



Millville United Methodist Church

The Dove April 2016

Hello Church,

Looking back at all of Holy Week there is quite a lot to reflect on and process. Our church has provided a unique lens to do this with in the Living Last Supper. If you're anything like me, it was both refreshing and powerful to hear the stories of the apostles from their own perspectives. In many matters of faith and biblical history it's easy to lose track of the value and necessity of the human element to it all. I believe that this comes from a true and good intentioned place, which is the fact that our human nature led to sin and brokenness entering the world. More often than not it is our human nature which leads us to the wrong and sin we bring into our own lives. That is very true in so many ways, but there is still the potential for strength and goodness to come from our humanity when we strive to live like Christ. This is illustrated most clearly and wonderfully in the lives of the people the Church is founded on.

Every time I read or hear about the Apostles I remind myself that they were as human as you and I. I started doing this later in my life as a means of holding

things in perspective as I began to take my faith on as my own. All throughout Sunday School I remember seeing the same poster in every room of the Apostles together in a staggered pose looking majestic and like characters out of a legend. Reminding myself that these guys were human beings was an important part of getting a grasp on the reality of the Bible. I still do it as a source of strength and inspiration. In the last week we've all heard how these men, human beings that felt and struggled like the rest of us, answered the call of Christ and used the gifts that they were blessed with to share His message regardless of the cost. They were ridiculed, imprisoned, beaten, and died in some of the worst ways imaginable. There is still mystery in how Jesus Christ endured all of that being fully human and fully divine. The Apostles would have experienced all of that, every moment of it, just as we would! Every stone, every insult, every whip, and every injury they suffered. All they had to lean on and their only strength was their unyielding faith in the risen Christ.

In my opinion, I believe the best way to acknowledge their lives of faith is

to follow their example and honor their sacrifices without mystifying the people themselves. After we ate our Easter supper my family had the TV on for background noise and happened to notice an older movie about the life of Jesus on. Watching the movie brought about mixed emotions because it portrayed the Apostles using the power Christ gave them in the way a magician might cast a spell or when Luke Skywalker would use the Force. The good news and lesson we can take from the Passion of Christ and the lives of His early followers isn't that faith removes us from the brokenness of the world and the trials in life. Christ led them, and leads us, into a life of faithful servanthood that gives us the strength to face what may come and endure not by our strength, but by His will and His Spirit within and around us. I hope and pray the Spirit of God will fill you all up and surround you in new and intimate ways.

Blessings,
Pastor Brad

YOU STILL HAVE TIME!

The next UMW meeting is on Tuesday, April 5, at 10 AM. Please join us in Wesley Hall.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Easter Sunday was my first time to set-up for communion. I forgot to clean up afterwards. Someone did it for me. Thank you. Marie Myers

GIVING IS UP AND DEBT IS DOWN

The finance committee is pleased to report that our total budget receipts for the year are staying slightly ahead of our goals. Through February we were \$83 ahead of our projected needs and the March totals, though not finalized at the time of this letter, are also ahead of the budget. The debt on our mortgage was reduced in March by \$21,506. Our mortgage is now reduced to \$161,670. \$19,246 of that reduction came from cashing in a CD; \$1,511 came from contributions by members specifying mortgage reduction and the balance from our normal monthly payment. Thank you for all your generous contributions; please keep contributing towards debt reduction so that we can get our mortgage paid off as quickly as possible and with as small an interest payment as possible. Don't forget to put your spare change in the jar at the back of the church. Every extra cent helps!

Larry Kaplan

Thank You

I would like to thank everyone who helped with or acted in the Living Last Supper. It was received well, and I have had a great deal of feedback about how much people really loved learning so much about what happened to the apostles. So many never knew how much they gave up and suffered to bring Christianity to the world.

We were blessed to be able to bring this to so many and I am so grateful for having so many wonderful people to work with.

Marianne

Sacrifice Part 1

By Ed Thornton

Read Leviticus 17:1-11.

