

“Altar’d - Sacrifice of Praise”

Scripture: Joshua 8:30-35

Graphics: altar, fire, peace, praise, worship, bible

Big Truth: God calls us to surrender our control and demonstrate our commitment through obedience. Are you willing to commit only when it’s conditional, when it’s convenient, or when it’s on your own terms? Jesus walked toward the cross in full obedience without condition. Are we willing to let go of control in order to commit ourselves fully in obedience? Are we willing to fully surrender? Are we willing to have an undivided heart?

Focus Phrase: Praise brings peace with God and our community.

1. Introduction

- A. **PRAY!** (Jesus, You are Lord...)
- B. **Praise brings peace with God and our community.**
- C. You’ve heard me say this before: “We are a peculiar people, as followers of Jesus.” While the world is, right now, going about its daily business - which, anymore, is the same Monday-Friday as it is Saturday and Sunday - we are sitting in pews (a strange term) in a sanctuary (another strange term) on a Sunday morning, singing songs, praying, reading God’s uber-ancient Holy-Spirit word, and talking to one another about life, about Jesus Christ, and about the world. In many ways, that’s just weird.
- D. At the end of worship today, we’ll welcome 12 new members of the congregation and baptize 4 of them. They’ve spent time praying and discerning taking this step in their faith, and they will stand up here to proclaim that they believe Jesus is Lord - confessing that with their mouths.
- E. It’s all very peculiar. WE are peculiar. And what we do is counter-cultural! In fact, it’s an antidote to what the world offers as the cure for all our ills.
- F. Yet, of all the things we COULD do to make peace in our hearts, minds, and souls, **worship and the sacraments** are the ONLY things we do that leads to peace. The reason they lead to peace is because it leads to God, who is peace.
- G. The bible makes it clear that God is a God of peace, and not chaos. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. The Hebrew word for peace is **shalom**, which is a state of wholeness, well-being, and joy. When we connect with the God of shalom, we bring peace to our lives and the world.
- H. And that happens when we offer up a **Sacrifice of Praise**, which is the title of our message today in our Altar’d series.
- I. (altar) At the altar in our lives, we make **space** to fully surrender, which renews our faith in the One to whom we **surrender** it all. Our lives shift by the power of God. But one of my favorite things to do at the altar is to offer a sacrifice of praise to God.

- J. In our scripture today, we will go with Joshua to the altar he built as he was entering the Promised Land. And it was there, in the midst of all his current and future leadership success that he stopped and praised the Lord.
- K. And that brought peace...with God...and to the whole nation.
- L. In your notes write: **Praise brings peace with God and our community.**
- M. Let's open our bibles to Joshua chapter 8, starting in verse 30.

2. Scripture

A. READ Joshua 8:30-31

- i. Let me stop there for a minute to give us some context.
- ii. Joshua escaped Egypt with the other Israelites as the Lord used Moses to lead the people. Joshua followed Moses as an apprentice, joining him at the Tent of Meeting where the Spirit of God dwelled, following him up Mount Sinai where Moses would receive God's Word. Most notably, Joshua was faithful to God when he supported the plan to enter the Promised Land.
- iii. However, we know that Moses failed to fully trust God's promise. So, he had to pass the torch of leadership to Joshua. And it was Joshua who crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land with God's people, conquered the enemies there, and claimed the inheritance that God had promised.
- iv. The story of God's people is this roller coaster of victory and defeat throughout history. Yet, it's the action (the faith and leadership) of **Joshua**, after experiencing great victory, that defined his leadership.
- v. Joshua was obviously a great leader. He had incredible momentum as they came into the Promised Land. Strategically, that would've been the time to press forward and use all the victories as a springboard to more success.
- vi. But Joshua did something unexpected: **he stopped**. Right there. He turned away from his success and he turned his face toward God. **He built an altar** - just as Moses had instructed them to do - once they entered the promised land of Canaan: "On it they offered to the Lord burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings" (Joshua 8:30-31).
- vii. The burnt offerings were for the sin of the people - required by God to atone for the sin of the people. The burnt offering was not optional.
- viii. BUT, here's where we're going today, the **fellowship offerings** that Joshua laid on the altar he built were a beautiful and optional offering of bread and other grains (usually), (listen) **simply to praise God**. The Hebrew term for this offering is the *selemim* - a voluntary sacrifice of praise, as described in Leviticus 3.
- ix. Write this down: **God does not require praise, but He desires it.** (repeat)
- x. The purpose of the selemim - the peace offering - was to praise God for the past, present, and future.

- xi. And Joshua chose, in that moment, to stop, build an altar, and praise God... to give thanks to God...to minister to God and show love and gratitude.
- xii.He created a space, right there in the wilderness, to encounter God...and to celebrate the people’s relationship with God.
- xiii.But that wasn’t all he did with the people. Let’s keep reading to see what else God desires as a sacrifice of praise...verse 32...

