

Pastor Ben Moreno: Come on, the only natural response when you see the greatness of God and how good God is, is to say, "Thank You, Jesus." Can we just say that together? Thank You, Jesus.

Thank You, Jesus, for all that You've done and all that You are. Can you take a moment just to sit down? I just want to share with you. We felt like it was so appropriate for us to have a weekend to respond to the greatness of God. Yahweh, our God, He is here with us today. Our only response is to worship. We thought it'd be great to have a weekend where we just worship and praise the Lord together. That's what you were created for. God, He chose you so that you could declare the praises of Him. In this season, I just want to take a moment just to share with you what God's been speaking to us as a worship team, as a production team, and ultimately what He's been sharing with our church. The Israelites, when they were ransomed out of slavery, when they were redeemed out of slavery, they crossed the Red Sea.

God was with them. He told them, "Hey, create an Ark. Build an Ark for Me and carry this everywhere that you go." This is the picture of the Ark right here. This is also a picture of our album cover. It's kind of a topical view, God's perspective of the Ark of the Covenant. They would carry it with them. Everywhere that they camped, they would carry this Ark with them. You can see it's the angels; the two angels surrounding the Mercy Seat, bowing down to the Mercy Seat. In the Mercy Seat, there is where God would commune with His people. The blood would be sprinkled over the Mercy Seat. Atonement would be made. There's a scripture that says God's enthroned on the praises of His people. Right here in the middle, we have lines that kind of represent music lines, songs of worship, songs of sacrifice.

Hence, the name Songs of Sacrifice. That's what it is. That's what worship is. It's a sacrifice. It's the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart, the song of my life coming out. That's what worship is. This Ark was the most sacred possession of all of Israel, all of the Old Testament, because it represented the presence of God. Here at Valley Creek, we are passionate about the presence of God. We value the presence of God. As a matter of fact, we would say, just like Moses said, "If the presence of God doesn't go with us, we don't even want to go." That's why you're here this morning. Believe it or not, that's why you are here in this place. You don't want just fun music. You just don't want great coffee in the atriums. You don't want an entertaining message. You want the presence of God. That's why you're here today.

This platform right here, this platform is meant to display the glory of God. That's what it's for. But there's also times whenever we can put other things in the way and we can become a distraction. As we've been evaluating our hearts and kind of what God's been speaking to us over this past season, we've realized that there's been pride on our teams. We've realized that God is calling us back to the heart of worship. We've realized that we want to bring a sacrificial offering to the Lord and He's calling us actually to repentance. I'm sure if you evaluate your heart, that's probably true for you too, where pride and preferences and perfection can come into your life. It can just be in the center of your life.

But, we feel like God's calling us to get back to the center with Him. You see, there's a story in the Bible about David. David was a man after God's own heart. It wasn't because he was perfect. It was because every time that his sin was presented before him, he would quickly repent it. There's two times in the Bible, that we know of, where David really messed up. It kind of gives me hope; because God never left him and he never left God. But there's two times in the Bible when he really messed up and one was with Bathsheba and we hear that story a lot. But, there's another story about whenever David takes a census. A census is essentially where you count your armies. "Look at how big my army is! Look at how powerful I am!" In our version, it would be, "Look at how successful I am! Look at how much money I have! Look at how many followers I have or friends that I have! Look at what I've done and look at what I can do!"

This is pride. It was pride in David's heart. It was pride. And this was so far different from whenever David was fighting the giant Goliath, and he was young and he didn't have anything. He said, "The Lord will go before me. The Lord will fight my battles. The Lord is on my side." Here he is, years later, he has everything. He's saying, "Look at how great I am! Look at what I have!" We all know pride comes before a fall. This pride, in David's heart, almost cost him his entire kingdom. There was a plague that was being swept over all of Israel, over all of his kingdom. An angel of the Lord was about to wipe out all of Jerusalem. Then in God's mercy, He stopped the angel.

It was in that moment when God invited David back to the heart of worship, back to His heart, to place him back at the center of his life. I wonder in this season, are you coming back to the heart of God? As we've been talking about the greatness of God, have you been placing Him back at the center? This was where David repented to the Lord. This is where David was broken before God. God asked David to bring Him a sacrificial offering. He told him this, He told him where to go and what to do. He said, "Where the angel stops, I want you to go there. I want you to sacrifice and I want you to build Me an altar," and told him exactly what to do.

If I had to be honest, this project, what you see right here, this project of Songs of Sacrifice, it's not about the songs that we've written. The songs that we wrote and the production and everything that went into it, it's not about an album. It's about something that God is calling us to, wanting us to come back to the heart of worship, wanting us to repent, and say, "God, I'm placing You back at the center." That's exactly the invitation that God has given us. It's the invitation that God gave David. There was an angel that stopped right at what they said is a threshing floor. What a threshing floor is, is basically a piece of property where they would separate the wheat from the chaff. David went to go to this guy, Araunah's house. He went to go buy all of that. He said, "I want to buy the property. I want to buy everything. I want to sacrifice to the Lord." He told Araunah of this, and he said, "You're the king! I just want to give it to you. Can I just give it to you? Here's a piece of property. Here's the ox, here's the wood. You can have it all."

But, here's the problem. This was not Araunah's offering to give. This was David's offering to give. Then, he says this, "But the king replied to Araunah, 'No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord My God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.'" See, Araunah couldn't offer what God was asking David to offer. Araunah couldn't repent for David's pride. Araunah couldn't give the sacrifice that God was asking him to give. That's what it was. It was a sacrifice. The nature of a sacrifice is, it's actually going to cost you something. You're going to give up something that costs you something. That's what a sacrifice is.

David, he bought the land, he bought the ox, he bought the wood and he gave a sacrifice. It says right in the very next verse, "The Lord heard His prayers, and all of Israel was saved and the plague was stopped." David, he continued to offer sacrifice to the Lord. Not only did he give a small offering that day, he gave his entire life's savings so that they could experience the presence of God. He spent all of his money and all of his treasures to build a temple for the Lord, to house the Ark of the Covenant, to put the presence of the Lord back with the people. For hundreds of years, they continued to worship God and come to this temple all the way until Jesus came. Then, the Spirit was poured out, and now Jesus says, "You are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. My presence lives inside of you."

David gave a sacrifice and gave everything that he had that day for the presence of God to live with him and with his people. My question to you today is, what is God asking you to sacrifice? What's the sacrifice that God's asking you to give? For David, it started with a threshing floor. For you, it may start with what? Is it pride? Is it preferences? Is it perfection? Is it my treasure? Is it my time? Is it that relationship? Is it that worldly dream? What is it that God wants you to sacrifice? It says this in Hebrews, it actually says, "Through Jesus continually offer God a sacrifice of praise." Just like David, I believe God can show you exactly what it is that He wants you to sacrifice.

I believe God can provide that for you as well, and He could show you what to do with it. Here's the question. Are you willing? Are you willing to lay it down, to give it up, to place it on the altar, maybe to never pick it up again? Are you willing to sacrifice to God something that will cost you everything?

Pastor John Stickl: This is how we know what love is. That Jesus Christ laid down His life for us and showed us exactly who God was and what He was like.

See, God is better than you think. God is bigger than you think. Look, look at what He has done; and look, look at who He is. You see, this is church. This is the people of God believing that God is real, and that God is here and that God is good. What He longs for more than anything else is relationship with us. He draws us in by grace and He washes the world off of us.

Sometimes it takes one song and sometimes it takes two songs and sometimes it takes the whole hour to get the world off of us to just be reminded that God is here, and God is real and God is good and that He's better than I think and He's bigger than I think. God, open up my eyes and open up my mind and help me connect with You in my heart. See, I get it; for some of us, it's like, "Man, that was a long hour." Maybe; but maybe it just shows us that our minds are so distracted and our hearts are so churned up, and there's so much going on inside of us that it takes a whole hour for God to finally grab our attention and lift us up beyond all of the circumstances and chaos and situations of our life.

We are a worshipping church. In some seasons, we lean into that more than others, but either way we will never stop declaring that we are passionate about the presence of God because meeting with God is what church actually is. The question is, what is the sacrifice that the Lord is offering, asking you to offer to Him? The sacrifice that costs you something, a next step, pride, finances, maybe just the song of your mouth or the lifting of your hands or the way you use your time during the week. I don't know, but we don't want to be people that give God sacrifices that cost us nothing.

Because He gave us the sacrifice that cost Him everything, and His name was Jesus. This album, Songs of Sacrifice, is available everywhere you do music. It's free. Here's the deal. We don't really care about albums around here. What we care about is worshipping God. These songs are all written. Everything we sang today, plus more is available for you. You can listen. These are the songs of our house, they're the songs of our family. If you're like, "Man, I never listen to this kind of stuff." Let me encourage you. If you've been tracking in the series and we've said the whole point is to just fix our thoughts on Jesus. Well, how do you do that? One of the ways you do that is by listening to songs that talk about Him. Maybe, this week, when you're driving to work, throw this on. Maybe, when you're heading to school, throw this on. Maybe, when you're just kind of in your house, just turn it on and just turn off the news and turn on some Songs of Sacrifice and let it fill your home.

I mean, I walked by this last week when I was studying in my office, my family was getting ready for the day, for school, and their life, and all the things, they had it on in the background. I could just hear the first song, "Holy Spirit, we invite You in," and it was just filling my home. I just had a moment where I thought, "My two kids are getting ready to go to school. My wife is getting ready for her day. I'm working on a message for the church, and you know what's playing in the background, not Fox News or CNN or some booties and dollars music. But, 'Holy Spirit, we invite You in. Holy Spirit, we invite You in.'" Because I got a big life to live, because I got a big God and He's better than I think and He's doing more than I'm aware of. Holy Spirit, I invite You in as I go to carry some hope this week in school, in work, in the places I go every single day. One of the things that we try to do, one of our five main strategies, is just create resources for you to activate your faith during the week.

"Songs of Sacrifice Experience"

September 17, 2023 | Pastor Ben Moreno & Pastor John Stickl

We can create it. We can put it out there. We can set the table for you, but only you decide whether or not you're going to feast. Let me encourage you, take advantage of it. Fill your mind with the goodness of God. Next week, we're going to continue on with our Yahweh series. If you're a student, a young adult, or a parent, we have our VCLA pop-up in the atrium. We have our Valley Creek Leadership Academy, our two-year training program for students where you can earn your associate's degree as a young adult. We have interest meetings coming up. We have parent gatherings coming up, so check that out. For those of you that want to give, you can give at the boxes at the doors as you leave or online. Giving is part of a sacrifice that costs us something. Saying, "God, I don't just invite You into these areas of my life. I invite You to every area of my life, and that includes my finances and that costs me something. I know it's an offering unto you."

But, as you go this week, may you go knowing that God really is good, and that Jesus really has forgiven you, that you really are loved, and that everything really is possible in Jesus' name. We love you. Have a great week.