

## **Advent Sunday 4 “One Final Perfect Sacrifice” Hebrews 10**

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing unto You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen!

Our sermon today focuses on our Epistle reading, Hebrews 10:5-10, especially verses 9 and 10, which say,

“Behold, I have come to do your will.”<sup>10</sup> And by that will we are made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish believer understood that the sacrifices of the temple were not really what effected the forgiveness of sins. Guilt could not be taken away by the sacrifice of an animal such as a lamb. He says that right here in verse 4, “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” The religious folk of the first century were far more sophisticated thinkers than we often give them credit for. Think about it: If I do something wrong, how does killing a sheep make that wrong into a right?

Their answer to this was that the sacrifices here on earth were simply shadows of the heavenly reality. The real forgiveness was effected in a heavenly temple, a sacrifice which took place in heaven, of which our earthly sacrifices were but inept copies, but important copies in that they connected us to that heavenly reality.

Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews, collapses this idea. Jesus **is** the heavenly reality. But the sacrifice was not made in heaven, instead it was made right here on earth. Jesus collapsed the heavenly to the earthly when, incarnate in the flesh, He became the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sins on the cross of Calvary. The lambs and goats of every Jewish altar were not a shadow of some heavenly reality, but a shadow of the cross, the place where heaven and earth meet.

We encounter the incarnation in the words: “You have prepared a body for me.” Christianity has always proclaimed the incarnation and all that entails for the whole of creation.

Perhaps that is obvious to you, but you should be aware that this has long been under some attack in certain ranks of professional theologians. But Paul, along with the rest of the New Testament authors, held that Jesus was in fact the presence of the eternal creator, in the flesh. That was significant for a number of reasons which are worth reviewing:

1. Jesus as God is a worthy sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, once for all. If it is not God on that cross, it would not be a worthy sacrifice and we would be stuck with our sins.
2. Jesus as Man has fully taken up to himself a human nature. Jesus is no simulated or representation of man. He is the real flesh and blood of humanity. He can be hung upon a cross, nailed to a tree, sacrificed for the sin of the whole world. The cross casts its long shadow over the Christmas holiday, right through to Easter's resurrection.
3. God in the flesh means that Jesus understands/empathizes with our plight in temptation and sin. We have an advocate with the Father who brings our prayers before the heavenly throne with feeling and compassion.
4. God in the flesh is also in our flesh and that means that our lives have taken on a greater meaning. Christianity is not about escaping this life, but it is about the incarnation of Christ in this life. The poor, the hungry, the lonely, the guilty, the grieving are now occasions for Christ's love, forgiveness, and life to shine brightly.
5. God in the flesh of humanity, means that all human suffering has taken on a different cast for us. Christianity does not look upon the suffering of the slum dweller and say that it is their Karma, or their fate, or their just desserts for decisions/failings. Christianity looks upon the suffering of humanity and sees a reflection of the suffering of Christ. It realizes that in helping alleviate that suffering we are comforting our beloved Jesus and it notices that Jesus does this same thing in comforting the suffering **He** encounters in His earthly ministry. We embody Jesus when we feed a hungry man.

The sacrificial system which was instituted through Moses was a shadow or a fore-picture of this current reality in which we now live. The sacrifices of the temple were not really what God was after; He did not take particular pleasure in the aroma of sacrificed animals. They were the anticipation of Christ's great work on the cross.

For Paul this meant that the urge to return to Judaism is like loving the photo of your fiancé more than the person, and insisting on looking at the photo rather than the person when he/she has come to see you.

This text prepares us for the celebration of the incarnation and the amazing work that God continues to work through that singular Jesus event. And although not one person in church is likely to have experienced sacrificing animals in an attempt to satisfy God, a shared experience can be found in the fact that we all have sins and other burdens weighing us down. Burdened, wearied by self-imposed expectations and responsibilities, all long to hear words of hope, of promises kept, of renewal, of forgiveness. The old, inadequate sacrifice has been replaced by a second, perfect sacrifice. The blood no longer belongs to a lamb but now belongs to **The Lamb**. It is because of that blood, that sacrifice, that we are made holy...once and for all.

Through faith, those wearied and burdened receive hope. The sacrifice is perfect, complete, and for each one of us. Gerald P. Coleman captures how the believer, released from the burden of sin, guilt and shame and lifted in grace and mercy, can sing, "The Lamb, the Lamb, One perfect final offering. The Lamb, the Lamb, Let earth join heav'n His praise to sing. Worthy is the Lamb whose death makes me His own! The Lamb is reigning on His throne" (LSB 547).

Jesus tells us about the nature and purpose of His coming into the world. It involved his incarnation, his assumption of a unique body that God had "prepared" for him (10:5), a body for presentation as an offering to God for our sanctification (10:10). Not only that, He became incarnate to "do" God's "will" (10:7, 9), so that God could rightly say that he was "well-pleased" with him (10:6, 8). That was and is His earthly mission, the purpose of his incarnation.

With the help of the psalm, Jesus explains that by his incarnation He “does away” (10:9) with all the offerings that the Law prescribes, the sacrifices “which are offered according to the Law” (10:8). After the incarnation of Jesus, God does “not desire” them (10:5, 8), because they have accomplished what they were meant to accomplish by foreshadowing Christ’s incarnation.

So, you see, Jesus has “come ... to do” God’s “will” by enacting all that was “written” about him “in the scroll of the book” (10:7), the whole OT. He did not just come to obey God’s Law by his bodily self-offering, but also to fulfill all God’s promises in the OT. Jesus “does away” with the sacrifices offered according to the Law to “establish” his own self-offering (10:9), for by his obedience He was made perfect as High Priest and became the source of eternal salvation for his disciples (5:8–9). Thus, His willing obedience to God’s will in what He did (10:9) and what He suffered (5:8) stands in stark contrast with the willful disobedience of the Israelites in the desert (3:7–4:11).

We acknowledge and confess that by God’s “will,” carried out by Jesus, “we are made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time” (10:10). We have all been “made holy” (10:10) and continue to be “made holy” (10:14; cf. 2:11); We are all saints (6:10; 13:24), holy brothers who serve as co-priests with Jesus (2:11; 3:1). “Holy” is our present state of being, a state of being that is the result of Christ’s past self-offering and our present ongoing participation in his holiness.

And, “the body of Jesus” is the source of our holiness. Jesus’ human body, which was offered once for all time in obedience to God, has made us holy and continues to make us holy. No further offering is therefore required for our sanctification.

Just as it was God’s will for Jesus to present his body as an “offering” for the sanctification of humanity, so it is God’s “will” to make Jesus the source of our sanctification. It is what God desires for us and gives to us bodily through Holy Communion.

By his life and death Christ has made satisfaction for the sins of the world. By his life of perfect obedience to God's gracious will, Jesus fulfilled all God's righteous requirements in order to speak God's pardon to sinners and reconcile them with God (FC SD III 56–57). So, since Jesus has done his Father's will perfectly, God is well-pleased with him. And not only with him! He is well-pleased with all those who trust in him for their justification. Nothing more is required of us because He has done it all for us by his perfect sacrifice of atonement.

**LSB 564**

Christ sits at God's right hand,  
His saving work complete,  
To reign till ev'ry foe will lie Beneath His feet—  
All that the Father planned,  
The Son sought to fulfill,  
When first He said, "Lord, here am I To do Your will."

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

And may the love of God and the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit abide in you to life everlasting.

Kleinig, John W. 2017. [Hebrews](#). Edited by Curtis P. Giese. Concordia Commentary. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.