B. READ Joshua 8:32-35

- i. After Joshua built that altar and sacrificed the burnt and peace offerings, he read all the words of the Law, specifically the blessings and the curses, AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP.
- ii. These were the promises of what would happen if they obeyed God’s commands and what would happen if they didn’t. The curses would be the consequences of their sins. According to the instructions given by Moses they were, “to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses” (Deut. 11:29).
- iii. The altar Joshua built was on Mount Ebal because that is where they needed to atone for their sins and receive mercy rather than punishment.
- iv. Notice who was there to hear the reading, “the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them” (v. 35).
- v. The sacrifices and the reading of God’s law was an act of worship, not just for them, but as a witness to others - the foreigners who were not Israelites, but people who joined them as they journeyed through Canaan.
- vi. The people’s actions influenced others and the unique aspect of the peace offering was the community meal that was shared. After the fat of the animal was sacrificed on the altar, the meat was given back for all the people to enjoy together. It was a way for a community to share together the worship of the Lord. Isn’t that beautiful? Isn’t that what we do together when we come to the Table for communion or when we share a meal together?
- vii. When we worship together and when we read God’s Word together, we become witnesses to the story of God.
 - a. We share the promises of God to forgive us for our sins and the promise of eternal life which happens through the sacrifice of Jesus.
 - b. We read the Word of God which holds us together, united in faith and united as a family of faith.
- viii. Corrie ten Boom famously said, “Be united with other Christians. A wall with loose bricks is not good. The bricks must be cemented together.”
- ix. Our sacrifice of praise reconciles us with the Lord and with others.

x. It's the desire of God that we live in His peace through our praise of all He has done and all He will do.

C. Praise brings peace with God and our community.

3. Application

A. When was the last time you stopped whatever was happening in your life for no other purpose than to give thanks to the Lord? I said at the beginning of this message that's exactly what we do every Sunday morning! But what about at other times during the week...every day?

B. Where have you experienced His blessings and heard His voice?

C. How has God enabled you to use your gifts and talents to accomplish your goals?

D. We encounter the grace and peace of God when we give our praise.

E. For Joshua, there were two reasons to stop:

i. first, to acknowledge the past sin from their community, and,

ii. two, to recognize that their success came from the Lord rather than their own abilities.

F. Those are the same reasons why we build altars to surrender our lives to Him:

i. To confess our sin and receive forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, and,

ii. To praise God, at those altars, for everything he has done.

G. We're tempted to just keep going without God when we're on a roll of success and victory and life is good. When things get rough, life changes, we screw up, or any host of other craters in the road, we tend to run to the God who is ready to hear and respond.

H. What would it look like in your life if everyday became a sacrifice of praise for Jesus from the minute you woke up to the moment you put your head down?

I. What would you experience if you remembered the sacrifice of Jesus everyday?

J. **Church, Jesus is our peace!**

K. Jesus became our atonement - the One who who made us one with God.

Galatians 3:10–14 tells us that Jesus redeemed us from the curse that is promised when we do not obey the law. And even if we try to obey, it isn't our actions which justify us, but Jesus.

L. The Word of God reminds us that it's only through a sacrifice that we are redeemed. It's only through the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross that we can be obedient.

M. These promises are found in the Word of God, which is why we should return to Scripture each day. When we choose to return to Scripture, we're reminded of God's mercy and His commands. We reaffirm our covenant with Him.

- N. It's the space we create to recall all that God has done to save His people.
- O. And our faith and praise not only activate forgiveness for our sin, but turns our hearts back to him. **That's the thing that brings peace!**
- P. For you and me, for sure. But also for US, here. And for the community out there, when we engage with each and every person.
- Q. Here's our call to action today:
- i. First, **spend time everyday confessing sin and repenting**, then asking for and receiving the full forgiveness that comes through the sacrifice of Jesus.
 - a. If you need to be reminded of the grace and forgiveness of God, look in any of the gospels to find the part where Jesus died for your sin.
 - b. In a few weeks, on a Friday night, we're going to spend a whole worship service sitting with that. And, it'll be a powerful time of experiencing the depth of God's love for us. Repent and believe!
 - ii. Then, **spend time everyday praising God** in some way.
 - a. Praise Him for all the good and gracious gifts He gives you - air, water, shelter, salvation, spiritual gifts to use, men and women around you to walk with you, family and church family, health.
 - b. Praise Him in the storm, too. Praise Him when you're anxious or depressed or sick or weak. In those times, it's less about the present, but more about the past faithfulness and the future healing that's coming.
 - c. Do that every day! Part of our mission statement is to worship passionately! That's not JUST for Sunday mornings, but for every day!
 - iii. And when the forgiveness comes, and the praise is sacrificed, PEACE will flood into your life. How do I know? Because whenever I repent and then praise God, peace flows into my life...and to my family...and to the church!
- R. Praise brings peace with God and our community.

4. Conclusion

- A. In just a minute, lots of people we love will stand up here to profess their faith in Jesus and proclaim to all of us that they are all in - they're **all in** with Jesus and they are **all in** with you, right here.
- B. This is a peculiar thing we do. Yet, as we all walk together in repentance and praise, PEACE is ours...together. Lift up a sacrifice of praise today!
- C. Once they give their vows, we will have the opportunity to give a sacrifice of praise
- D. **Be Altar'd. Let's pray...**