One could hardly overestimate the significance of the Old Testament sacrificial system for the theology of the Bible. The whole of the Old Testament, every book, points toward the Great Sacrifice that was to come—that of Jesus’ sacrificial giving of His own life on our behalf. Leviticus 17:11 is the Old Testament’s central statement about the significance of blood in the sacrificial system. God, speaking to Moses, declares: “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.”

The dictionary defines sacrifice as the offering up of something precious for a cause or a reason. And making atonement is satisfying someone or something for an offense committed. With these definitions in mind Leviticus 17:11 can be understood more clearly now: God said, “I have given it to you (the creature’s life, which is in its blood) to make atonement for yourselves (covering the offense you have committed against Me).” In other words, those who are covered by the blood sacrifice are set free from the consequences of sin.

It’s easy to lose sight of the focus of the Book of Leviticus reading about all the tedious details concerning sacrifices and offerings. The central sacrifice and

offering was the shedding of animal blood. The offering of innocent animal blood was atonement for one’s sins. The sacrificial system taught the necessity of dealing with sin. The sacrifices and offerings were brought by the people as a physical expression of their inward devotion.

Of course, the Israelites did not know of Jesus per se, or how He would die on their behalf and then rise again, but they did believe God would be sending them a Savior. All of the many, many blood sacrifices seen throughout the Old Testament were foreshadowing the true, once-for-all-time sacrifice to come so that the Israelites would never forget that, without the blood, there is no forgiveness. This shedding of blood is an act of substitution. Therefore, the last clause of Leviticus 17:11 could be read either “the blood ‘makes atonement’ at the cost of the life” (the animal’s life) or “makes atonement in the place of the life” (the sinner’s life, with Jesus Christ being the One giving life through His shed blood).

We live in a society that doesn’t see much shedding of animal blood. We see a lot of blood, human blood, on TV in association with entertainment. Why all this focus on blood in the book of Leviticus? There are two reasons Leviticus emphasizes blood sacrifice.

First blood is a reminder that we are sinful. Animal sacrifices were used as a way to cover the sins of the people of Israel. They felt the sacrificial system was necessary because they were a sinful

people. Think about it: they pass through the Red Sea, parted by the power of God, and the people said, it would be better for them to be back to Egypt. Moses goes up to the mountain and sees God. When he came back down the people had told Aaron to make them an idol to worship. Remember we are no better than our Israelite ancestors. We are a sinful people who need the cleansing and forgiveness of God.

So the blood sacrifices in the Old Testament were a reminder to the people that they were sinful and atone for their sins. Atoning may they pure and holy in the eyes of God. That was the reason we find in the middle of Leviticus all the laws of cleanness and purification, all the dietary restrictions -- to remind the people of Israel that God is holy. Yes, there were also health and hygiene issues involved whereby God was protecting the Israelites. But it also showed the need to be pure. The Israelites purified themselves through the sacrificial system.

Second blood is a reminder that sin is costly. Why animal sacrifice? From the beginning in the Garden of Eden with the first sin of Adam & Eve, we see God clothing their nakedness with the skins of animals. Animals gave their lives to provide the clothing for Adam and Eve. As we look in Leviticus to these sacrifices, we see that it cost the Israelites something whenever they sinned. If you had a problem, let's say with a quick temper, each time you blew up at someone you

would end up paying for it with the sacrifice of a lamb.

Think if here in our church we collected fines. Everyone showed up on Sunday morning and paid set fines: \$25 for each time you cussed, \$50 times for each time you lied, \$75 when you display greed, \$100 for each time you acted proudly. This would probably do a great deal to help us remember sin is very costly in our lives. But an animal sacrifice could not take away human sins permanently. For this reason the same sacrifices were repeated endlessly year after year. They were only temporary fixes. That was the nature of sacrifice under the Old Covenant.

