

Knockin' on Heaven's Door

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[0 : 0 0] So we're going to be turning to our Bibles now, and Stephen Ballingle, one of our ministers in training, is going to be opening up Leviticus to us over the next few Sunday evenings.

So we're going to turn this evening to Leviticus chapter 1. But when you get to Leviticus chapter 1, turn back a page, because we're going to read in from the very last paragraph of Exodus.

So first, for a bit of context, Exodus chapter 40 from verse 34, and then we'll turn to Leviticus chapter 1.

So Exodus 40, beginning at verse 34. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.

[1 : 1 5] But if a cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

The Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, 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.

If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a meal without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the Lord.

He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make attunement for him. 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.

Then he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into pieces. And the sons of Aaron, the priest, shall put fire on the altar, and arrange wood on the fire. 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.

[2 : 4 1] 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, with a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a meal without blemish. 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. 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.

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.

If his offering to the Lord is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtle doves or pigeons. And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar.

[3 : 44] Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. However, he shall remove its crop with its contents and cast it beside the altar on the east side in the place for ashes. 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.

Amen. This is God's words. I'm going to return to it shortly. Good evening all.

We're going to be digging into Leviticus this evening, so please do have chapter one open in front of you as you work through this together. So what on earth are we getting into with Leviticus?

About five years ago when I started thinking about this and was preparing my first talk on it back then, I overheard a conversation where one person said, a friend of mine said, and I quote, the last thing I would want to hear is a sermon series on Leviticus.

[4 : 52] Can you imagine how boring that would be? So perhaps I should start by apologizing for inflicting this upon you. But we all kind of understand where he's coming from, don't we?

We know it's part of the Bible, but man, it's weird. As soon as you enter, it's all tents, priests, blood, bulls, tearing animals limb from limb and burning them up. That's just chapter one, and it only gets weirder and weirder from then on in.

We've not even heard about the leprosy laws, the moldy houses, the long lobes of the liver, the warping with the cloven hoof, the tooth for a tooth, the priestess, the feast of booths. It's just plain weird.

And I haven't even mentioned anything about the goat demons yet. And not only is it weird, but we tend to think that Leviticus is both boring and irrelevant.

Maybe like me, you've previously made a New Year's resolution to read through the Bible in a year. And maybe like me, you loved Genesis, the opening pages of God's story and God's world.

[5 : 54] Exodus, one of the most thrilling stories in existence. And then you get to Leviticus. And it's just law and instruction and repetition on top of repetition.

And before you even hit the end of January, you're done. What is this all about and why does it even matter? There's so much going on in this book that feels utterly foreign to us as Christians living on this side of the cross.

And we struggle to see its relevance for Christians living today. So we tend to treat Leviticus like a tech manual. Or like the terms and conditions that you just flick through without any genuine thought of reading it before mindlessly clicking agree at the end.

But can I share something with you? I love Leviticus. I have genuinely enjoyed and found great pleasure in sinking my teeth into this book over several years.

And I hope that you do too. Because Leviticus is not just the book that talks about homosexuality. It's not just the book that contains love your neighbor as yourself and nothing else useful.

[7 : 04] It's not just the book that we look at and say, Jesus did that, isn't that great? And then move on. No, Leviticus is a book which, if we study through this together, will show you just how wonderful and joyous it is to be in fellowship with the Lord your God.

To be at one with him. Because all of these rules, these rituals, these long, complicated descriptions of offerings, feasts and priestly duties, they all have a laser-sharp focus on one thing and one thing only.

Relationship with the Lord. As we approach this together, we'll need to deal with that one big problem we have, that this is all so strange and unfamiliar and foreign to us.

So to fight against that one big problem, we're going to need two keys to understand what's going on before addressing three elephants in the room. So far more exciting than the keys to a new house or a new car, these two keys are the keys to unlocking the book of Leviticus.

So key number one, which is the key to understanding Leviticus. One story in two verses. And our two verses are Leviticus 1.1 and then Numbers 1.1.

[8 : 23] Leviticus follows straight on from Exodus, as you'll have seen from our reading. The Exodus, and particularly the incident with the golden calf, casts a shadow over Leviticus.

Just as the Lord was giving Moses instructions on how to build the place where he would dwell in the midst of his people, the people were fashioning an idol, a golden calf, so that they could worship it instead of worshipping the Lord.

God shows great grace to his people, but there is still fracture there. The people's sin is still painful.

