

Text: Heb. 13:15-16

Title: "Our sacrifice of praise"

Time: 9/18/2016 am

Place: NBBC

Intro - I remember sitting at our kitchen table with a lady whom I believed to be a sister in Christ and her son who had just trusted Christ as Savior. We were spending some time together at her request because her son had some questions about spiritual things. As we talked it became apparent that another question was weighing on this sister's heart as well.

She had been saved out of Roman Catholicism, and her little girl was coming to the age at which Roman Catholic boys and girls celebrate their first communion. The Church teaches that babies must be baptized to be born again, and then when they come to what they call the age of reason, they must go to the priest for their first confession and then they can celebrate the Mass as their first communion.

Faced with these pressures from both her former Church and her family, the mother asked me, "Pastor, should I allow my daughter to celebrate her first communion?" I asked her, "What do you think the Holy Spirit wants you to do?" She thought just a moment, but then the answer came quickly. She knew the answer was "no."

We continue to pray for this family, but we do so remembering that in spite of that conversation, the family has gone back to Roman Catholicism and that little girl did indeed celebrate her first communion.

As I contemplate what happened there, I think this mother struggled with what the first readers of this Epistle strug-

gled with. They were no longer to go to the altar of the temple of apostate Judaism and worship. Their kids were no longer to do so. They were to go to Christ outside the camp. There they would find the altar they must now use for their sacrifices.

The term, “sacrifice of praise” in v. 15, would have reminded the Hebrew Christian of the thank-offering of Leviticus 7. Those had been very special times. They still were for many of their family members who did not understand why these believers would not go back to the temple worship and ceremonies.

So it is in this context that Luke wants his fellow believers in Palestine to understand that we do not have to go back to those ceremonies. We have a sacrifice of praise that is far better now. I want us to see 3 things about our sacrifice of praise this morning.

I. Our sacrifice of praise is always possible through Christ (v. 15, “By Him, therefore, . . . continually”).

Ill: On Wednesday, February 5, 2014, 13,000 people stood in heavy rain in St. Peter’s Square in Rome to hear a message from Pope Francis. The pope was 25 minutes late getting started that morning as the crowd stood there in the rain. *The Catholic Herald* reported this about what he said, “It’s so important to go to Mass every Sunday because that’s where people receive Christ who saves, forgives and unites everyone to his father, church and each other, Pope Francis said. It’s also ‘important that children are well prepared for first Communion because . . . after baptism and confirmation it is the first step toward belonging strongly, really strongly, to Jesus Christ,’ . . . The Pope continued a series of talks on the sacraments of Christian initiation, focusing on the Eu-

charist as the source and summit of the life of the church. 'In fact, every authentic journey of faith, communion and witness springs from this sacrament of love,' he said" [<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2014/02/06/mass-every-sunday-is-so-important-says-pope/>].

Appl: First-century apostate Judaism would have been critical of a Hebrew believer in Christ for not participating in the thank-offering ceremony. But he would have done so, in part, because he no longer understood the true meaning of the ordinance. Even in the Old Testament, the Word of God is clear that it is not the outward ceremony that is the sacrifice of praise. Ps. 50:12-15, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

In the same way, our text tells us that our sacrifice of praise is not through a ceremony, but through Christ. There is great emphasis on that phrase in the grammar of v. 15. **It is not that we need a sacrifice to get to Christ, but rather that we need Christ to get our sacrifice of praise to God.**

And this we can do continually. The idea of *continually* here is *at every time* or *in every circumstance*. In sickness and in health, when richer or when poorer, whether young or old, on the Lord's Day at church or on our days at home throughout the week, we can offer acceptable sacrifices of praise through Christ. And each such offering is heard in a way the pope and all his ceremonies are not.

So do we worship? Do you have your quiet time with your Bible and on your knees? Does your family enjoy a time together before the Lord? Have you come together this morning as the church ready to offer a sacrifice of praise to God through Christ alone? If not, *let us*, says the Word of the Lord. This is command we will never regret obeying.

II. Our sacrifice of praise is a fruit of a true confession (v. 15).

III: When I was a boy, my Dad planted a lot of different fruit trees in our back yard. When he did I could not tell a plumb tree from a peach tree. They all looked about the same to me until they bore their fruit. A peach tree, it turns out, yields peaches. A plumb tree does not.

Appl: Our passage tells us that our sacrifice of praise will be a fruit of a true confession. The word translated *giving thanks* simply means *to make a confession*. I think it is translated as it is because the KJV translators understood the thank-offering context. Giving thanks in the name of the Lord is certainly one sacrifice that is the fruit of a true confession. We should be a thankful people, and if we are a complaining people, the fruit of our lips is certainly indistinguishable from an unbeliever.

