



Why, God?
I Will Worship Through It All
Part 5 – Worship With Sacrifice
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Today, we're wrapping up our series called *Why, God? That I Will Worship Through It All*. This is our series talking about worship and the importance of worship. You've heard several times through this series that worship is more than just music. And you've heard different definitions and quotes to explain what worship is. For me, I like a very simple explanation of what worship is. This is the definition I turn to: *Reverent acknowledgement of who God is and what he has done*.

So, we understand that worship can come in many, many different forms. As we've been talking in the past several weeks about times that it's important for us to worship through, today we're changing gears a little bit and talking about one of the ways that we worship.

Today, we're talking about *Worshiping With Sacrifice*. What is sacrifice? For our definition of sacrifice, we're going to say it is **to surrender or give up something for the sake of something or someone**. When we talk about worship with sacrifice, we're talking about surrendering or giving up something in order to reverently acknowledge God for who he is and what he has done.

People have been worshiping with sacrifice for thousands of years. In fact, in the Old Testament, there were laws that were outlined for God's people about how they should worship with sacrifice. There were these prescribed sacrifices with things like livestock, cattle, sheep, goats, birds, and even certain grains like fine flour and barley. There were these prescribed sacrifices that they were to make in their worship.

There were different types of sacrifices, those of the national nature, kind of congregational, if you will, and those that were individual. They each represented a different type of remembrance or a different act. There were sacrifices of thanksgiving, sacrifices of peace offerings. There were sin sacrifices, which were a little different in that they were to be an atonement for the sin of the worshiper, so these were brought to the Lord as atonement for their sins.

The interesting thing about these sacrifices that were brought, particularly the sin sacrifices, is that they didn't remove the sin, but rather they atoned for the sin. We understand that these Old Testament sacrifices were more of a reminder than a removal. They did not remove the sin, they simply atoned for it. My wife, Kari, likes to say it's kind of like brushing your teeth while you're eating Oreos. Offering these atonement sacrifices for sin didn't remove the sin; it simply atoned for them.

We understand this from Hebrews as we read about this. If you have your Bible and you want to open to Chapter 10, we're going to start in Verse 1. That's where we're going to spend the better part of our time in scripture this morning.

In Hebrews 10, it says, **1 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.** Because we're all eating oreos. **2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? 3 But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

We understand that this worship with sacrifice, the prescribed sacrifices in the Book of Leviticus were more of reminders than removal. We worship with sacrifice today. One of the ways we worship with sacrifice is sacrificing for other people. That we can be worshipful, depending on our intent because we are commanded to do so. Love your neighbor as yourself.

We read in Philippians 2: 3, **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourself.** We see that sacrificing for one another is a form of worship. Worshiping with sacrifice. We can do that in several ways too. Something so simple as a gesture. When you meet someone new or when someone walks in the room, if you stand to your feet, that's a form of sacrifice. Your sacrificing your comfortable position to honor the person that you're in front of.

There are other ways that we sacrifice of our finances and our resources. The first Sunday of every month here at Woodland Hills, we take a benevolence offering for those that have need inside of our church. You do a wonderful job of giving of your finances in a sacrificial way to meet the needs of others. That's a form of worship.

Sometimes we worship with sacrifice to other people by giving of our physical self, by giving part of yourself like donating blood. As a physician, I see this need and I understand this need and I see that sacrifice is needed. That's a huge sacrifice for me because I hate needles. Your like, "Aren't you a doctor?" Yeah, I can dish it out, but stay away from mine. So, that's a sacrifice we can give of ourselves.

Some people take that even farther. I've known people who have given some of their organs to others in a living donation to a friend or family member in need for survival. And that's a pretty big sacrifice, giving one of your own organs.

And then we understand sacrifice for another person in its highest form, the highest way that we can sacrifice for another human being. Jesus calls it out in John 15. **13 "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."** In this, we see the highest form of sacrifice that one can make for another person. Literally willing to die to save the life of another. I'm curious... In this room, in a group this size, generally will have a few people. Are there any of you that have had an opportunity or a time when you have laid your life down, literally put yourself in harms way to the point of potential death to protect or save the life another person? Raise your hand; it's not arrogance, it just happens. There aren't many, but you are out there.

Most of you, I would guess, are either military, law enforcement, fire protection, EMS, first responders, those types of folks. So, not many of us get that opportunity, but Jesus calls it the highest form of sacrifice that we can make, the greatest way we can love other people.

I think it's appropriate here that we pause again to mention Memorial Day, a time when we acknowledge that people have laid down their life for us in military service and lost their life in that sacrifice, and the family members who remain suffering the pain from that loss still. May we always respect them and the loss that they have suffered.

