

Sacrifice

Scripture Reading — Genesis 22:1-19

Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. — John 15:13

Sacrifice has almost disappeared from people's understanding in our Western culture today. Some glimpses of it can be found in war stories, as when a soldier puts himself in harm's way to save the lives of others.

In the ancient world, it was common in many religions to sacrifice an animal for the sake of a person, and even human sacrifice was widespread. We shudder to think of it. Archaeologists have found that young men were buried alive in Irish peat bogs as an offering to the people's gods. And young maidens, in ceremonial dress, were led high into the Andes in South America and left to starve and freeze as an offering to the gods of the mountains.

The worship of God was different. But one day God told Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. This was a test to see if Abraham really trusted God. Along the way Abraham told Isaac, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering." And when the time for sacrifice came, God provided a ram in place of Isaac.

This shocking story points to the ultimate sacrifice God was planning for the future, when he would send his only Son, Jesus, to be born as a descendant of Abraham and to give up his own perfect life to atone for human sin. Jesus, the Lamb of God, laid down his life for us all, showing how deeply God loves us, so that we can have life with God forever.

Prayer

Lord, in this selfish world, where we are often tempted to take advantage of others, we remember Jesus' selfless sacrifice. Thank you for such amazing love! Amen.

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Printed on October 13, 2019

