

Keynotes from Steven Driver's am Sermon on 17/10/2021

Text: Leviticus 3 verses 1 – 17

Title: - "A meal with God!"

Scripture references from the ESV

Leviticus 3 "If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers an animal from the herd, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD. ² And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar. ³ And from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as a food offering to the LORD, he shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, ⁴ and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. ⁵ Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering, which is on the wood on the fire; it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. ⁶ "If his offering for a sacrifice of peace offering to the LORD is an animal from the flock, male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. ⁷ If he offers a lamb for his offering, then he shall offer it before the LORD, ⁸ lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it in front of the tent of meeting; and Aaron's sons shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. ⁹ Then from the sacrifice of the peace offering he shall offer as a food offering to the LORD its fat; he shall remove the whole fat tail, cut off close to the backbone, and the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails ¹⁰ and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. ¹¹ And the priest shall burn it on the altar as a food offering to the LORD. ¹² "If his offering is a goat, then he shall offer it before the LORD ¹³ and lay his hand on its head and kill it in front of the tent of meeting, and the sons of Aaron shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. ¹⁴ Then he shall offer from it, as his offering for a food offering to the LORD, the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails ¹⁵ and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. ¹⁶ And the priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering with a pleasing aroma. All fat is the LORD's. ¹⁷ It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that you eat neither fat nor blood."

When we come to Communion, many of us are unsure why Jesus chose a meal as the way for us to remember his sacrifice on the cross. We are aware that Jesus said this was how we are to remember that he paid the price for our sin by dying for us, but why do

we need these physical symbols laid out in front of us? It can feel overly religious and a little detached from God.

Communion is not the only thing that can make us feel that way – reading certain books of the Bible can have that effect too and Leviticus is probably one of those! Leviticus is the book of the Law and tells us what sacrifices Israel had to make, and the festivals they enjoyed. It's not easily digestible and you may wonder how it fits into our Christian lives today. It can feel overly religious and a little detached from God, but when you dig a little deeper you don't find that at all. Leviticus points us towards the most intimate, relatable and truest expressions of the life with God that we have now, gained in its fullest extent through Jesus.

- The peace offering is simply about having a meal, but it is an extraordinary and joyous meal – a meal with God himself.

This sacrifice was slightly different to all the others, though they all have their own special role and point to Jesus.

- Here, we find God in all his majesty inviting the priest and the common Israelite to share a meal with him.

This meal reveals so much about our God and how he relates to us, but here are just three of the things that happen.

1. It is a meal where God shows us who he is

When you have a meal with someone, you can't help but learn something about the person who invited you. You see their family pictures, the books in their bookcase, and as you talk, you find out things about them that you wouldn't do in a more formal setting. Each time you go, you feel more relaxed and get to know more about the person who invited you. The same thing happens when we have a meal with God.

Through having a meal with them, God is teaching his people about himself.

The tabernacle (God's dwelling place) was the place where God and his people could meet, and was designed to teach God's people about him. There were three sections, including the courtyard where this sacrifice took place.

- a) At its heart was the **Most Holy Place**, filled with the cloud that symbolized God's presence. It also contained the ark of the covenant, which held the stone tablets

with the ten commandments. Only the High Priest could ever enter this room, and only once a year on the day of atonement after numerous cleansing rituals.

- b) The next section (separated from the first by a thick curtain with cherubim woven into it) was the **Holy Place**. Only priests were allowed in this room, which had a lampstand, the incense altar (in line with the entrance to the Most Holy Place) and a table with bread from each tribe on it.
- c) Outside was the **courtyard** which was accessible to most people, and where the sacrifices were made on the bronze altar.

In this design, God was teaching his chosen redeemed people that he still has to be separate, even from them. God is holy and just, and he is perfection. In his perfection, he made the perfect creation and he holds it all together. He loves his creation, and wants to dwell with us, but there is a problem, and we are that problem.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Ever since Adam, sin has corrupted the world and us. We think we can lead our own lives and so reject God. In his perfection, God cannot come near us, and when the God who creates and sustains life separates himself from us, the only outcome is death.

- Coming to the meal that is the peace offering, the Israelites would be reminded of that tragedy just by looking around them.

