

Sunday: November 15, 2009

Scripture: I Samuel 1:4-20; I Samuel 2:1-10
Hebrews 10:11-25

Title: "A Sacrifice that Really Works"

Call to Worship: from: Matthew 5

Now, when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him and he began to teach them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit;

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,

For they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,

For they will inherit the earth

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

For they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,

For they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,

For they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,

For they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,

For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds

Of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,

For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Hymns: #446 Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

405 What Does the Lord Require

392 Take Thou Our Minds, Dear Lord

Prayer of Confession: Heavenly Father, we confess that we are not a people who likes to sacrifice much. We have grown accustomed to our way of life and it would be difficult for us to cut back or change our living standards. Even while we see the poverty that runs rampant in the world, we are unwilling to make changes which might lead to a more balanced world economy. Yet, we are aware that You have made the ultimate sacrifice for us poor sinners. In Christ Jesus we see the sacrifice which was made to cover our sins. Teach us that there is no true religious life without sacrifice and no real faith without self-giving. We pray in the name of the only sacrifice which has the power to save, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Tim Rusert in his book Big Russ and Me, tells about the time when he had finished middle school in Buffalo and was moving up to the Catholic High School. His parents wanted him to attend the finest Catholic High School in the city, and so he was enrolled in Cansecus, known not only for its high academic rating, but also for its strict discipline. While back in the lower grades most of his teachers had been Nuns, now, his teachers were Priests. He came from a section of the city that was known for its roughness and lack of discipline. On the first day of school, as he was entering the building the Principle, Father O'Brian looked at him and said: 10 hours in detention hall. Tim stared at him and asked why, he hadn't done anything. To which the Priest replied, I know where you come from and I know you're going to get in trouble, so this 10 hours is for all the things I know you are going to do. Poor Tim! Caught before he even had a chance to commit a sin. But Father O'Brian knew about young boys and especially young boys from Tim's side of town so he was preempting the punishment for all the sins he knew Tim would commit during his four years at Cansecus.

We cannot talk about a "Sacrifice that Really Works" without understanding something about what a sacrifice is. Why do we offer sacrifices? What is a sacrifice? How did humans ever get the idea that the gods, or in the case of the Hebrew people, God, could be made happier by the offering of a sacrifice?

To gain some understanding we need to go way back to the earliest days of civilization, when humans were very primitive and their understanding of the world was just as primitive. Back then they did not understand fire, and they did not understand how things grew, and they did not understand why the heavens had so many stars and why the sun moved across the sky. Well, the human spirit does not like a void. Perhaps one of the things that set us apart from all of God's other creatures is our ability to think and to understand complex issues. So, from the emergence of human life, there has been a constant struggle to understand. And those things we cannot understand, we attribute to God.

Well, early on in human development the human spirit understood that there is good and there is evil. There are pleasant feelings and there are hurtful feelings. And along with this primitive understanding came the idea that evil and pain were somehow connected to how the gods related to us. If the gods are angry, then a plague will fall on us. If the gods are unhappy with us, then there will be a drought and no crops will grow. If the gods are upset with us, there will be a flood and we will die.

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