

November 14, 2021
Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Hebrews 10:11-25 (Daniel 12:1-3)

SURELY THE DAY IS DRAWING NEAR.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Letter to the Hebrews, the 10th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word *sacrifice*? In our world there are many sacrifices both great and small. With Veteran's Day being honored just a few days ago, perhaps the word *sacrifice* makes you think of all those who have served and currently serve in the military. The phrase: "***All gave some; some gave all***" comes to mind. It is a great definition of *sacrifice* as we remember those who have given up great and small, suffering in various ways for the sake of country, many risking all they have so that our country remains free. We thank them all for their *sacrificial* service.

In the Old Testament days, *sacrifice* was almost always associated with blood. The Lord God despises all evil and He especially despises the sin of mankind. Because of sin, it is impossible for man to stand before our holy God, let alone even attempt to draw near to Him. It all started in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve fell into sin. After eating from the forbidden tree, they knew that they were naked. Recognizing their separation from God, they hid from Him. (cf: Genesis 3:7-8)

Through His prophet Moses, the Lord gave His people Israel a detailed *sacrificial* system of shedding of the blood of animals to cover the guilt of their sins. The sacrifice pointed forward to the offspring of the woman, promised in the Garden of Eden, who would crush the head of the devil on the cross. (cf: Genesis 3:15) The Lord said to Moses:

"¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." (Leviticus 17:11)

The shed of the blood of animals is all over the pages of the Old Testament. Day after day, week after week, year after year, the Old Testament priests would stand in the tabernacle or in the temple slaughtering animals, draining out the blood, and offering up *sacrifices*. There was a burnt offering offered every morning and evening for all Israel. (cf: Exodus 29:39–42) There were double burnt offerings offered on the Sabbath. (cf: Numbers 28:9–10) There were extra offerings on feast days. (Numbers 28–29)

And on the most important religious day of the year, the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the high priest was allowed to draw near to God, entering the Holy of Holies with the blood of the

atonement *sacrifice* and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and on the floor before the ark of the covenant. This sacrifice was for the atonement of *all* sin, those known and unknown, and everything that was ritually unclean. It established reconciliation between man and God. (cf: Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, 234)

But even still, the Yom Kippur sacrifice and all the daily sacrifices had to be repeated over and over again. Referring to the Old Testament priests, the writer to the Hebrews says that offering repeatedly the same sacrifices can never take away sins. (cf: Hebrews 10:11)

Their work is never done because those sacrifices can never achieve the goal of full atonement for all sin. The high priest could stand in service before God in the Holy of Holies, but his work was never sufficient that he could sit with God on His throne.

The priests sacrificing the blood of the animals pointed forward to our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus, and the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is only by His sacrificial death that you and I can draw near to God and receive forgiveness, life, and salvation.

We cannot stand before the holy God because according to the Ten Commandments, you and I and all mankind are declared guilty of every sort of sin against God and neighbor. Things you have done and things you have left undone all committed in your thoughts, words, and deeds. If God were to deal with you according to His justice and what you deserve, He would be justified in damning you eternally into the *“shame and everlasting contempt”* that Daniel speaks of in our Old Testament reading. (cf: Daniel 12:2)

But in His rich love and mercy, God has sent His Son, your great High Priest to make sacrifice on your behalf. It was His joy, not to sacrifice the blood of bulls and goats, but to shed His own blood on the altar of the cross as a one-time sacrifice for all sin, a New Testament sacrifice in His blood poured out as the atoning sacrifice for your sins and the sins of the world. (cf: Hebrews 10:12, 12:2) Christ gave all. He is your great High Priest. By His fully paying the wages of all of your sins, your transgressions are completely covered. His holy precious blood shed for you takes away all of your guilt and all of your shame. He did it all for you.