There is a member in our church I've gotten to know over the past several years. He is someone who has laid down his life multiple times for people. He was kind enough to grant me an interview by way of video to talk about this. His biggest concern in this, of course, is that Memorial Day is to remember those who have lost their lives in military service and not those that have survived. We acknowledge that and we get that. What I am hoping for us in this information from this person is to get a glimpse into the people like the few of you that raised your hand and for those of us that haven't to understand this John 15: 13, literally laying down of a life for another person. Watch this video:

Paul Etheridge: I'm Paul Etheridge. I served in the United States Army back in 69 and 70. I went to Vietnam. I was a paratrooper and served with the 173rd and later with a STAGG team, which is a small, six-man special ops team. I was told that my life expectancy in an ambush was four seconds, so we made jokes about that kind of stuff. In the small special ops teams that I was on, our life expectancy, if we were compromised, was zero. You just didn't survive if you were compromised. There were some times when, you know, you feel like you're not going to make it. You're outnumbered tremendously, and the helicopters can't get in to get you out, and you're going to have to fight your way out of it. You just think you're probably not going to make it.

I know that I would have easily risked my life and did for them. I was more afraid of letting them down than dying. Being killed was not what motivated me. The thing that motivated me was I was not going to let my team members down. It's proven itself time and again. If a guy needed your help, it didn't matter what kind of firefight you were in, you were going to respond, you were there to help him.

I served 27 years as a Missouri State Trooper. I served almost all over the state. I retired as Director of Special Operations. I ran SWAT teams and sniper recon teams and executive protection details, things like that. I've lost some good friends on the patrol.

Dr. Grossman defined the population of the world as you've got the sheep, in other words, the people that go about their daily lives, and then you've got about 2% of the population God has wired to be protectors or what he calls sheep dogs. When the bad thing happens, these are the people that run toward the explosion, toward the gun shots. They go toward the danger. Everybody else is running away, but the sheep dogs run toward it.

And it's not that they are braver, it's just the way God made them. Most of the sheep dogs are going to wind up being soldiers, policemen, on SWAT teams, on SEAL teams. They will gravitate toward those professions because that's the way God made them, and we need to be thankful that we have sheep dogs in our society. They are our protectors. [Video ends]

I thank God for sheep dogs, how about you guys? Amen? I think it's appropriate to mention again, as we remember on Memorial Day, those that gave their life, the sheep dogs that lost their life protecting us. We are grateful to them and to their families. Very few of us in this room will ever have an opportunity to die for another person.

Very few of us in this room will also ever have an opportunity to die on account of our faith. What a sacrificial way of worship that is. Those who have lost their lives on account of their faith. Certain missionaries have been martyred and killed because of what they believe, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are people in their native countries who have heard the gospel, received it, and proclaimed Christ who are told by their government, by their family, by their military that either they deny what they are saying or they will die. And they stand up and say, "I must die." Not many of us will have that opportunity, but the thing is, Jesus said, "If you're going to follow me, there must be a death that takes place. You must die to follow me."

He said it in Luke 9. ***"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."*** You see, there must be a death in order to follow death. Not a physical death, but a spiritual death, a laying down of our life. Robert Lewis calls it the Paradox Principle. If you really want to live, you have to be willing to die.

Romans 12 - ***1 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.*** A living sacrifice, not a death sacrifice. What does that look like? Jesus was a living sacrifice. We know that he died for us and he sacrificed for us in his death and we talk about it a lot. His suffering and his hanging on the cross and then subsequently his resurrection proved that he has authority even over death. He reappeared and then ascended to be with his Father in heaven, sitting at his right hand. So, he sacrificed for us in his death, but he was also a living sacrifice for us. I think sometimes we overlook that. In order to be an adequate death sacrifice, he had to be a perfect living sacrifice.

As being fully God and fully man, he faced every temptation that we do. The temptation to sin yet he didn't give in to that temptation. For his 33 years on earth, he was a living sacrifice. And that is of utmost salvational importance because if he was not that living sacrifice, he could not be the dying sacrifice that he was for us.

How can we, as followers of Jesus, be a living sacrifice? We're talking today about worshiping with sacrifice. We said sacrificing is surrendering or giving up something. And in our worship, for the sake of reverently acknowledging who God is and what he's done for us. What can we give up? We can give up a lot of things: our time, our money, our resources, our energy, our talents, our efforts, so many different things. I believe there is one thing that we can give up that kind of encompasses all of these things. I believe that's **my will**. I can give up my will in sacrifice to the Lord as an act of worship.

