

No Sacrifice Is Too Great in the Cause of the Kingdom of Jesus

A Sermon on Sacrifice for God's Kingdom

Sermon Parables and the Teaching of Jesus Not stated

Matthew 13:44-55 (referenced)

Genesis 12:1-7 (referenced)

Philippians 3:4-11 (referenced)

Isaiah 11:6-9 (quoted)

Introduction: The Question Behind Every Sacrifice

A sacrifice may be defined as giving up something important or valuable to you, to get or do something that seems more important still. The perceived value of what is gained will outweigh the value of what is sacrificed. The objective, here, is to gain the lost paradise, the Kingdom of Jesus. This was the most central and dominant message of Jesus' ministry, so much so that He returned to it more often than to any other subject. Therefore, there can be no equal weighing of sacrifice when the target is the Kingdom of God.

A question we often ask in our day-to-day life is, "Is the result worth my sacrifice?" When children sacrifice leisure time for studies, when parents give up their resources for their children's education, when investors risk their wealth to start an enterprise, no one stops to weigh what they will gain. Because we have a clear idea of the result of such sacrifices, that visibility makes it easy to sacrifice something.

Sacrifice seems central to the Christian walk. We tend to count the cost of our sacrifices, and at times proclaim it from the rooftop. We talk about it, and conduct seminars and workshops on the cost of discipleship. Jesus, therefore, explains the worth of the objective in three successive illustrations in the passage from Matthew 13:44-55. In simple terms, it shows that the gain is far more valuable than anything else we may possess. What we possess is temporal and has no eternal value. The Kingdom of Jesus is where we would have eternal existence in the glorious presence of our God, Jesus Christ. Any sacrifice is too small for such an objective.

Before we answer whether we are prepared to sacrifice for the Kingdom of God, we need to understand what the Kingdom of God is. In the illustrations, each one sacrificed knowing fully well what they would gain. Numerous examples in both the Old and New Testaments show people giving up everything for something they believed was far more valuable. The fishermen did not stop to ask questions when Jesus called them to follow Him. Saul, a zealous young Pharisee who once persecuted the Church with the full authority of the religious leaders,

became Paul when he knew he had gained Jesus Christ. Tradition holds that all the Apostles, save John, found it worth sacrificing their lives for the Kingdom of Jesus. There can be no more valuable sacrifice than one's own life.

The Kingdom Is a Treasure That Reorders All Other Values

The place to look for the Kingdom of God is in Genesis. We need to go back to when God created everything. In Genesis, we read that God Himself reviewed His creation and found everything in order. There was peace on the earth, and all creatures coexisted peacefully. God walked and talked with man. This harmony was destroyed because sin entered the mind of man, creating a gulf between God and man. Afterwards, man lived a journey in sin, while God did everything, including incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' once-for-all sacrifice on the cross bridged the gap between God and man.

But the story does not end there. We are waiting for the second coming of the Lord to take us to His restored creation, His new creation. All creation belongs together in the arms of its Creator. The final vision is that all men and women should recognise that they are equal in creation, and that the entire creation is called to live in unity, with all members of God's creation coming together in perfect harmony. Jesus the Christ came to fulfil that vision. Long before He was made incarnate in this world, the prophet Isaiah foresaw it:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6-9, King James Version)

To enter this restored state of creation, preparation is inevitable. The sacrifices we make in our present temporal life are for receiving the golden crown as we transit from this form of life. The opportunity to serve the Lord is with us today, and would not extend to the eternal life Jesus offers us.

Living as Sacrificial Christians Looking Towards the Kingdom of God

We have but one mode of life, which is living as the people of God, the flock of Christ. Had we not been arrested by the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, by the blood He shed for us on the cross, by His never-to-be-repeated sacrifice to end all sacrifices, to redeem us, we would have continued as servants of sin and slaves to our body and fleshly desires. Having thus been redeemed, we need to conduct ourselves in our lives worthy of His grace, as His people.

It may not tax us much when we sacrifice a morning film to participate in the church service. It may not be too hard to give up ice cream, meat or a couple of pegs for a season during Lent. Others know we have done all that because we tell them. That is where our sacrifices get diluted. When we make sacrifices, do so as unto the Lord, freely, without grudge and joyfully, known only to the Lord and us. Our sacrifices are not for others' concern.

Eventually, these sacrifices should become part of our living. It should not seem as if we lost something, as what awaits us is of such value which we have no way of determining it. Amen.