A New Covenant was spelled out in the Gospel. In that New Covenant we find a different kind of sacrifice, a permanent solution to human sin. This New Covenant brought the perfect sacrifice. And that brings me the final remainder about blood. Next month we'll look what the New Testament says about sacrifice. Hebrews 9:11-18 confirms the symbolism of blood as life and applies Leviticus 17:11 to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 12 states clearly that the Old Testament blood sacrifices were temporary and only atoned for sin partially and for a short time, hence the need to repeat the sacrifices yearly. But when Christ entered the Most Holy Place, He did so to offer His own blood once for all time, making future sacrifices unnecessary. This is what Jesus meant by His dying words on the cross: "It is finished" in John 19:30. Never again

would the blood of bulls and goats cleanse men from their sin. Next month we see what the New Testament says about sacrifice.

Why all the blood? The sacrifice of blood: Reminds us that we are sinful. The sacrifice of blood: Reminds us that sin is costly.

Why Nobody Wants To Come To Church Anymore Part 4

A Synopsis By Ed Thornton

Chapter 6: Practical Way To Love With Radical Hospitality

This chapter offers some proven, practical ways to make Radical Hospitality work in church ministry.

Embrace The Power Of Environment

Most underestimate the power of our surroundings. Much of the authors' work to ensure Radical Hospitality was done before anyone says a word. People soak in their surroundings, it create feelings. Churches have developed "cool places" to hang out, built for mingling. Now they need to allow these special places to be a physical center of real ministry, not just "cool places" to hang out. Need a shrewd understanding how the atmosphere in which we hope faith will grow.

Understand The Power Of Language

Get rid of churchy jargon. Christians use "code words" and most unchurched people have no idea what they mean. It makes them feel like outsiders. Carefully choose words that help you communicate. Remember isn't about sounding academic or profoundly knowledgeable. It is about doing your part to build a relationship.

Take Time For "Befriending"

Acknowledge the importance of befriending in building trust and rapport. Relationships don't just happen. Also not count on technology to do the work for you. Friending someone on Face Book is not real "befriending." Make personal relationship building a priority every people gather.

Remember Friends And Family Bring Friends And Family

If you want to demonstrate true Radical Hospitality chuck your "marketing plan" out the window. Mass media is the opposite of personal. Faith grows through relationships, not clever slogans or ads.

Understand The Power Of Names

All people, no matter what their, like to hear their name. Help people learn each other's names.

Get Better Acquainted Through Personal Story Telling

The authors used having people tell a personal story about something, "Tell

about a time...” Whatever the topic, find ways to ask people to tell about their lives. The beauty of this is people can choose what to share at whatever level they feel comfortable.

Set The Tone

If you want other to open up and be vulnerable, set the example. Church leaders are the model for others. When you ask others to “tell about a time, you should go first. This helps people understand expectations and open to sharing their own stories.

Eat Together

For years we’ve joked about church potlucks, Sunday morning coffee and donuts, teen pizza, and Vacation Bible School snacks. Gallup research revealed that church attendees who shared meals together experience higher church satisfaction. By sharing food, you can break down social barriers to create common experiences that “for a new society.”

Don’t Underestimate The Power Of A Smile

Not only does a smile convey warmth and the beginning of Radical Hospitality, it also makes you feel better. People respond positively to warm gestures.

Be Patient

In this age of “instant” everything remember that Radical Hospitality takes time. Be will to invest in relationships for the long haul.

The bottom line of Radical Hospitality: Be a friend. Don’t even think about what a church should do. Do what a friend would do.

*Mary! Had a little Lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary went,
The Lamb was sure to go.*

*It followed her to school each day,
T'wasn't even in the rule.
It made the children laugh and play,
To have a Lamb at school.*

*And then the rules all changed one day,
Illegal it became;
To bring the Lamb of God to school,
Or even speak His Name!*

*Every day got worse and worse,
And days turned into years.
Instead of hearing children laugh,
We heard gun shots and tears.*

*What must we do to stop the crime,
That's in our schools today?
Let's let the Lamb come back to school,
And teach our kids to pray!*

