

Theme : Delight the Father as True Worshippers (2)
Topic : Offerings to God
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SUMMARY OF MESSAGE

John 4:23-24

23Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. 24God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.

There are particular offerings instructed in scriptures. In offerings, the word 'sacrifices' appears. As we have learnt, we come to a service as worshippers. We come to engage and encounter the Lord of the house. We come to worship Him. It is not like attending a concert or watching a football match. In Exodus 23:15, we see that none is to appear before God empty handed.

Exodus 23:15

Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. No-one is to appear before me empty-handed.

Let's recap some fundamental truths:

I. All believers in Christ are called to be priests.

Exodus 19:5-6

5Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

In the Old Testament, the whole nation of Israel was to be a kingdom of priests. It was not a company but a kingdom of priests. In the New Testament, all believers in Christ are called to be God's nation of priests.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.

We are chosen. The word 'holy' means special, set apart. Why? It is so that we may proclaim and exalt Him and celebrate Him. All believers have responsibility to offer gifts and sacrifices.

1 Peter 2:5

you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, the offerings were natural sacrifices that were types and shadows of the reality in Christ. In the New Testament, the offerings are spiritual in nature and involve our whole being - body, soul and spirit.

II. As true worshipper, we make five spiritual offerings in our bodily-natural realm:

1. The offering of ourselves

Romans 12:1 (NIV)

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.

We are a very unique creation – spirit being with soul dwelling in a physical body. As spirit beings, we are aware of demons and angels. As physical beings, we are subjected to the physical laws such as the law of gravity. We are to bring sacrifices with our entire beings - our soul, spirit and body. In Romans 12:1, we are told to bring our bodies. The literal translation for that is our physical bodies. Which aspect of our bodies is referred to?

Let's see Romans 6:13

Romans 6:13

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

The members are the areas in our physical bodies or areas in our lives. There are seven areas:

- A. Our Mind
- B. Our eyes
- C. Our Ears
- D. Our Mouths
- E. Our Hearts
- F. Our Hands
- G. Our Feet

Our behavior stems from what we believe. Every proposition, suggestion or idea is to be kept captive to the will of Christ. We need to guard our mind as to what we finally grasp and digest as it affects our living. Our eyes - what do we see? We see things that are filthy, naked or things that are horrifying. If for some reasons we don't have a choice, we appropriate the Blood to cleanse. We need to watch what comes through our eyes. Our ears - what do we hear? We may need to stop listening to murmurings and complaints. Watch what we hear.

Our mouths - The Psalmist says to set a guard over our mouths. That's a negative aspect. We need also to open our mouths to say and sing and declare His praise. We cannot keep silent. There is a place for silence and solitude but there is a place to raise our voice to God. Our hearts - what's the attitude and posture of our hearts? We know that for people who work in unions, they may be called upon to oppose a matter; reject, make compromises or do some negotiations. They may bring this attitude to the house of God and hence do not submit to the leaders of the church.

Our hands - we need to commit to God the works of our hands. We may be insurance agents, mechanics, taxi drivers, etc but all the same, we need to commit such works to God. Our feet – they are about having direction in life. Do we know where we are going? What's our direction in life?

2. The offering of our time.

Ephesians 5:16-17

... redeeming the time ... Understand the Lord's will ...

To redeem is literally to count our time. Are we living our lives intentionally, randomly or accidentally? Are we living in our 60s, 70s purposefully or do we just allow activities or events to squander our time? Whatever you are doing, do it purposefully - even in our time of relaxation. How we live our lives is going to determine eternity. In Daniel 5:27, Belshazzar was found to be lightweight and wanting and in less than 24 hours, his kingdom was taken away. We are going to be weighed. Will we be found wanting? One of the indicators is how we spend our time. It is about how intentional we go about doing things. Are there activities that suck away and cause you to be off course and disorientated?

3. The offering of our substance - money in:

- Tithes - Matthew 23:23; Hebrews 7:8
- Offerings
- Alms

A. Know the difference between bread and seed.

2 Corinthians 9:10

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

Bread is for consumption. It is used and gone. Examples of bread: Money spent for tea-break, rental, bills, transportation, maintenance of parents or allowance for children.

Seed is for sowing.

2 Corinthians 9:10

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

B. Of all (100%) that God has given to us, He only asks His people to pay the tithe.

The tithe is the first 10% of our income and increase of whatever the Lord has given to us. The income we receive may come in the form of: bonuses, salary, inheritance, commission, fees, gains from sale of assets, income, etc.

C. When we tithe, God will sanctify the remaining 90% of what we have received. That He will sanctify means that He will subdue the devourer.

Malachi 3:11

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” says the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 6:20

but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

D. Anything above the tithe is our offering.

We do this by beginning with the tithe and gradually and incrementally going into offering.

E. Look for opportunities to give alms to the relatively poor and the needy beginning with our families, those in BBTC and those who cross our paths.