When we come to our meal with God, we also need to:

- recognise the God we are having a meal with, and our own history
- admit to ourselves where we have fallen short – what is our part in this
- the just separation from God and the consequence of that, which is what we deserve

2. It is a meal where God provides everything

Generally, when you go to someone's house for a meal, the host provides and cooks the food. God commanded the people to come to his house to have this peace offering meal. However, he also commanded them to bring their best animal and said that the priest was to cook it! It seems that God is inviting people to his house for a meal where they must provide the livestock to be eaten and also cook the food. To understand this, we need to remember that the Israelites depended on farming for their food, and it was

largely what they all worked at. A good harvest and healthy livestock depended largely on the weather, which comes from God's hand, no matter what the Israelites did.

- The peace offering is partly a reminder that God is sovereign, and in the end provides everything for his people's physical needs

This offering also echoes the burnt offering (**Leviticus 1** see p4) which deals directly with sin. Both offerings include the same animals. God provided the animal and it was without blemish or defect so would have been known to the family. Both offerings have a moment before the animal is put on the altar where the person offering their best sacrifice puts his hands on the head of the animal.

- In the burnt offering, this signifies the animal becoming a substitute and dying in the place of that person, symbolically taking their punishment for sin. Every part of the animal is burnt up, transformed into smoke.
- In the peace offering, they gave what were considered to be the best parts of the animal to God, then the priests would eat the breast and the right thigh, and the family who brought the animal would eat the rest.

The peace offering was not a means to gain peace with God.

The peace offering is a meal to celebrate having peace with God.

God is showing that not only does he provide for our physical needs, he also provides for our deepest spiritual need. **That need is for our sin to be paid for and for us to be made holy,**

to be at peace and have everlasting joy with God for eternity.

The burnt offering did not actually do the work that was needed. It was just a shadow because it is impossible for animals to take away our sin (**Hebrews 10:1** see p4). In the moment after the animal was sacrificed, people could sin again and that sacrificial death would have been wasted.

**We cannot be granted peace with God because of an animal's death
but we can be granted peace with God because of Jesus' death.**

God himself provided, in himself, the perfect eternal sacrifice for sin, dying on the cross on our behalf. (**Hebrews 10:10** see p4). As Jesus was raised from the dead, we can

know that we will be raised with him. When we have our meal with God (Communion) we are reminded of that once for all sacrifice in this true peace offering.

- We don't deserve and cannot bring anything to the table, but that is testament to the love God has for us.

It should bring us to our knees as we understand the cost of our sin, but it should also cause us to shout with joy.

3. It is a meal where God wants to celebrate with us

The peace offering was not primarily designed to be a reminder of the burnt offering. Though it was only a shadow of what we have in Jesus, it was primarily designed to celebrate and enjoy what the sacrifice achieved – communion with God.

In the parable of the lost son (**Luke 15:11-24** see p4), we see the son coming back to his father with his tail between his legs, hoping that his dad might give him a job with the servants. We can be like this, rightly coming to the Communion table with sincere repentance and thankfulness, but the father's reaction to the return of his son (**Luke 15:22-24** see p4) gives us a different perspective. He runs to the son, wrapping him up in his arms, pouring out his love.

Having made a way through Christ for us to come to him, the Father wants to wrap us up in his arms, pouring out his love on us by every means possible. He wants us to realise that he is here, dwelling with us.

- He wants us to come into his house with honour wearing the robe and a signet ring. He is not offering us the leftover crumbs, but wants us to eat the fattened calf and enjoy it with him, in celebration.
- Christ did not die unwillingly. He died so that we can live life to the full in his name through the power of the Spirit right now, in this moment, in this week and for eternity.

We have our meal with God because it reminds us of how distant and separate we were, and how guilty we are. Then we are reminded of how the atonement was really paid – the willing perfect sacrifice for sin, not a shadow but the real deal in Jesus.

It tells us of what we have gained because of Jesus and gives us a taste of the great celebration that we are joining with both in heaven and across the globe today, uniting

us with our brothers and sisters who are doing the same. We are all giving thanks and celebrating what Jesus has done.

Death is done and love has won.

We were lost and now we are found.

God is dwelling with us and celebrating with us.

Every day we need to remember the truth that this meal with God shows us.

Leviticus 1 The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying,
² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.³ "If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. ⁴ He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. ⁵ Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁶ Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, ⁷ and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸ And Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; ⁹ but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering^[a] with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.¹⁰ "If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, ¹¹ and he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. ¹² And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar, ¹³ but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.
¹⁴ "If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. ¹⁵ And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He shall remove its crop with its contents^[b] and cast it beside the altar on the east side, in the place for ashes. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely. And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Hebrews 10:1 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

Hebrews 10:10 we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Luke 15:11-24 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to ^[b] one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ^[c] ²² But the father said to his servants, ^[d] 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.