And if you're not familiar with it, then reading Exodus chapter 32 to 34 later would be very useful. If you can flick back to the end of Exodus, together we can see how one of the most thrilling stories known to us ends on quite a sad note, actually.

Reading from verse 34, to 35. So once Moses has built the tabernacle, God's house in the middle of his people, it says, verse 34, then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

[9 : 36] And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

And this should be the climax of the story's Exodus. God's presence dwelling right in the middle of his people. This tent is the wonder of the world, with the creator himself living amongst his people, amongst his creation.

But instead of this being a climax to the story, it's a letdown. A damp squib of an ending. The tent is there, good.

God is there, brilliant. But Moses can't go in. He's outside, knocking on heaven's door, and he cannot enter. Why?

Well, Moses cannot enter precisely because God is there. The whole reason for the tabernacle was for God to dwell in and meet with his people. But their relationship is so fractured and stained with sin that meeting with God can't happen.

[10 : 43] God's people are being kept firmly at arm's length. That's when we come to Leviticus, with Moses standing outside, waiting for God to speak.

Where in one verse one, we read that the Lord called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting. Moses is outside, hearing God's voice loudly boom through the curtain.

But if you were to flick forward to the book of Numbers, you don't need to do it now, but if you read the very first verse there, it says that the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting.

In the tent of meeting. Somehow, Moses is in there with the Lord himself in all of his glory. So that means that something wonderful happens in between those two verses that enables God to meet with his people and that is Leviticus.

Framing the book in these two verses, the first of Leviticus and the first of Numbers, is the first key to help us see what the purpose of this book is. As it shows us how a holy God can live with sinful people.

[11 : 53] God gives his people a way for them to be in relationship with him and maintain that relationship despite their sin. That's key number one. Key number two for navigating Leviticus is the mountain that preaches.

Now, Moses was very careful as he pulled the material together and constructed this so that the structure preaches the message too. Moses has recorded Leviticus as being mountain-shaped, meaning that the high point of the book doesn't come at the end but is smack bang in the middle of the book.

You may have heard of the Hebrew term chiasm. That's what Leviticus is, a chiasm on steroids. And it's a term used to describe how a style of Hebrew writing where instead of the story building towards a natural climax at the end, the focus is all on the center of the book with each pair of verses or chapters on either side mirroring each other so that the focus is always drawn into the center.

I've tried to illustrate that on the screen so we've got a diagram to work through together. So first, we have at the base of our mountain patterns which enable us to approach and appreciate the Lord.

These are offerings in chapters 1-7 at the start of the book which we'll be in tonight and celebrations, feasts in chapters 23-27. Then in chapters 8-10 and 21-22 we have sections about priests, the people set apart to mediate God's presence and his blessings to his people.

[13 : 29] Then, as we get near the top of the mountain we have sections about purity, how people set apart for the Lord are to live in fellowship with him. That's the laws of what is clean and unclean in chapters 11-15 and the personal holiness laws for life in chapters 17-20.

And finally, at the peak of the mountain is chapter 16, the price as there is the day of atonement where all the people are made at one and at peace with God, reconciled to him.

And it stands out on its own as the peak of the book shining out like the beacon on top of a hill working as a gravitational pool, pooling together and making sense of all the different sections.

And atonement means at one make. It's a very relational word and it's making two people or groups who are enemies who are separated at one.

It's bringing them together, reconciling them. And that rams home that the whole book is about being at one with the Lord, being reconciled to him and living in the light of his wonderful life and presence.

[14 : 42] Moses wants us to notice that. He wants our eyes firmly fixed on the peak of the mountain. And each side of the mountain actually has its own focus. The first half of the book is primarily concerned with rituals on how we approach the Lord as people who wish to be in relationship with him.

And the second half of the book, once the day of atonement has happened, once the price has been paid, is focused on appreciating the Lord who you're in fellowship with, who has made you at one with himself.

That's how Moses has deliberately and very carefully constructed Leviticus. And it's helpful to keep in mind as we go through this together to see the laser sharp focus on atonement, on being at one with the Lord, living at one with the Lord of life.

So those are your two keys to Leviticus. One story in two verses and the mountain that preaches. Now, on to these three elephants in the room.

Big questions that I'm sure we'll all have when we read these offerings in Leviticus. Firstly, did the blood of these animals really pay for sins?

[15 : 55] And the short answer is no. Hebrews 10 says this emphatically leaving no room for doubt at all. It says it's impossible for the blood of fools and goats to take away sins.

And surprisingly, Leviticus agrees with that. Leviticus never says that the blood of these animals pays for sins. It's careful about that and we'll see that shortly this evening.

