

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Sacrifice” from the “Called Together” sermon series

Scripture: Romans 12:1-3

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of Romans, we are exploring the idea of being a living sacrifice to God.
- Verse 1 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” Here, Paul uses language of the altar to signify that our sacrifice to God is a spiritual act of worship.
- Verse 2 says, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”
- The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Philosophers wanted hearers to base all decisions on reason; Paul adds an eschatological (end times) perspective.” This perspective allows us to consider ourselves as citizens of the coming new world, and what it takes to get there. This involves the renewing of our minds and being able to discern God’s will...what is good and pleasing.
- Verse 3 says, “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.”
- Here, the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible says, “Many philosophers urged a sound view of oneself based on one’s role in the larger universe; Paul urges believers to consider their roles in Christ’s body.”

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- We have been exploring our common call as a faith community: (1) to worship; (2) to spiritual formation; (3) to be ambassadors of reconciliation (restored harmony); and (4) to *sacrifice* (offering or service).
- A sacrifice is something that you give of great value so that something of greater value can be realized.
- In Romans 12, the apostle urges believers to be generous in their lifestyle. His appeal is the mercy of God (not in his pastoral authority). In other words, because of Christ's great love for us, it is reasonable for us to follow in kind!
- Consider the analogy of the "sacrifice" play in baseball. This is where the batter is called on to "bunt" the ball when up to bat, to advance the runner. It is essentially the batter giving themselves up to help advance another player.
- In a similar way, the apostle Paul is best remembered for being willing to give himself up in order to advance somebody else! In today's reading, he is exhorting the church to be a "living sacrifice."
- A sacrifice always involved a death of something (lamb, goat, calf, etc.) in order to experience forgiveness. By Paul's day, a sacrifice like this was no longer necessary because of the sacrifice of Christ for us. He was the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Christ's sacrifice is accessible to us in a new way.
- "...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." In the Greek perspective, the body was secondary to the soul and spirit. However, as children of God, we do not divide the body from the soul.
- Faith is more than just "head knowledge", we are also called to love God with our strength. We should regard our body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19).
- Your body is not a jailhouse, it is a temple that houses the Spirit of God! Every fiber of your being is a living sacrifice to God!
- When we take marriage vows, we are no longer our own and two become one. Similarly in baptism, when we profess our faith in Christ we are bound together and no longer our own. This is why we refer to the church as the Body of Christ. Each and every one of us have a unique and special gift to share!
- "Sacrifice isn't so much us giving to God, it is us taking our hands off of what already belongs to God and giving it back." -Walter Knight

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- Describe the kind of sacrifice Paul urges us to make. What are the characteristics of this sacrifice and how can we do this?
- What is the purpose of the transformation by the renewing of our minds?
- How would you describe the pressures put upon a someone to conform to the world? How does the inward transformation of a believer change this?
- How can we know the will of God?
- What is the significance of being in the Body of Christ as a church?
- What is the difference between a donation, or giving up something, and a *sacrifice*?