Galatians 6:10

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

How to give alms to the relatively poor and the needy? Some of the possible ways are:

- ✓ Pay for their transport fees, school fees, uniforms
- ✓ Pay for their utility bills, food
- ✓ Buy an electrical appliance
- ✓ Buy tissue packets sold by the elderly or blind

4. The offering of our good works.

Hebrews 13:16

But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

There is such a thing as the sacrifices of good works. This may be in the realm of alms or free tuition. We need volunteers to serve meals. It is our offering of good works to the Lord and God is well pleased.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

5. The offering of our fruit of sharing the full gospel of God.

Romans 15:16 (NIV)

... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles. He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 4:18

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed ...

Paul is a minister of Christ to the Gentiles. We have the priestly duty to proclaim the gospel to the lost so that they may become the offerings acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. There are many hurting and they can be the ones for us to minister to. Would you bring sight to the spiritually blind? Some of these may be asking why we partake of the Lord's Supper or ask questions about why is there suffering if God is good. Others may want to know how to be delivered from oppression. We have the answers. They are the offerings we can bring to God.

III. As a true worshipper, we make three spiritual offerings in our soul realm:

1. The offering of thanksgiving

Psalms 107:22

Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving and declare His works with rejoicing.

Psalms 116:17

I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving and will call upon the name of the LORD.

The psalmist deliberately used this phrase, 'sacrifices of thanksgiving'. The essence of thanksgiving is gratefulness. Gratefulness is the beginning of wisdom. Ungratefulness is the beginning of foolishness (Romans 1:21). The more we submit to God, the more we are blessed. As in Ephesians 5:20, let's give thanks even when we don't feel like it.

2. The offering of joy

Psalms 27:6

And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

We can all bring the earlier sacrifices fairly easily but the next sacrifice is the most difficult.

David wrote this psalm when he was in the cave, surrounded by his enemies. In spite of that, he was still able to offer the sacrifice of joy.

In Philippians 4:4, Paul called upon his readers to rejoice in the Lord. He said that in the context of the problems he faced. He called upon them to still celebrate and rejoice in the Lord.

3. The offering of praise

Hebrews 13:15

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

IV. As a true worshipper, we make one primary offering in our spirit realm: the offering or the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart.

Psalms 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— these, O God, You will not despise.

Isaiah 66:2b

But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

For some, brokenness is associated with pain, disappointments, rejection. For others, it relates to their personality. For some people with high 'D', they may need to be broken re their strong personality. The ultimate essence of worship is surrender. It is bringing an aspect of the self before God. The self has to be broken. The sacrifice of a broken spirit and contrite heart is to come to God and recognize that in His presence, the "I" in me must die.

Jacob is an example. He was one who connived till he wrestled with the angel and came out with a limp. He said God was in that place. In worship, that's what happens. We are consumed with Him. Isaiah said, "Woe am I." Peter was very sure of himself yet he denied the Lord thrice and that broke him. When our confidence is in ourselves, we are going to slip. In worship, we stand on the same playing field. We don't rely on the clothes we wear, the house we live or the car we drive. Where do we stand? Peter caught nothing till Jesus came and then the catch was near breaking point. Peter realized that this was not natural. The person talking to him was not man but God. Isaiah 57:15 says that God dwells with those who have a contrite and humble spirit.

Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

BOTTOM-LINE

What hinders us from offering freely to the Lord?

1. Pride - Self centredness

2 Timothy 3:1-4

1But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God ...

We are to exercise self-care but to shun selfishness.

1 Chronicles 21:24

Then King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing."

We are to come like David. Israel was under a plague and Onan offered what he had for David to use but David would not use anything that cost him nothing.

2. Not intentional

Psalms 54:6

I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

Let's freely raise our hands; freely clap and volitionally surrender to the Lord.

3. Not consecrated to God

Psalms 50:5 (NIV)

Gather to Me My consecrated ones, who made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.

In Nigeria, the people were so poor they brought the equivalent of fifty cents, one dollar, etc to the altar. Today when we put money into the offering bag, we can do so more than just putting money. We sow seeds.

Deuteronomy 16:16b-17

16 ... they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. 17Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

In summary, we see five sacrifices in the natural; three sacrifices in the soul and 1 sacrifice in the spirit. Each time we come into the presence of God, as the Holy Spirit points to our heart, we bring it to God. There must be transformation. We become people who are more grateful, kinder, less harsh with our words and more forgiving.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does it mean to offer our bodies as living sacrifices?

2. We should not appear before the Lord empty-handed. What are some things you could do so as to make the offering of your time, substance and good works acceptable sacrifices to God?
 - A. Time

 - B. Substance / money

 - C. Good works

3. We need to be grateful people. Is there something you would like to thank God for?

4A. What kind of person do you think is God looking for? What delights Him?

4B. What could be the factors hindering you from experiencing Him deeply?