Instead, Leviticus says that these offerings bring us into and maintain relationship with the Lord. The Israelites were forgiven through the atonement that responds to their act of faith in confessing their sin.

But while we say no, these animals didn't pay for sin, we don't want to fall into the trap of thinking that these animal deaths were a charade, they were make-believe, just some spiritual-sounding play-acting that achieved nothing at all.

As the Israelites offered these animals, they were being brought into relationship with the Lord by both anticipating and participating in Christ, even though they didn't fully know what that meant yet.

[17 : 03] They were anticipating and participating in Christ. Because God's salvation doesn't change. Old Testament believers are saved by the blood of Jesus just like you and me.

No human enters into heaven by any means other than the blood of Jesus. God didn't save his people by obedience then but faith now. All people are saved by the phrase Romans uses, the obedience of faith.

Our Old Testament brothers and sisters just saw it from a different vantage point and were given different means of expressing that obedient faith. So as they offered sacrifices, they were anticipating something better coming that would be able to finally pay for their own sin.

One commentator very helpfully illustrates this as like writing a check. As the Israelites offered these sacrifices, they were writing a check that was only cashed in not when the animal died, but when Christ died on the cross.

And as they made these offerings, they were participating in Christ and his sacrifice. They're saved by him in his perfect once-for-all sacrifice. These offerings were simply the means of them showing that faith as they both anticipated Christ's better offering and participated in him through faith.

[18 : 26] Second elephant in the room. How was God dwelling in the tabernacle? Well, God can't live in a temple made by hands, can he? That's what Solomon said in 1 Kings 8 and Stephen quotes it in his speech in Acts 7.

But in Leviticus, he very much appears to do exactly that. He's physically in a tent. Now, it's important to state that God didn't leave heaven to come to earth.

The divine nature of God still existed within the throne room of heaven, but the tabernacle was like his embassy, his means of providing access to himself. If you're not familiar with the tabernacle, then all of the action in the book is surrounding this.

Leviticus is all based around the tabernacle. God set up his permanent residence among the community of Israel by pitching a very grand tent among them. He would live in the middle of his people in a physical tent full of imagery and detail that we don't have time to get into, which made it feel like a royal garden, like Eden.

It had a courtyard outside that served as the location for most of the drama of Leviticus, where all the offerings would be made and the priests would do their work. And this tent, this tabernacle, served as God's throne room on earth.

[19 : 46] It literally means a dwelling place, just a house or a tent. And the idea, as I've said, is quite foreign to most of us, but I think it's helpful to think of it as being like the embassy of heaven on earth.

There aren't many in Glasgow, but there are quite a few embassies or consulates through Edinburgh. You might have seen some of them, usually in the nicer parts of town. And while they might physically be in Edinburgh, in Scotland, they are an outpost of their own country.

While it's situated just off the Royal Mile, legally speaking, the embassy of France is French ground. It might have a Bank of Scotland and a Greggs around the corner, but it's French territory.

French law applies there. They probably have very firm opinions about baguettes and pan-au-chocolat. And if you're looking to get a visa to live in France, you'd go there to get access. The embassy is a copy of the main thing.

And you go there to get access to the country itself. It's not a perfect illustration, but it's helpful in communicating that the main thing is somewhere else, but there is real and meaningful access to the main thing from the embassy.

[20 : 57] The tabernacle is not the throne room of heaven, but it gave real and meaningful access to the Lord who sits on the throne. Final elephant in the room.

How on earth do we apply Leviticus today? And I think this is where a lot of us struggle. We open up this book and see something very different from what we're used to in the Gospels and New Testament letters.

But to apply Leviticus, we just need to use our brains and think about it harder. The line from you today to an ancient Israelite, it's just a bit more complex than from you today to a believer in one of the New Testament churches.

One very helpful way of grouping God's different laws is the threefold division of God's law. You might have heard that before, that God's law in the Old Testament can be split into the civil, ceremonial, and moral law.

Civil meaning all laws of how Israel was to function as a society. Ceremonial, so that means all that happens in the tabernacle or temple, including the food laws. And moral, meaning God's moral commands that never change.

[22 : 02] Now the civil laws don't apply directly to us because we don't live as a Christian state anymore. The ceremonial laws don't apply to us directly because we don't have a temple to go to.

Jesus has fulfilled that in the incarnation. And the moral laws do apply eternally, such as sexual ethics, how you treat outsiders, how you love your Christian community, your honesty and integrity, and many more laws beside it.