What is my will? My will is that part of me that resides in my soul along with my thoughts, my feelings, my emotions, and my heart. It can't be seen by the world, but the effects of it can be seen by the world through my words and my actions.

My will is mainly my desires and my plans. That can be something that can be really hard to give up. Everything else that we sacrifice can be rooted in our will, the way I want things to go.

There is only particular place where I personally have trouble giving up my will, my desires, my plans, and the way I want things to go, and that's this place right here. The double drive-thru line. Does this place stress anyone else out? There are two ways that I think it can stress you out. One is if you're a Type A personality and it's not going one at a time like ants marching, that bothers you.

Another way it can stress you out is if you're competitive. So, here's the deal. You pull up to the double drive-thru line and everything's okay at first because there is no one behind you and you have one car in each line. It's no big deal. It's like at a bank. I'm going to sit back and see which one pulls out first and I'm going to pull into that one. The problem is that as I'm waiting, someone pulls up behind me and I've got to choose. You may look at this picture and think it's easy. There's a little blue car that probably just has one, maybe two people in it. And then you have soccer mom Suburban that has her whole tribe. You think this is an easy choice, but it can be a trick. The person in the blue car may be ordering for everyone at work and taking it back to them. Soccer mom might be alone because she just wants a half cut tea to herself. So, it can be a trick.

But the car pulls in behind me and I have to choose. Am I going to choose right or am I going to choose wrong? So, I make my decision and I pull in behind the car. The car behind me pulls in behind the other one. Sometimes I choose right. The car in front of me finishes ordering and pulls forward. I pull forward and I place my order. Sometimes it gets even better. The car that was already there was not done yet and I pull in front of them and I win. Some of you are like, "It's not a race." Yes, it is. And I just won so stop being a sore loser.

But sometime, I choose wrong and I choose my line and the car behind me pulls into the other line. The person in front of them pulls on ahead and now the person that got there after me is ordering their food. Then the worst thing that could possibly happen is they're done, and they pull forward and a parade proceeds to just pass me by. I'm thinking, *I know it's their pleasure to serve you, but it would be my pleasure if you'd move along.*

I've got a solution. I'm going to fix this, okay? If you guys could all just help me in this, I would appreciate it. It's going to make my life easier. When I pull up to the double drive-thru line, I need each of you to stick your hand out the window and declare the number of people you're ordering for. This is going to help me make a more educated decision about which line I want to pull into. If you could do that, that would be great. If you need two hands to declare your number, you are drive-thru ineligible and you need to go inside. See, we just fixed it. What does this have anything to do with the message? Absolutely nothing. I just had a great idea I wanted to share with you.

The point is this. I have my will, my desires, and my plans, the way I want things to go. You can plug in any life situation with this drive-thru scenario. I have the way I want things to go and so does everyone else around. The sacrifice is considering other people's desire and their plans as well. That's important, but even more important is for me to consider the will of God, God's will.

The greater sacrifice is my sacrificing my plans, my desires, the way I want things to go for the will of God. What is the will of God? This can be a confusing and long discussion. I think sometimes we can get caught up in the weeds of this discussion with the things that can be a little bit unclear, so I want to rise us up to things that are quite certain as we talk about this. We can consider God's will for our lives as we talk about big decisions like what job to take, what school to go to, what town to live in, how many kids we should have. So many big decisions as we try to consider God's will. I'm not saying God's not concerned about the details of our lives; he is. But here's what I believe. I believe he is more concerned about how you handle the line you choose in the drive-thru, rather than the drive-thru line that you choose. That's God's will; we can be certain about that. He has ways that he desires for us to manage the drive-thru line, to manage the paths that we choose.

What is the will of God? My will tends to want to get angry and frustrated when someone messes up my comfortable existence, right? God's will is for us to be patient and kind. My will tends to want a little dishonesty to creep into my relationships to protect and preserve my reputation, while God's will is for us to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another that we may be healed. My will is to disregard my physical condition, while God's will is for me to be well so I can better love and serve other people. My will is to do things by myself – I don't need anyone's help – while God's will especially is for me to draw near to him when I labor and I'm heavy laden so he can give me rest for my soul.

My will tends to get a little complacent, a lot complacent sometimes, in my parenting, disregarding the influence I have on my children in their walk with the Lord, while God's will is for me to train my kids up in the way they should go. My will, as I say I'm going to worship through it all, can tend to be in these situations where life hurts and is uncertain and the end is drawing near, my will can tend to say, "God, I know how you want me to handle myself, but do you have any idea what I've been going through?" That's my will. God's will, if he would choose to answer you verbally, I believe would be to say something like, "Child, on this side of heaven, you will never fully understand what I went through for you." That's God's will.