Our text says:

“... when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.” (Hebrews 10:12–13)

Your High Priest was crucified and died for sinners, is risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. On the Last Day He will raise both believers and unbelievers: believers to everlasting life, unbelievers to everlasting death. (cf: Daniel 12:2) In His death and resurrection, He has defeated sin death and the grave, but death remains as the last enemy to be destroyed. (cf: 1 Corinthians 15:26) In biblical times, the conqueror placed his foot on his enemies to indicate triumph. And on the Last Day, death will become Jesus' footstool. (cf: Hebrews 10:13)

Because of Christ's vicarious atonement on your behalf, as baptized believing children of God, you can approach that Day with confidence, hope, and eager expectation. Just like little Timothy Patrick, you were untied to Christ in Baptism. At the font you were sanctified and made holy in

the blood of the Lamb, cleansing you of all your sins. By His body and blood, Jesus has opened the way for you to approach and draw near to God and stand before Him in holiness now and forever. (cf: Hebrews 10:20)

For all who are in Christ, the writer to the Hebrews gives three exhortations, three end-times appeals as how to live as a regenerated child of Christ, as we live out our lives anticipating the Last Day. The first appeal is:

"... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..." (Hebrews 10:22)

You draw near to God with the assurance that Christ has gone before you and entered the holy place of heaven through the curtain of His own body and blood. Just as sure as the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom the very moment that Jesus cried out ***"It is finished,"*** (John 19:30) His death on the cross opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. So, draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, that you are approaching the throne of God and before the Lamb, (cf: Revelation 7:9) as a throne of grace, a place of promised mercy, life, and eternal salvation. You are drawing near to a Judge who has been judged in your place and paid your wages of sin. (cf: Romans 6:23) You go with the full assurance of faith that Christ has gone on before to prepare a place for you. (cf: John 14:1-6)

The second appeal is:

"²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." (Hebrews 10:23)

You have God's promise, and He always keeps His promises. Not because of any merit on your part, but out of His pure mercy and grace. You can trust that by the mercy and grace of God, that when this life is over, when the last Day finally comes, you will be among the great multitude in heaven that no one could number, (cf: Revelation 7:9) who as Daniel says:

"... shall awake... to everlasting life, and... shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and... like the stars forever and ever." (Daniel 12:2-3)

Again, you believe this – not because you are good, religious, pious, or Lutheran. It comes solely on account of the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, sprinkled by the Word on your heart, poured on you with the water of Baptism.

The third appeal is:

"²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Even then, there were those who stopped going to church. So, the writer to the Hebrews reminds each of us that there are reasons for gathering together in worship. As I sometimes say, Christianity is not an individual sport. No. You are members of the body of Christ – each as an individual part of the body (cf: 1 Corinthians 12:27) and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. (cf: Ephesians 3:6) You need the other members of the body and the other members of the body need you. When you neglect to come to the Divine Service, you not only do not receive our Lord's gifts in Word and Sacrament, you are unable to encourage one another

in love and good works. When you skip church, you are not only saying to God: “*Your gifts mean nothing to me this week.*” You are saying to your brothers and sisters in Christ that: “*You mean nothing to me this week.*” When a hand is missing one finger, the hand and the body suffer. But notice, it is the finger who is separated from the body that dies, not the hand. When one member is missing, the whole body suffers. (cf: (1 Corinthians 12:26)

Brothers and sister in Christ, as you sang in the sermon hymn: “***The day is surely drawing near.***” (LSB 508) So, “... ***let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...***” that by Christ’s death on the cross, the kingdom of heaven is open to all believers. He is seated at the right hand of God and will graciously welcome you into His place of promised mercy, life, and eternal salvation.

“***The day is surely drawing near.***” So, “***Let us hold fast the confession of our hope...***” that Christ was crucified to save sinners. Salvation comes solely on account of His blood shed on the cross.

“***The day is surely drawing near.***” So “... ***let us... stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging one another...***” with that love and those good works.

“***The day is surely drawing near.***” So let your prayer be:

***“O Jesus Christ, do not delay,
But hasten our salvation;
We often tremble on our way
In fear and tribulation.
O hear and grant our fervent plea:
Come, mighty judge, and set us free
From death and ev’ry evil.”*** (LSB 508, stz. 7)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.