While most of these laws don't apply to us in a direct way, we can't just copy and paste them into our lives. We can learn about the God who made them. Each law reveals something of the law giver.

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, including when he made the laws about what seafood you can eat and what to do if you develop a nasty rash. We're not going to have time to get into all the complexities of Levitical law, but I will say this.

There is not one Levitical law that has no relevance in your Christian life. I'll say that again. There is not one Levitical law that has no relevance in your Christian life.

[23 : 16] It might not apply in exactly the same way, most of them won't, but these laws give us a window into the heart of God. They show us what matters to him, what he expects from his people, and how he wants people in relationship with himself to conduct themselves.

The law reveals the law giver, meaning that there's much to learn for those who belong to him, who want to know him better, and who want to reflect his character in their day-to-day lives.

So, I hope that serves as a helpful introduction to Leviticus. It's a difficult, weird, wonderful, and quite majestic book. And my prayer is that as we go through this together, we are all shaped into people who love, love living with the Lord.

Well, with the time we have left, let's dig into those verses we read earlier as we get to grips with the burnt offering. And what we're going to do is look at the ritual itself, then the reason for the ritual, then finally we'll zoom in on the requirement.

And through all this, we're going to be seeing in this offering that the Lord is worthy of costly worship from those who belong to him. So, firstly, let's look at the ritual.

[24 : 36] The burnt, or sometimes called the ascension offering, is the first given by God to his people. And it's like the first step along the path towards being at one with him. It's a voluntary offering.

There isn't a particular occasion for or command to do. And this is one that the Lord assumes his people will want to bring him. After all, he's redeemed them from slavery in Egypt and just forgiven them from their heinous sin as they worshiped a golden calf.

He's provided a way for them to be in relationship with him. So this offering is the gratitude that follows the grace of salvation. If you've got your Bibles open, then you can follow along through the passage.

We'll focus in on the ritual for the bull in verses 1 to 9, as it gives us the most detail of the three animals described in our passage. So verse 2, this offering was for anyone in the congregation of Israel, for any one of them to bring forward something of great value, no matter who they were or what they'd done, to be accepted for atonement.

And if you were this offerer, you would start by verse 3, bringing your best bull, a male without blemish, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to be, end of verse 3, accepted before the Lord.

[25 : 52] And the Hebrew language used there is a little bit vague on whether it's the bull or the offerer being accepted. As the offerer and the animal they bring start to be identified with one another.

The priest would then take a look at your bull to make sure as all as it should be, that it's not got a broken leg or is malnourished or anything like that. It has to be the best you could give without flaw.

Well, the priest was ensuring that this wasn't an animal that you were actually quite glad to be getting rid of. And God was getting her second best. Then, verse 4, and this is significant, you would place your hand on the head of the offering, firmly pressed down on the animal.

And this was to identify with it, to identify yourself with the bull you were sacrificing. As you place your hand on the head of the bull and pushed down, you were saying, this is me.

And this is what I deserve. With the animal now representing you. For this ritual, you'd be looking down at this animal, watching everything that's about to happen by your and the priest's hands, knowing that you should be facing the exact same fate.

[27 : 10] Things start to get messy now. I'm sorry if you're squeamish, but in ancient Israel, you couldn't afford to be. And if you're going to be honest about what your sin deserves, it's necessary. Their worship meant, bring an apron.

Things are going to get bloody here. You would, verse 5, take your knife and slit the throat of the bull. The blood would start to pour, seeping into the ground, and you would watch the life drain out of him, fading away down to its very last twitch, until there is nothing left.

It's an exceptionally raw and vivid picture of what you deserve for your sin. Then continuing in verse 5, the priest would take the blood and throw it against the altar, representing the life that was being taken in your place, offered up for you.

And after the blood had been sprinkled, you would then, verse 6, cut it up, separating it limb from limb. Once that's been done, the priest starts the fire, arranges the wood, and washes the hind legs and entrails.

Verse 9. And he does that to cleanse the animal of any residual fecal matter. One of the first of many reminders in Leviticus that no decay, no impurity of any kind may enter into the Lord's presence or be offered to him in worship.

[28 : 30] Then finally, the priest burns all of it. All of it is burnt up for the Lord in the burnt offering. And once that happens, end of verse 9, a pleasing aroma ascends to the Lord.

That's what happens in the ritual. It's gruesome, but I'm sure that the people in ancient Israel at that time would have had a superb theology of their sin and the judgment it deserved.

