at times will have animal rights activists that will get up in arms about how the animals are treated, right? In some cases, they probably should. But think about this... Jesus came to be an animal that was just going to be slaughtered. He would become that sacrifice that would just die for us. He's in the glory of heaven. He has his eternal power, his eternal glory from all eternity, and he sets that aside to come and be born in a manger. It looks so neat in those little figurines you have in your house. So nice and sanitary and clean. But he was born in a manger. He was born just to die like an animal, right? To have his blood shed and his blood cover you so that your sins are forgiven... can you even begin to fathom the depth of love that your God has for you that he did that, that he was willing to do that, that the One who created the universe humbled himself just to become the sacrifice that all these other animal sacrifices pointed ahead to?

It's an amazing truth that the Messiah came to be a sacrifice. It's a glorious truth because it's the only way your sins could be taken away. Without him coming to die on Calvary, live in our place and then die on Calvary, there would be no reason for us to celebrate his birth. He was born simple to be sacrificed in our place.

It once was said that Satan is happy to deceive us in two ways... (1) convince us that as long as we do the right thing, it doesn't matter what we believe, or (2) convince us that as long as we believe, it doesn't matter what we do. God gave very detailed instructions for the Israelites to remind them both (what they believed about the Messiah to come, and what they did in response to that love) were important. They were to follow them in response to his love.

I think the same would be true for you and me, wouldn't it? You and I should all respond to God's love and know what we're doing, not just go through the motions because it's what we've always done, but know what we are doing and why we are doing it, know why we want to live for God, why we want to serve, why we want to respond to this love. It's because he sacrificed himself for us to take away our sins. When we are honest with ourselves and see what our sins are and what they deserve and we see that depth of that love, then loving him and serving him is not a burden or an inconvenience. It's a thrill that passes all understanding.

So as you celebrate Christmas by enjoying all kinds of big meals and all kinds of treats and things, remember that Christmas came about simply so that God could sacrifice himself for you. Amen.