

## “From The Ashes” Sermon Series Part 5 “Sacrifice”

**Scripture: Hebrews 9:11-14, 1 John 2:2, John 14:6, Philippians 2:6-8, John 6:50-71, Galatians 2:20, Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 12:2**

**Main Argument:** The Hebrew people experienced the temporary forgiveness of sins by the blood of an animal sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jesus, to leave heaven and offer himself on the cross, was an atoning sacrifice that is effective throughout eternity. **Through Christ we are completely redeemed from the ashes of our former life.**

Today, we're going to be talking about the sacrifice of Jesus and the impact his humble actions have had on all humankind.

To illustrate the idea of sacrifice I want to share a story with you from the trenches of World War II.

“John Robert Fox was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in May 1915. By all accounts, he was a smart, diligent young man and he earned a place at Wilberforce University. Here, he signed up for the Reserve Officer Training Corp, meaning he not only finished college with a graduate degree, but with a rank of Second Lieutenant. When war broke out he took his commission and joined the 92nd Infantry Division, a segregated division for African-American soldiers that fought with distinction throughout the conflict.

With his unit, Fox was sent to the European theater of war. In 1944, he found himself fighting the Nazis in Italy. It was here where, in December of that year, he was tasked to stay behind in the small village of Sommocolonia, in Tuscany. The village had been overrun by Nazis, and Americans were in retreat. Fox found a house to hide in and, from the second floor, he used his radio to contact his colleagues. He called for artillery fire to be directed at the village in order to give the US forces time to retreat, regroup and then launch a counter-attack. Fox specifically ordered a barrage of fire on his exact position. The gunner who received the message pointed this out to him, assuming it must be some mistake. Fox, however, simply said: ‘Fire it. There’s more of them than there are us.’

Fox’s act of sacrifice was not in vain. As he planned, the artillery barrage did indeed give his comrades the chance to regroup and launch a successful counterattack. When the US army entered Sommocolonia, they found Fox’s body surrounded by the bodies of nearly 100 Germans.<sup>1</sup>”

The sacrifice of John Robert Fox gave life, opportunity, and victory to his fellow soldiers in a decisive battle with the Germans.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://historycollection.com/10-of-the-most-heroic-acts-of-self-sacrifice-in-history/2/>

The sacrifice of Christ also gives life, opportunity, and victory to all who would believe. The sacrifice of Christ is so completely sufficient that there's no need for any other work to be done.

The sacrifice of Christ is completely sufficient

There is much to learn from Christ in this area, so let's get started;

## **Humility & Sacrifice**

### ***Philippians 2:6-8 Holman Christian Standard Bible***

***...Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage.***

***Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.***

We already covered humility in week 2, so I'm not going to belabor the point again. But I do have to take a moment to recognize where there is sacrifice... there is humility.

Christ willingly gave up Heaven to come to earth as a sacrifice for our sin. He did not hold onto His position and power, but instead laid it all down to be a humble servant and give up His life on a cross.

He knew, in order to rescue the world from the curse of sin, it would cost Him His life.

## **There Is A Cost**

If you are going to follow in the footsteps of Christ, which is what it means to be a disciple, then you are going to experience sacrifice. Thankfully, Jesus is very straight-forward about this and He tells us this in the gospels. Listen to his words from Luke 14;

### ***Luke 14:25-33 NLT***

#### ***The Cost of Being a Disciple***

***25 A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, 26 "If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. 27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.***

**28 “But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? 29 Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. 30 They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’**

**31 “Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? 32 And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. 33 So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.**

This is admittedly one of the more difficult passages in the New Testament. Jesus’ challenge is to give up family, plans, and position in the process of discipleship. Another way to say it, to paraphrase the lesson of this passage, is to say, **“You have to be willing to let go of everything as you follow Christ.”**

If Christ sacrificed Himself to bring redemption then you are going to need to do the same as you share redemption with others.

### **Crucified with Christ**

I can almost guarantee you’ve heard this verse from Galatians before, simply because it so succinctly describes our position with Christ and our engagement with the world around us;

***“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20***

Yes, discipleship and sacrifice can be difficult.

Yes, you have to be willing to let go of everything you once believed to be so incredibly important.

Yes, there will be opposition.

And Yes, God will be with you always... In fact He lives in you, empowering you to live the life of faith. So as hard as it is to let go of things and make sacrifices don’t forget that He’s with you and He’s the *perfect High Priest*;

***“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so***

*that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

Hebrews 4:15-16

Sacrifice takes courage, conviction, and confidence, but it's worth it.

### **It's Worth It**

So here's the encouragement today; *throw off the past sin and shame that so easily entangles you. Run the race set out before you... looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith... who for the JOY set before Him endured the cross.*

Jesus sacrificed His life for the joy set before Him. And let me tell you today – there is a very real, deep abiding joy in serving others and sacrificing your life for someone else.

Think about the last time you went out on a service project... You sacrificed time, energy, and possibly money to serve and be a blessing to someone else. And you know what? I bet it felt amazing, I bet you walked away having experienced a fullness that was different than you'd felt before.

When we trade our selfish desires and wants for a life of discipleship and serving others the sacrifices we make have meaning and purpose. They have names and faces attached to them. When we serve others, we can see our selfless impact.

Without the sacrifice of Christ, there's no redemption.

And without the sacrifice of all the saints who've gone before us, there's no church.

Sacrifice is powerful, it can change the outcome of a battle...like the story I shared at the beginning of service. It can change someone's life who needs help. And it can redeem someone's eternity... Think about that for a moment.

No matter how hard life has been. No matter how far from God you may feel here today. No matter how irredeemable you believe your life to be... The sacrifice of Christ was completely sufficient.

And today is as good a day as any to rise above the sin and shame and accept the gift that God has given you through His son.

As we wrap up, I want to take a moment to recognize that today, the Sunday before Easter, is called Palm Sunday. And on Palm Sunday many churches read the passage where Jesus rides a

colt into Jerusalem. In that story Jesus is treated like royalty and all the people lay their cloaks down before him as he rides along.

*The whole crowd of disciples begins joyfully praising God in loud voices for all the miracles they have seen, and they say, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!", "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"* Luke 19:35-38

And then, as Jerusalem comes into view Jesus weeps over the city and says;

*"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."*

Luke 19:41-44

Friends, next week is Easter Sunday. It's a day when we celebrate the resurrection of Christ and the fulfillment of the prophecies about Him. There were many contemporaries of Christ, many well educated and faithful people, who didn't recognize He was in fact the Messiah. For them, the sacrifice was nothing more than the loss of a human life. But for those who believe, *it's the promise of eternal life.*

How will the sacrifice of Christ change your life this coming week?

What are some things that you need to let go of in order to give your life, time, money, etc... so that others may experience the life of the gospel?

What areas of life are you being called to greater sacrifice?

This life of faith can and will be a costly one, but remember that Christ is always with you, He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Let's pray together.