You couldn't kill this animal, watch its blood drain out, and be splashed on the sides of the altar, get cut up, and then burn it up without being grateful for the fate that you were saved from and repentant of the sin that made such a fate necessary.

You couldn't underplay the seriousness of your own failure to love your neighbor as yourself when you saw a living, breathing animal die because of your failure to live up to God's commands.

We could all do with a raw and vivid reminder like that sometimes, couldn't we? God also gave the option of doing this ritual with verse 10, a sheep or goat, or verse 14, a bird, specifically a turtle dove or pigeon.

[29 : 44] And the reason for this is simply to accommodate God's spiritual privileges to the economic reality of Israel, to ensure that everyone would have been able to offer up something for the burnt offering.

No one is too poor to offer a gift of devotion to the Lord. And also the manner in which the animals are cut up is slightly different. You might have noticed that.

The bull, sheep, and goats follow a similar pattern, but the birds in verses 14, 17 are slightly different. There's no big theological reason for that. It's just that birds are smaller and more delicate.

They're far more difficult to separate into their component parts. So less is done in that regard. And that's the ritual. That's what happens in the offering. You bring your unblemished animal, you slaughter it, and burn it in its entirety.

Nothing's left over. Now let's think about the reason for this offering. Why was this sacrifice necessary? And a helpful way for us to understand this is by asking two questions.

[30 : 45] Firstly, what does the offerer get out of this? And secondly, what does the Lord get out of this? Well, the offerer receives no tangible benefit.

After all, they bring this huge, expensive, costly animal, and it's all burned up. But, end of verse 3, he receives acceptance, and verse 4, atonement.

The priest, as he performs this ritual, is acting as a peacemaker, making the two parties, God and the offerer, at one. They're being reconciled together. But in what sense is that true?

Well, the day of atonement is the center of the book, as we've already seen, and that is the day for all of Israel to be made at one with him. But our sin is constant, reaching down to the deepest fiber of our being.

It's not just a one-day-a-year thing. That's why the Israelites needed constant reminders that they needed atonement to be at one with the Lord, at peace with him. They didn't have the once-for-all sacrifice yet.

[31 : 53] They needed constant reminders and assurances that, despite their sin, they were still in relationship with the Lord. And that's why the fire for the burnt offering was to be kept aflame all the time, even at night.

Kind of like the Olympic flame. The fire that never goes out. Chapter 6, verse 13 tells us that. It was an instruction for the priest. This fire is never to go out, day or night.

Because we are in constant need of atonement. I sinned yesterday. I sinned today. And if I were a betting man, I'd bet that I'd sin again tomorrow.

Each Israelite, wherever they were in the camp, they would be able to see the smoke of the burnt offering rising, always rising, always sending up a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

And they would know that they needed it every day of their lives. They receive the constant reminder that only the blood of another enables them to be in relationship with the Lord.

[33 : 01] Instead of getting what they deserve, bleeding out on an altar, the offerer is accepted and atoned for. They're communing, they're in fellowship with the Lord of life.

And what does the Lord receive? Well, at the end of verses 9, 13 and 17, we see that this offering is so that you can please the Lord. As the offering has a pleasing aroma going up towards the heavens, towards the Lord.

This offering is an act of devotion to the one who has redeemed you. The burnt offering is a celebration of the love that the Lord has for you and you showing how grateful you are to be joined to him.

He's provided a way for you to be at one with him. He's provided means of acceptance and of approaching himself. And he is genuinely pleased and delighted when his own people offer up themselves and all they have in costly devotion to him.

This offering, for all of its ritual strangeness, has God being in joyous relationship with his people as the beat of the drum through it all. And this book seems a whole lot less foreign when you start to understand that.

[34 : 22] Finally, let's look at the requirement. Now this offering, this act of devotion, is costly. God requires the absolute best for the offering. It's, verse 3, a male without blemish.

And there's to be nothing wrong with this animal in any way. It's to be the perfect specimen, the best of what they had, the prized animals, the fattened calf, the one that they would least like to get rid of.

This offering required great cost to the giver, especially in a farming culture like Israel. Meat was a, it was a privilege. It was something to celebrate over.

And in verse 8, it's a small detail, but the fat is to be burned up too. Throughout Leviticus, in any offering, all of the fat goes to the Lord. God loves the fat.

He says so in chapter 3. And that's because it was the best bit of the animal to eat. The Israelites weren't like us. They didn't cut the fat off the meal and leave it at the side of your plate.

