

Title: Nothing but the blood
Text: Hebrews 9.11-14
Theme: The sufficiency of Christ's death
Series: Hebrews #23

Have you ever been at a meal, where there was too much food or perhaps, someone forgot about a dish that was prepared because it was tucked away in the refrigerator? In a way, that is what I felt like after the sermon last week. While I thought that we covered the big idea of the text, I still left too much food in the kitchen and did not get to serve it on to your plate. Now, some of you (a minority mind you) will say from time to time, "oh, you could just keep going." However, comments like that never come from our wonderful care-givers in the nursery. Besides, like food, there is only so much that we can eat. So, this morning, I am returning to the text from last week, but focusing on the last three verses because I want to serve up for some of the good stuff that I had to leave in the kitchen, since we had already run out of room on our plates.

Read Text:

Last week, I focused our attention on the sufficiency of Christ because this text gives us another reason why Jesus is such a complete Savior because he is our High Priest who perfectly performed the perfect offering when he offered himself as the sacrifice for our sin. That means that he, once and for all stood in my place. But standing in my place meant that he stood condemned because of my sin. But in my place condemned he stood so that he could seal my pardon with his blood. But, in focusing on that, I did not adequately deal with a very important truth that this text brings up twice. So, this morning I want to draw your attention to the contrast that the author of Hebrews establishes between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ. That contrast is pointed out in v.12 and repeated in verses 13 and 14. So, let me summarize last week's message. And by the way, if you are attempting to take notes, there are four sections to this message, including the conclusion. 4 points, 3 points, 3 points then 2 points

- 1) God made us to know him and have fellowship with him and each other.
(reflected in the construction of the tabernacle)

Fellowship with each other is rooted in and made possible by fellowship with God.

- 2) God desires for people to approach him and established the way for that.
(reflected in the purpose for the tabernacle)

But, God did not wait for people to come to him. He came to us. He made Adam and Eve. He talked with them and initiated the restoration process after they sinned. He called Abraham. He called Moses. He established the tabernacle so he could live in the midst of his people and be approached by them. And, in the greatest demonstration of his desire for us to know him and approach him, He sent Christ to us and for us. Look at what is in your hand. We have God's Word. God gave us the gift of language so that we could communicate with each other (very helpful) and so that we could communicate with Him.

God did not wait for us to make our own way to him. Left to ourselves, we would make gods that look more like us and reflect our weaknesses.

- 3) God is particular about how people approach him. (reflected in the details and laws of the tabernacle)

That is made very evident in the God-ordained ceremonies that governed the tabernacle. The only way to approach God then was through the sacrifices that pointed to Christ because Christ is the only final way that God can be approached.

- 4) The way to God is through a sacrifice that he demands and that he provides. (reflected in the ceremonies and sacrifices associated with the tabernacle)

That is very, very important to grasp. In order to satisfy God's standard of righteousness, God demanded a sacrifice that we could never pay, so he provided it for us. That is radically different than how other religions function. We are naturally hard-wired to think in terms of what we can do for God to earn his favor. So, when we look at the Old Testament (covenant), it is easy (and superficial) to look at the sacrificial system that required animal sacrifices for the sins of the people and think that this is what the people did in order to earn the favor of God. They paid God off with their wealth – right? No! That is not what was going on. The idea that I can earn God's favor is built on the assumption that I have something that he needs. I have nothing to bargain with. He is all sufficient and has it all. First of all, go back with me to the Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel. When God called him to offer his son to God as an offering, Abraham was willing to do that, and would have, but God stopped him. But, what did God do? God provided a ram. God provided the sacrifice that he required.

So, even under the old covenant system; the way to God was through the death of an innocent substitute that was offered in place of the guilty, but ultimately, it was God who provided the sacrifice that he required. He provided the laws so that you could know what God demanded, and God provided for his people the flocks and herds from which those sacrifices came. And, God provided the instructions for the tabernacle. And, when the children of Israel left Egypt, God moved upon the Egyptians in such a way, that they gave the Israelites their gold, silver, precious cloths and other things of value just to get rid of them. All of those resources that God had entrusted into his people from plundering the Egyptians were so they would be able to have the materials required by God to construct the tabernacle. But, as we have seen in this text, those sacrifices were not sufficient to fully and finally deal with sin. Last year's sacrifice could not cover this year's sins. So the sacrifices had to be offered over and over and over. This set the stage for Christ. All of this is here in this text. But, in bringing this out, this text refers quite a bit to blood because it is contrasting the blood of bulls and goats and the blood of Christ.

Blood appears a lot in the Bible. Some people find that a bit uncomfortable, others are embarrassed, and others seek to completely rid the Scriptures of it claiming that it is barbaric, crude, unsophisticated, and vulgar. Surely, God in his excellence would not be

so base to demand bloody sacrifices like others. But in order to grasp the point of the comparison, we need to bring to this text an understanding of life from God's view.

