

Monday, March 23, 2026

## Virtues part 3 - Sacrifice

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### Sermon Summary

#### **The Sacred Act of Sacrifice: Love, Obedience, and Mercy**

This sermon explores sacrifice as a meta-virtue that encompasses generosity, hospitality, servanthood, and charity. Pastor John examines how sacrifice is intrinsically connected to love, faith, and obedience throughout Scripture. Beginning with Cain and Abel's offerings, the sermon demonstrates that appropriate sacrifice reflects our love for God and recognition that everything belongs to Him. The message emphasizes that while sacrifice is essential to Christian life, God values mercy, faithfulness, and intimate relationship with Him even more than sacrifice itself. Jesus's ultimate sacrifice on the cross serves as the model for believers, who are called to give sacrificially while extending mercy to others rather than demanding sacrifices from them. The sermon concludes with the paradox that Christians must make personal sacrifices cheerfully while showing compassion to those who aren't making the same sacrifices.

#### **Key Points:**

- Sacrifice is a meta-virtue incorporating generosity, liberality, hospitality, servanthood, and charity
- There is no love without sacrifice; sacrifice is the proof of love
- The etymology of sacrifice means "to make sacred" — God makes our sacrifices sacred when we give them to Him
- The most valuable sacrifice we can give to God is ourselves
- Cain and Abel's story illustrates the difference between appropriate and inappropriate sacrifice
- God values obedience, faithfulness, and intimate relational knowledge more than mere sacrifice
- Jesus quoted Hosea twice: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"
- Sacrifices should be made cheerfully and not under compulsion

- We must make personal sacrifices while extending mercy to others rather than requiring sacrifices from them
- Young people need prudence—wisdom for the future—to make proper sacrifices today for tomorrow
- Every sacrifice has eternal value because we live in the everlasting aftermath of our decisions
- Christ's sacrifice was complete; we cannot earn more from God through our sacrifices

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### **Scripture References:**

Genesis 4:3-7 (Cain and Abel's offerings)

Genesis 4:15 (The mark of Cain)

Mark 8:34-35 (Deny yourself, take up your cross)

John 15:12-13 (Greater love has no one than to lay down his life)

1 John 4:9-10 (God's love revealed through Christ's atoning sacrifice)

Hebrews 11:4 (By faith Abel offered God a greater sacrifice)

1 Corinthians 13:3 (Sacrifice without love profits nothing)

1 Samuel 15:22 (Obedience is better than sacrifice)

Hosea 6:6 (I desire faithfulness, not sacrifice)

Matthew 9:13 and Matthew 12:7 (Jesus quotes "I desire mercy, not sacrifice")

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### **Discussion Questions**

- How does the story of Cain and Abel challenge our understanding of what makes a sacrifice acceptable to God, and what does this reveal about the condition of our hearts when we give?
- Pastor John states that love means nothing if it doesn't cost you anything. In what areas of your life might you be offering God things that don't truly cost you, and what would a more costly sacrifice look like?

- When Jesus says he wants mercy, not sacrifice, how should this shape the way we interact with people who are living in sin or who don't meet our religious standards?
- Telemachus gave his life to stop the gladiator games without knowing the outcome of his sacrifice. What sacrifices might God be calling you to make even when you cannot see the fruit they will bear?
- The sermon suggests we often make decisions for our present self that our future self will regret. How can developing the virtue of prudence help us make better sacrifices today for the sake of tomorrow?
- How can we distinguish between making appropriate sacrifices that honor God and falling into legalistic demands that miss the higher principles of mercy and compassion?
- King Saul chose to please his army rather than obey God, showing that obedience is better than sacrifice. What areas of your life might involve pleasing people at the expense of obeying God?
- The Pharisees brought correct sacrifices but lacked mercy and relationship with God. How can we ensure our religious practices flow from genuine love rather than dutiful obligation?
- Pastor John mentions that anything you sacrifice for Christ is made sacred by God. How does this truth change the way you view the everyday sacrifices you make in your work, relationships, and service?
- If the most valuable thing you can sacrifice to God is yourself, what does it practically look like to lay down your life for Christ in your current season and circumstances?