[35 : 21] But it was the best part of the meal. Juicy, full of flavor, and something to look forward to. You can imagine Israelites' kids kind of fighting over who gets the fatty bit of the meat. Throughout the offerings, the Israelites were constantly being reminded that God deserves your best because he is the Lord who has redeemed you from the house of Egypt.

A couple of years back, there was a hugely popular Netflix series called Tidying Up with Marie Kondo. Marie Kondo is a professional tidier, if that's even a thing. And what she does is she goes around people's homes and tells them how to keep a tidy home so they can have a tidy mind and a tidy life.

Ah, I kid thee not. She's bonkers, but people seem to love it. And when it comes to clothes, she makes you lay out every item you own on your bed one by one, and you have to hold each item individually until you sense, somehow, whether it sparks joy or not.

So what you have is fully grown men and women organizing all their clothes on their bed and holding their worn down socks that they picked up from pre-mark three years ago in a bargain bin, earnestly asking themselves, do these socks spark joy for me?

It's mental. Absolute madness. But it caught on and charity shops at the time experienced the Marie Kondo effect with reports that their donation has more than doubled in the couple of months following the show's publication as people had been tidying away and giving in huge numbers after watching it.

[36 : 54] But there's a problem. The charity shops were full of clothes that don't spark joy.

They're joyless, unwanted tat. People are always happy to give what they don't want or what doesn't spark joy for them.

But the Israelites, while they were to give God their best, their absolute best, what was most costly because he more than deserves it, he is worthy of the most costly worship we can offer.

But we know we don't sacrifice animals now. We don't take our animals to the tabernacle and burn them at the altar because we know that this sacrificial system is the shadow and Christ is the substance.

He is our burnt offering, giving us acceptance before God, making atonement by his blood and offering up a pleasing aroma to the Lord so that now we can genuinely bring the Lord joy in our obedience to him.

[37 : 58] But that doesn't mean that we get to do less, that we get to loosen up God's requirements on our lives. Instead of doing less, we are to adopt the language of Hebrews and say, how much more should we want to sacrifice for him?

how much more should we want to devote all we have to him in costly worship? I don't know what sparked joy for you, what each of you holds dear.

It could be your bank balance, your me time, your hobbies, your education, your kids' education. But how much more should we be willing to give God our best how much more should we be willing to give up anything we have even if we prize it, even if we love it, if it means putting a smile on the face of our Heavenly Father.

Because real devotion is costly. Do you know, the thing I find most personally challenging about this passage is just how normal this kind of behavior is expected to be.

There's no specific command of when people should do this. It's just assumed that the Israelites would want to because they've been forgiven much and they would want to show real costly appreciation to the Lord their God.

[39 : 30] What Leviticus 1 is teaching us today is that costly devotion is normal Christianity. Christianity. This chapter invites us to join in with true worship of the living God.

It's the pattern in Leviticus. It's the pattern in the whole Bible story. Think of the sinful woman who pours a whole jar of expensive perfume at the feet of Jesus to show her love for him, sending up a literal pleasing aroma to the Lord.

Or consider the poor widow putting her two pennies into the offering basket, giving all she had out of her poverty as a sign of her devotion to the Lord, bringing joy to her Savior watching on.

Or today, think of the young child putting some of their pocket money into the offering basket. Or the teenager sacrificing their reputation at school to stand firm for Christ in this world.

The worker giving generously to the Lord amidst the pressure of saving every penny they have to get their first house. Or the young parent giving up time with their family so that they can read the Bible with internationals.

[41 : 01] Or the senior saint visiting those who no one else will when they need it most. Costly devotion is normal Christianity.

So when we come across offerings like this, we shouldn't be thinking, I don't have to do this. This isn't relevant for me. Jesus has come. He's done it for me.

That idea is nonsense. Jesus is not our get out of jail free card for actual obedience to the Lord. Instead, we need to search our own hearts and ask ourselves, how much more should I be willing to give up so that I can thank and please my heavenly father who has brought me to himself?

Because of course, our heavenly father gave us what was most costly to him. He gave us his son, a young male without blemish and he held nothing back.

Let's pray together. Our Lord and Father, we thank you that you have provided a way for us to be in relationship with you.

[42 : 28] through your son. We are sorry that so often in our worship of you, we give you the leftovers, that we give you our second best, that we don't serve you as you deserve to be served.

Please help us to thank you for giving us atonement by loving you with our heart, soul, mind and strength and offering up ourselves and everything you've given us in costly devotion, to you alone.

In Jesus' name, Amen.