1. God made life.

Everything that God made reflects the nature and character of God to some degree. But, the chief and highest act of God's creation was the creation of the human race. When God made us, he made us in such a way that every single human being bears his mark. Human life is very precious to God because we reflect him like no other aspect of creation can. Every human being is a living, breathing, reflection of God.

2. Blood represents life.

The life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17.11). To spill or shed someone's blood meant that you killed that person. When someone's blood is shed it means that their life is poured out. When the Bible speaks of the blood of Christ and when we sing about that we are referring not simply to the fact that he bled, but that he died a violent death. He could not have donated a pint of blood to forgive our sins. He had to die in a manner that fulfilled the Old Testament sacrificial system.

3. Sin is extremely serious.

God warned Adam and Eve that if they disobeyed God, they would die. The soul that sins - dies. Once again, people seem to accuse God of being immoral because he punishes sin. God's abhorrence and reaction to sin does not raise moral doubts regarding his character. What would raise doubts about God's character and what would destroy his integrity was if God did NOT respond to sin. God would not be just, nor be right if he did not act in a way that was just and right. He has to inflict upon all sin the penalty that it deserves. But, of course that highlights the crux of the matter. That elevates the very heart of life's ultimate issue. How can God respond to sin without destroying all sinners? But that is not how people talk. People arrogantly assume moral superiority over God and say things like, "how can you believe in God, when there is so much war and injustice in this world? If God is really a God of love, then why is there is so much violence and tragedy? That argument is so lame, because it attempts to shift the attention on to the violence and injustice that is out there instead of looking at the violence and the injustice that is in here (our own hearts). There would be no violence and injustice out there, if there was not first violence and injustice in here. The real question is, "why didn't God kill you in your sleep last night, knowing what you thought about yesterday, much less did."

That's the real issue. But people like to pretend that they have these moral concerns about God, which in their minds give them an ethical and logical basis to ignore him. But, have you ever looked at the cultures of the world that have done that? Take, for example the Aztec religion.

The Aztec religion is composed of an incredibly complicated set of beliefs filled with stories of human sacrifices and demanding gods and goddesses. Sacrifices were an

important aspect of the Aztec religion because of their belief that the gods needed to be nourished by human beings, which was accomplished through **human blood**. A part of the Aztec religion, therefore, was to participate in bloodletting, which is the intentional harming and then drawing of blood from the body. Those who were higher in status within the Aztec religion were expected to give the most blood, which of course would have a discouraging affect on upward mobility.

The Aztec gods and goddesses also required the **living hearts** of humans for their appetites. All hearts were good, but the bravest captives were considered to be particularly nourishing to the Aztec gods. Therefore, wars would be fought for the simple reason that the people sought to bring captives back to the temples for sacrifice in an attempt to appease for a time at least, the demanding appetite of the angry gods.

Look at the history of the world and you will see that the practice of child-sacrifice is the norm and not the exception. The Canaanites, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and almost every dominate culture (but not the Egyptians), practiced sacrificing humans (and often children) in order to appease the gods. Our culture is no different. We abort children at the temple of convenience, lust, image, and materialism. These gods are every bit as demanding as any Aztec or Canaanite deity. The truth is; blood appears a lot in history. But, here is the difference between the pagan systems and the Old Covenant sacrificial system. The pagan systems required the ongoing deaths of humans, and so often children in order to appease the violent, moody, capricious, and unpredictable gods and goddesses. They were extremely bloody and they never worked. But under the Old Covenant, God required the blood (the life) of bulls, goats and calves, not human blood, as the means to deal with sin, because the blood of these animals was a picture of the sacrifice that God himself would make for his own people, when Christ died for us. Look at the mercy of God! He did not demand the lives of humans to temporarily assuage him. Knowing that we could never give what was needed, he himself became our own sacrifice! Do you see that instead of requiring the life of the sinner for his own sin (which God would be just to require), he demanded the life of an innocent substitute. And since every human was contaminated by sin, only an animal could be an innocent substitute until the real Innocent One came. But the animal solution was not good enough. And that is the point of this text. This text establishes a contrast between what was temporary and what was permanent. The sacrifice of animals had to be offered over and over but the sacrifice of Christ was offered once. It is done. It is finished. Here are three reasons why:

1. **Christ is righteous, not just innocent.**

Under the Old Covenant, an innocent animal would be offered so that a guilty human would not face the consequences of his sin. Do not forget that this was an agrarian culture. The animals offered by these people were most often from their own flocks and herds. Farmers usually love their animals and care for them. The offering of these animals for their sin was a difficult matter designed to impress upon them the seriousness of God's law. But, even though these animals were loved, and had not committed any sin, they were still animals. And as such the value of their sacrifice was limited. They were innocent so they could be a substitute, but they were not righteous. They did not break