But the point of the verse seems to be that a real desire to worship God with the sacrifice of praise is an important evidence that the heart behind the lips has made a true confession of faith in the name of Christ. Some say they love the Lord, but then they neglect worship personally, in the home, and with His church. That is not the fruit of a true confession of faith in Christ's name.

Hos. 14:1-3 speaks of the right fruit of the lips of one who is truly saved, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for

thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.”

Have you a true confession of faith in Christ’s name? Is the sacrifice of your praise the fruit of your lips demonstrating this to be the case? If not, you may have a false profession. If you have no sacrifice of praise, you may yet need the Lord to save you from your sin.

III. Our sacrifice of praise will include sacrifices (v. 16).

Ill: As Baptists our meeting place is certainly less ornate than St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Our pianos are prominent pieces of furniture, but we need those for our singing. The pulpit is pretty prominent, and Protestants have always made it so out of respect for the preaching and hearing of the Word of God as central to our worship. But then there are really only two other pieces of furniture – the table we use for the Lord’s Table, and the cross that hangs on the wall behind me. When we enter our sanctuary, it is my hope not that these things would impress us with their pomp and artistry. Rather, I think it would be helpful if we used these things to remind us each week what being a Christian really is all about. It is about the glory of a cross. It is about a broken body and shed blood for our sins. Christianity is about sacrifice, because it is about Christ.

Appl: Our text mentions the sacrifice of material or financial generosity in response to the needs of people who have less than we do. *Communicate* here means *share*, and the vocabulary of generosity used in this verse is also used in Gal.

6:6-9, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Why be generous with our material possessions? Well, because God gave us all we have, and He is not mocked. He expects us to be generous, and He will allow us to reap corruption if we are not. If we are generous, we are told we will reap life everlasting. It is not that we also will be blessed financially. That is not the promise here. The promise is that we will have treasure in heaven, where moth and rust does not corrupt, and where thieves do not break in or steal (no property tax in heaven).

Or, to answer the question from Hebrews this morning, "Be generous with the needy because with such sacrifices God is well-pleased." That generosity is an act of faith, not of sight. You will not see the benefit; you will have to believe in the benefit. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Do you believe that? Do you believe that enough to offer the sacrifices that this verse tells us please God? Chapter 11 told us that Enoch "had this testimony, that he pleased God" (11:5). Is that our testimony? Be not deceived, with such sacrifices the God who is not mocked is well-pleased.

Conclusion: We are going to respond to what we have heard from God's Word this morning with help from a hymn written on the first anniversary of the conversion of

its author, Charles Wesley: "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing." It was a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of the lips of a true confession of faith that this man had experienced only a year prior. It is wonderful how this young believer was able to offer such a sacrifice with such tremendous understanding of why God is praiseworthy. Our hymnal will have us sing only 5 verses of this song. Wesley's original sacrifice of praise had 19 verses. Thought I might read the missing 14 as we close this morning.

He speaks, and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

In Christ your Head, you then shall
know,
Shall feel your sins forgiven;
Anticipate your heaven below,
And own that love is heaven.

Glory to God, and praise and love
Be ever, ever given,
By saints below and saints above,
The church in earth and heaven.

On this glad day the glorious Sun
Of Righteousness arose;
On my benighted soul He shone
And filled it with repose.

Sudden expired the legal strife,
'Twas then I ceased to grieve;
My second, real, living life
I then began to live.

Then with my heart I first believed,
Believed with faith divine,
Power with the Holy Ghost received
To call the Savior mine.

I felt my Lord's atoning blood
Close to my soul applied;
Me, me He loved, the Son of God,

For me, for me He died!

I found and owned His promise true,
Ascertained of my part,
My pardon passed in heaven I knew
When written on my heart.

Look unto Him, ye nations, own
Your God, ye fallen race;
Look, and be saved through faith
alone,
Be justified by grace.

See all your sins on Jesus laid:
The Lamb of God was slain,
His soul was once an offering made
For every soul of man.

Awake from guilty nature's sleep,
And Christ shall give you light,
Cast all your sins into the deep,
And wash the Æthiop white.

Harlots and publicans and thieves
In holy triumph join!
Saved is the sinner that believes
From crimes as great as mine.

Murderers and all ye hellish crew
In holy triumph join!
Believe the Savior died for you;
For me the Savior died.

With me, your chief, ye then shall know,
Shall feel your sins forgiven;
Anticipate your heaven below,
And own that love is heaven.

Is this your sacrifice of praise through Him who loved you
so?

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching