



Stewardship: Living as God's People in God's World

Lesson 5: Sacrifice & Joy

THE GOSPEL RENEWS THE MARKETPLACE

The gospel renews the marketplace by awakening us to two things. First, all of our work matters to God. So-called "secular" work is as valuable and God-honoring as Christian ministry. Second, God matters to all our work. The gospel enables Christians to work in their vocations both with Christian distinctiveness and excellence, and the result is the culture of the city is transformed from the inside out.

Review

The theme of our first lesson was the kingdom of God. We saw how God is to be worshipped as the Lord and King of all creation. We also looked at how God's kingdom is described in the Bible. It's a realm where peace, justice, and righteousness triumph over conflict, oppression and sin. Finally, we noticed how Jesus described his ministry as ushering in this promised kingdom through his life and death. The second week we studied what it means to be a "steward" in God's kingdom. The third week we focused our lesson on the blessing and challenge of money. And last week we examined the motives that God desires us to have when we give.

Further Informed & Further Involved (15-20 minutes)

Sermon Topic: The Gospel Renews the Marketplace

- What is the most challenging issue you face as a Christian in your occupation? Is there someone you can think of who is having a transforming influence in the marketplace?
- Read or review the text from the sermon. In what way were you most challenged from the sermon?
- What about the gospel compels us to place high significance on the way we do our work?

Further Invested (45-60 minutes)

Two things that don't normally mix are sacrifice and joy. Yet in the story of the Macedonian churches that we looked at last week, Paul tells us that their "overflowing joy" enabled them to give sacrificially ("beyond their ability"). What did they discover that allowed them to find joy in sacrifice?

There is a story in the life of David that give us some answers. In 2 Samuel 24, David had disobeyed God and brought judgment upon Israel. God told him to build an altar on the threshing floor of

2 Samuel 24:18-25

¹⁸On that day Gad went to David and said to him, "Go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite." ¹⁹So David went up, as the LORD had commanded through Gad. ²⁰When Araunah looked and saw the king and his men coming toward him, he went out and bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.

²¹Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?"

"To buy your threshing floor," David answered, "so I can build an altar to the LORD, that the plague on the people may be stopped."

²²Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take whatever pleases him and offer it up. Here are oxen for the burnt offering, and here are threshing sledges and ox yokes for the wood. ²³O king, Araunah gives all this to the king." Araunah also said to him, "May the LORD your God accept you."

²⁴But 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." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them.

²⁵David built an altar to the LORD there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the LORD answered prayer in behalf of the land, and the plague on Israel was stopped.

Matthew 6:28-33

²⁸"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Araunah the Jebusite, so David approached Araunah in order to purchase the property. Instead of driving a hard bargain with David, Araunah offered to give the property to the king, along with everything he would need to build an altar and offer sacrifices. But surprisingly, David refused.

- What was Araunah's motive for his offer to David?
- Why did David refuse Araunah's offer?

From this story, we learn three things about sacrifice. First, *sacrificial giving is rooted in worship*. At the heart of worship is the desire to meaningfully and more fully give ourselves to God. When we worship, we attribute worth to God and we offer to God ourselves and what we have of worth.

Second, we learn that *sacrificial giving costs us something*. It may be one thing to offer a gift that makes a difference to *Advancing the Vision*, but it may be an entirely different thing to give in a way that makes a difference to you. In other words, sacrificial giving is committing ourselves in ways that make a real difference in shaping our lives, our priorities, our calling and our witness.

The third thing we learn is that *when we genuinely honor God with meaningful, worshipful, sacrificial giving, remarkable things—things we have not yet imagined—tend to happen*. In this story, David's immediate prayers of repentance were answered and a plague was averted; but there's actually much more to the story. This threshing floor, where David honored the Lord with his sacrificial gift, not only served as the site of an altar, but it would later become the exact site where the Temple was built under Solomon's reign. An act of sacrifice on David's part literally paved the way for the place where God would dwell among his people.

- Do you think David realized the significance of what he was doing when he did it? Why or why not?
- Are there other lessons about sacrificial giving that you have learned from this story?

Making a sacrifice actually means giving up something of that means a lot to you in order to give to something that means even more to you. It is giving something you care about for the sake of something you love even more. And we find that when we give this way, the surprising result is joy—the joy of making a difference for God, the joy of aligning our hearts with our treasure, the joy of committing our lives to God's kingdom, the joy of being a part of something larger than us, the joy of helping to make miracles—both small and large—happen, the joy of seeing lives changed because of seeds we've planted, the joy of glorifying God.

So sacrificial giving is not "giving until it hurts." It is giving until we discover that true joy comes from seeking first the Kingdom of God.

- For whom or what are you willing to make sacrifices?
- Share ways you have found joy in giving.