What did God go through for us? What was the sacrifice of God? We talk about it a lot. We said earlier he was a living sacrifice. He lived a sinless life even though facing temptation, and he suffered on the cross and died for us. That's the sacrifice of God. But do we really fully understand that? I want to share something with you that has helped illustrate it for me... Again, according to 1 Corinthians 13, we won't fully know on this side of heaven. We can't fully understand. Someday, we will, as if seeing face to face, understand, but this side of heaven, we can't fully understand.

I want to share with you an illustration that helps me kind of understand the sacrifice of God. A few months ago, our son, Owen, who is 12 years old, was just growing like crazy. He started complaining about his legs hurting. I said, "Owen, you're growing like crazy, it's probably just growing pains."

God bless the children of physicians. Some of you say, "If you're not bleeding, you're fine." For me it's like, "If you're not pulsatile bleeding, then really you're okay." So, I can maybe tend to disregard some things, but as he started talking more about it and as time went by and it got a little more acute and a little more specific, my physician alarm started going off. I started thinking we needed to look into this.

Long story short, we looked into it and everything was fine. In fact, it likely was just growing pain. But you parents understand that in that process, where my mind goes. It goes to a pretty ugly place, a place where I started having conversation with God and praying “Why, God? Why not me?”

It was in that experience and those conversations, those prayers that I had, that it triggered a memory. I remember that last week, Scott talked about how we should let memories bring us to a place of worship. This triggered a memory in me. I want to share that memory with you. I’m generally not an emotional person, but in my medical practice, there have been a handful of times where I’ve been brought to tears because of a certain situation. One in particular stood out as this recent experience triggered this memory in me. It was at the OU Medical Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in the Pediatric Cancer Unit. We would occasionally get called as specialist to consult with the patients that were admitted there for specialty needs.

One time, I went, and you could imagine the picture. Standing at the foot of the bed with this child in the bed, suffering from a disease and the side effects of the medicine that was keeping her alive. It was pretty dramatic, and that struck me. But what struck me a little bit more was her parents sitting at the bedside. I know that if they are follower of Jesus, they have cried out to God, “Why, God? Let me do this for her.” I know the thing those parents wanted more than anything else, sitting at that bedside, was to be able to say, “Child, you can get up and go home. I’ll take care of this.”

Each and every one of us start out as that child in that bed, suffering from the death consequence-bearing condition of sin. And our Heavenly Father, in his brilliant sovereignty made a way that he could, fully God and fully man, live a sinless life, die a sinner’s death so that he could take on the suffering for us. So that he could stand at the side of your bed and say, “Child, get up and go home. I got this.”

That is the sacrifice of God. That is what helps bring me to my knees in worship, willing to sacrifice, laying down my life as a living sacrifice, taking up my cross daily and following him. Am I perfect at it? Lord, no. We have double drive-thru lines for crying out loud. But here’s the great thing. In the same way that the blood of bulls and goats can’t remove my sin, my own acts of sacrifice can’t remove my sin. Ephesians 2 says, ***8 For by grace you have been saved through faith...*** Not through my own works. It’s nothing that I’ve done. But it’s through the sacrifice of God, through his Son Christ.

Let’s keep reading in Hebrews, picking up in Verse 5. Remember it just said it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove your sins. ***5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired...”*** This is Jesus speaking to the Father. ***“...but a body have you prepared for me; 6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. 7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”***

Then we skip to Verse 9. ***“He does away with the first...”*** The bulls and goats. ***“...in order to establish the second.:*** The body of Christ. ***10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*** Every single one of us need to answer the call to “Get up out of that bed, child, and go. I’ve got this.”

If you've never answered that call, maybe today is the day for you to do that. As we close today, we are going to have the prayer team down front that would love to talk to you if you want to talk with someone or pray with someone about anything that you need prayer for. If you are follower of Jesus, I would challenge you today and every day to worship with sacrifice. May we remember, tomorrow on Memorial Day, those who have made the ultimate John 15: 13 sacrifice for us. May we choose to make our lives a living sacrifice, taking up our cross daily, and following him.

Father, we love you and we're grateful for so many blessings, Lord. We're thankful for opportunities to sacrifice, we're thankful for those especially that have sacrificed for us, Lord. We acknowledge today that the blood of bulls and goats cannot remove our sin. Our own sacrifice cannot remove our sin, Lord, but only the sacrifice of your Son that we receive can remove our sin.

May we go about our day tomorrow in remembrance and reflecting on the loss that some have suffered with their loved one's in military service for the sake of our freedom and our safety. Bless this church. Bless the families involved, Lord.

We pray for safety as we go home, and we ask this in the mighty name of your Son Jesus. Amen.