

## “The Ultimate Sacrifice” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent 5 – March 17, 2024

- I. **Hebrews 5:1-10** – previously read
- II. **People often take pride in their well-used things.**
  - a. Lots of people like antiques and old furniture, and they might even take new furniture and make it look old by distressing it or painting a patina on it.
  - b. Many people also like their clothing to be well-used, faded, or even torn.
  - c. When I was a teenager, denim was the most important thing to wear.
    - i. Everyone had to have a jean jacket... and the more worn out and beat up it was, the better!
    - ii. It was like a badge of honor to have a jean jacket or pants that were faded and had holes all over them.
    - iii. I remember buying some new Levi's, and someone told me how to break them in so they would look worn and faded... just wash them and dry them a bunch of times.
      1. I don't remember how many times I washed and dried them, but they never really looked very faded... and I always wondered how in the world people could get their pants to look like that!
    - iv. Soon enough, stores began offering brand new jeans and clothing that were faded, beat up, and had lots of holes.
  - d. I've also heard of musicians who are new to the music scene, so they beat up their guitar and put stickers all over it, and then it looks like they've been playing it for years.
  - e. I even saw an old advertisement for guys with four-wheel drive vehicles – spray on mud!
    - i. Not sure if they sell it anymore, but for us city slickers who don't want to actually get our trucks muddy taking them out four-wheeling, we can spray fake mud on them to make it look like we did.
  - f. So, what's the problem with wanting our stuff to look well-used?
    - i. I suppose nothing really, but it seems like we are trying to take a shortcut.
    - ii. These things take years to become well-used, but we don't want to wait years for the look want or do the hard work of using something until it's well-used... so we buy it new... a new, worn-out thing.
  - g. Unfortunately, we can get caught up in this idea of taking shortcuts in our Christian lives too.
- III. **Our world teaches us there are better, faster ways to do everything.**
  - a. Yet, some things require long hours, lived experiences, and hard work.
  - b. We want to be super Christians, and know everything right now...
    - i. I remember when I had not read the Old Testament yet, and I kept looking for a Cliff Notes version so I didn't actually have to read the whole thing.

- ii. For some reason, I assumed that taking in the “information” would help me, but I overlooked the “relationship” I would build with God as I read His Word for many hours.
- c. Another example is our Bibles.
  - i. Some of us consider it a badge of honor to have Bible that looks like it is well-used, notes and tabs sticking out all over, and the cover all tattered and beat up.
    - 1. It won't be long before some store starts selling a Bible that looks like it's already been used for 20 years.
  - ii. On the other hand, a Bible that we read daily, take notes in, bring to Bible study, and memorize many verses from is a Bible that might take 20 years to look well-used!
    - 1. There is no shortcut, it just takes time.
- d. The disciples also looked for shortcuts and ways to circumvent the plans that are in God's time.
  - i. Just look at their desires today in the Gospel lesson, as they seek to receive a place of honor in the glory of God, but without first going through God's plan.
  - ii. Jesus reminds them of their fate... that they will suffer greatly before they are glorified... but also what it means to be a servant, like their Lord.

#### IV. **Jesus is the High Priest and Servant.**

- a. The author of Hebrews gives us a little background on the high priesthood.
- b. God had a plan for His people in the Old Testament times, and part of that was the system of sacrifices and the priests who served.
- c. The first one chosen by God was Aaron, the brother of Moses... and then Aaron's sons were specially chosen to serve in the temple as well.
- d. The priests were those who served in place of the other Israelites, as they offered sacrifices, prayed, and worked in the temple of the Lord.
  - i. In fact, they offered sacrifices for the sins of the people, and even for their own sins as well.
  - ii. Again, these men were chosen by God to carry out the responsibilities of the priesthood for Him.
- e. Only the people chosen by God could be appointed to this position, and our reading explains that Jesus was appointed for this service as well.
  - i. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Holy Spirit came upon Him and set Him apart for service as our High Priest... as God the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17)
- f. Jesus spent the next three years preparing for the ultimate sacrifice... His own death on the cross.
  - i. Priests were always the ones to offer sacrifices, but Hebrews says that even the priests needed their sins forgiven.

- ii. Only one High Priest, Jesus, could be the servant of God with no sin, and the sacrifice to forgive sins as well.
- iii. In God's way of caring for us, He made the High Priest the sacrifice.
- g. The greatest thing about this gift of Jesus is that He became a servant and humbly went to the cross as one of us.
  - i. Listen to what Hebrews 4 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)
  - ii. This means that Jesus knows our weaknesses... our limitations... our temptations to go our own way... our desire to take shortcuts rather than be obedient to God.
  - iii. Jesus chose to serve us and love us... with perfect obedience to His Father, without any shortcuts.
- h. Certainly Jesus could have used His divine power to avoid the terrible pain and suffering He experienced.
  - i. I often tell my Confirmation students that Jesus was God, so He could have chosen to limit His pain, stop the soldiers from nailing Him to the cross... or changed any of the things that He suffered... but He didn't.
  - ii. In humility and obedience, Jesus went through it all, as a man... in our place.
  - iii. All glory be to Him for His obedience to the Father, and His love for us as a servant.

V. **Jesus didn't take shortcuts, and we don't have to take shortcuts either.**

- a. Jesus invites each of us share in the work of priest... and servant.
  - i. It's not easy, and there are no shortcuts to becoming a well-seasoned saint of the Lord... but that's okay, because it's not necessarily about speed, but endurance.
- b. We recently read Romans 12 in our Adult Bible Class, and it says we are to present our bodies "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1)
  - i. This means that we serve God and love Him... along with serving and loving our neighbor as a response to the gift God gives us in forgiveness.
  - ii. We don't seek glory or praise for our sacrifices, they are a part of who we are just like breathing or walking...
  - iii. Yet, they bring God glory as His baptized children respond to the gifts He poured out through the High Priest Jesus.
- c. Just imagine, the God of the universe... Christ the very Son of God... is our example of obedience and love.
  - i. The sacrifice He made draws us into a family of faith that runs the race together – not a sprint, not a shortcut... but a marathon.

- d. When we are tempted to take shortcuts in our lives of sacrifice for God... when we pride ourselves in doing more than others... or when we want to jump to the front of the line – remember Jesus.
  - i. Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice – and it was for everyone but Him... It was the ultimate sacrifice even for you.
  - ii. Our High Priest and Savior specially chose and appointed us to receive forgiveness and become living sacrifices in service to Him – Amen.