

Life: Jesus is crucified and raised

July 24, 2013

• *The Bible Studies for Life lesson for August 11 focuses on Mark 15:33-39; 16:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:17-19*

God is holy. We are not. Sin has separated us from him since the first disobedient act in the garden and created an insurmountable chasm. To have a relationship with God, we must be sinless. But humans choose sin time and again. S

o, we are separated from our Creator, our Father. Scripture tells us God is merciful and just. He gives us grace, but at the same time, he brings about justice. God loves his people with a deep, enduring love and provided a way. He set up a system of sacrifice enabling people to experience forgiveness. In this sacrificial system, sin was covered or paid for by the blood of an animal.

The Sin sacrifices

The sin sacrifices took place first in the tabernacle and later the temple. The sinner brought an animal to the sanctuary. He placed his hands on the animal to signify it was being sacrificed on his behalf. Next, he took a knife and slaughtered the animal. After the animal was dead, the priest spread the blood on the altar and then burned or disposed of the remains.

The animal's blood was spilled on behalf of the sinner. The animal's death took the place of the sinner who deserved death. The animal was slain because humans should be put to death for our sins. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death."

This system was harsh, and the acts were gruesome. The temple was filled with blood and the stench of death. But the sacrifices were necessary because of the sin of the people. The terrible act was terribly beautiful as their sins were forgiven.

The cycle of sacrifice and sin continued for years and years. Sin remained a problem, and the sacrifices continued to be necessary to pay the price and provide a way to God. As horrific, gruesome and terrible as the sacrificial system was, over time it became routine.

When worship becomes routine

The sinful people were desperate for a way to connect with the holy God, but their hearts stopped feeling the desperation after the sacrifices became the normal routine. The ache and the need were replaced with regular repetition, and God was not pleased. God wanted more.

After David's terrible choice to sleep with Bathsheba, we hear his repentant cry: "You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise" (Psalm 51:16-17). God wants broken, aching hearts in response to sin.

God loves his people with such a deep, enduring love, he provided yet another way: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). A sacrifice still is necessary to pay the debt of our sin, but this time, the sacrifice is different. Christ's sacrifice was once and for all.

The altar of the cross

The death and resurrection of Jesus was sufficient for the redemption of all humankind throughout all history and future. His death was gruesome, horrific and terrible. His blood was poured out on the altar of the cross, and

his body was broken for you and for me. Just as in the Old Covenant, we must “place our hands on Jesus” to signify he is sacrificed on our behalf.

We must have a relationship with him that begins with our admitting we sin and ends with our surrender to his leadership and authority over our lives. His life and his death are sufficient and necessary to redeem us. His death was terrible and terribly beautiful, because it provided the ultimate way to our Holy God.

As horrific, gruesome and terrible as his death was, we begin to take it for granted, just like the people in the Old Covenant. The cross is necessary for our very life, yet we start to view it as routine. Our hearts that once were desperate for his forgiveness and restoration start to feel numb and go through the motions.

We often come to church, to worship and act as though his gift to us is expected or routine. May we never forget his death is necessary and a gift. May we never forget his sacrifice came at great price. May we never lose the ache for him, and may we never overlook our incredible need for our Savior. Jesus’ death was extreme, heart-wrenching and beautiful. Because of his willingness to walk the road to death, we are able to know real love and real life.