God's law, but neither did they obey God's law. We need a substitute who is both innocent (without sin) and perfectly righteous (who has done everything right). Here is what I want you to see. The Old Covenant sacrifices focused more on forgiveness or atonement. Forgiveness means to remove and atonement means to cover. When the animal was sacrificed, God accepted the death of that animal as the payment for that sin for that time. The sin was forgiven. But, we need more than forgiveness, we need righteousness. Our problem is a compound problem. We are in spiritual debt and we need spiritual capital. All that the animals could do was provide a temporary covering for sin, but the animals did not bring anything to the sacrifice. Not so with Christ. Not only was he an innocent sacrifice, he was a righteous one! When he died on the cross, he died in my place, meaning, he paid the debt that he did not owe because I owed a debt that I could not pay. But, he did even more than that. He brought to the sacrifice of the cross an infinitely sweet, perfectly righteous, eternally holy, completely sufficient life that he lived in my place. He was able to die as a perfect substitute in my place because he lived a perfect life in my place. When you come to faith in Christ, he is credited with your sin and you are credited with his righteousness. That is why, on the cross, Christ was treated by the Father the way you and I deserved to be treated because of our sin, so that God could treat us the way his Son deserved to be treated.

2. **Christ is our representative, not just our substitute.**

Under the Old Covenant, the animals took the place of the sinner. They functioned as a substitute, in the place of the one who should have paid for the sin. This had to be particularly profound upon children who grew up going to the tabernacle and probably in their younger years, did not know all that took place, but began to realize that the animals that they took with them on the trip did not come home with them. But, how did this work? Why did God require this? The only way God could not judge you for your sin was for him to judge someone in your place. That is where the animals came in, but the obvious problem with this was that these were animals. Animals did not sin. Animals live as animals. They do animal things because they are by God's creation – animals. Animals function according to how their Creator made them. Not so with us. We are humans, made in the image of God, but we sin. We sin because we rebelled against God and instead of acting like God; we tried to replace God with ourselves as God. Since animals did not sin, how can the death of an animal pay for the sins of a human? They can't! (Heb. 10.4) So, what did they accomplish then? They postponed the payment. The sacrifices were like paying off the minimum monthly payment on your credit cards. If you do that, you will never pay off the debt, but neither will you lose your house. It is kind of like that. But, we need a Savior who can pay the whole thing off. Animals can't do that. We need one who is like us, and yet not like us. We need a human Savior so that his life could perfectly represent us. The problem is that all of our representatives are contaminated by sin. So, God solved the problem in a way that we would never have imagined. He sent us Himself. Christ, the eternal, 2nd person of the Godhead, came to this earth as a child, conceived by the Holy Spirit in womb of a young woman named Mary, who gave birth to him. He grew as a human. He developed, matured, and learned. He experienced life, just like us, with one enormous exception; he never sinned. What I mean by that is that he never did anything that he wasn't supposed to do, nor did he fail

to do anything that he was supposed to do. As a human, he was able to stand fully in the place of humans. He was a perfect match for our need. He was not only our substitute, but he was a perfectly human representative.

3. **Christ accomplished our salvation, not just symbolized it.**

Look back at our text now. Notice that “Christ appeared” (v.11), “he entered” (v.12) and “Christ...offered” (v.14). I point those out because they are all in the past tense. Verse 12 also uses the phrase, “once and for all.” The Old Covenant sacrifices were never done, but they served a useful purpose as I mentioned earlier. Christ was the reality that these sacrifices illustrated. He accomplished what they pointed to. They could only serve as symbols, when he was the full and final act.

Under the Old Covenant, if you offered a sacrifice in obedience to the law, you were considered to be ceremonially clean. In the eyes of the covenant community, you were accepted. In contrast, if you were not clean, you were placed outside of the camp. You lived, as it were, not accepted. Outside of the camp was where the sinners and the lepers lived. Outside of the camp was where the people who were unclean and impure existed until such a time when they could, once again come back in and be part of the covenant community. That setting illustrated, and symbolized a greater reality that was coming. (Heb. 13.11-12) Christ died on a cross, outside of the city. He was treated like the carcass of an animal sacrifice that was considered as being unclean and could not stay inside the area of community. He died as an outcast, because we are the outcasts, so that he could bring us back in to God. The animals could only symbolize that – he did it! Once and for all he did it! That is why only Christ can purify your conscience. He cleanses you from the inside out!

Now, I have come to the end of the message and I have 2 so-what points that I am imploring you to consider.

1. If you have not come to faith in Christ as your King-Redeemer, your Priest-Sacrifice, trust him, right now!

There is no other way for your sin to be dealt with. Not only is there no other Savior, but he is a phenomenal Savior. Just look at how God ordained all of this history for this purpose.

2. If you have professed faith in Christ, Press on Pilgrim!

In a few weeks, we will come to chapter 11. In that chapter we will read of the men and women of faith upon whose shoulders we stand. We will read of their battles, their struggles and be encouraged by their perseverance. We will think of their example and realize that others who come behind us need to see in our lives the same grace under fire and faith under pressure. But beloved, it is more than that. Think of this. These faithful saints, all looked forward to a Savior who was promised. They endured because of what

they believed God would do. How much more should we persevere because we can look back on what God has already accomplished?!