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## **5-Day Devotional: The Sacred Path of Sacrifice**

### **Day 1: Love Without Cost Is Not Love**

#### **Reading: Genesis 4:3-7; 1 John 4:9-10**

**Devotional:** Abel's offering pleased God not because of its quality alone, but because it represented genuine sacrifice—giving something that cost him. When we claim to love God yet hold back what truly matters, we mirror Cain's deficient offering. God doesn't need our possessions; He

desires our hearts. The ultimate expression of this truth is found in Christ's sacrifice, which demonstrates that authentic love always bears a cost. Today, examine what you're withholding from God. Is it your time, resources, dreams, or control? Remember, anything you sacrifice for Christ becomes sacred—set apart for holy purposes. True love isn't measured by what's convenient to give, but by what's difficult to release.

Reflection Question: What possession, relationship, or ambition are you clinging to that God is calling you to surrender?

## **Day 2: The Eternal Value of Today's Choices**

**Reading: Mark 8:34-35; Hebrews 11:4**

**Devotional:** We often live as though today's choices affect only our immediate circumstances, but Scripture reveals a different reality: every decision carries eternal weight. Abel's sacrifice still speaks thousands of years later, commended for his faith and righteous offering. When we sacrifice comfort for obedience, convenience for compassion, or security for following Christ, we're investing in an eternal return that far exceeds temporary loss. The world teaches us to preserve our lives, accumulate, and protect ourselves. Jesus teaches the opposite—that losing our life for His sake is the only way to truly find it. Your future self—the eternal you—will either thank or lament the sacrifices you made or avoided today.

Reflection Question: What sacrifice is God calling you to make today that your future, eternal self will celebrate?

## **Day 3: Obedience: The Superior Sacrifice**

**Reading: 1 Samuel 15:22-23; John 14:15**

**Devotional:** King Saul learned a devastating lesson: religious activity without obedience is worthless to God. He preserved the best livestock for sacrifice while violating God's direct command, revealing that he valued public approval over divine instruction. Samuel's rebuke cuts through our tendency to substitute impressive religious performances for simple obedience: "Does the Lord take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obedience?" The answer echoes through Scripture—obedience is the sacrifice God desires most. It costs us our autonomy, our preferences, and sometimes our reputation. Yet this is precisely what

proves our love is genuine. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Obedience isn't legalism; it's the language of love.

Reflection Question: In what area of your life are you substituting religious activity for simple obedience to God's clear instruction?

#### **Day 4: Mercy Trumps Sacrifice**

**Reading: Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:10-13**

**Devotional:** Jesus shocked the Pharisees by dining with tax collectors and sinners, then challenged them to understand a profound truth: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." The religious leaders had mastered ceremonial correctness while missing God's heart—compassionate love for broken people. This principle liberates us from two errors: first, thinking our sacrifices earn God's favor, and second, demanding that others meet our standards before receiving our love. Jesus didn't wait for sinners to clean up before befriending them. He offered relationship first, knowing transformation follows encounter. We're called to the same radical mercy—loving people where they are, sacrificing our comfort and reputation to reach them. Mercy is the higher principle that makes our sacrifices meaningful.

Reflection Question: Who in your life needs mercy rather than judgment, and how can you tangibly demonstrate Christ's compassionate love to them this week?

#### **Day 5: Making Your Life Sacred**

**Reading: Romans 12:1-2; John 15:12-13**

**Devotional:** The word "sacrifice" means "to make sacred"—to set something apart for God's purposes. Paul urges us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, transforming ordinary existence into sacred service. Unlike ancient offerings consumed on altars, we're called to be living sacrifices—daily choosing God's will over our own. This is challenging because, as someone quipped, "the problem with living sacrifices is they keep crawling off the altar." Yet this is precisely where transformation happens—in the repeated choice to surrender ourselves to God's purposes. Jesus modeled the ultimate living sacrifice, laying down His life daily in obedience before the final act at Calvary. When you give God your

time, talents, resources, and dreams, He makes them sacred, producing eternal fruit beyond what you could accomplish for yourself.

Reflection Question: What does it practically look like for you to be a "living sacrifice" today—in your work, relationships, and daily decisions?

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, teach us the sacred art of sacrifice—not as duty, but as worship. Help us release what we clutch tightly, trusting that what we give to You becomes eternal. May our lives reflect the sacrificial love of Christ, who gave everything for us. Transform our offerings into sacred instruments for Your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.