

Last week and history

Last week Sister Emilie spent time taking us back in history. I'm not particularly good at history, nor do I find it interesting to read history or historical documents. Most people who know me would agree that I prefer to rocket ahead like a high speeding train rather than look back and learn something from what others have done or experienced. That is why I appreciate commentaries that put our history into perspective so very much. I get the opportunity to understand what others have done and learn from them without wading through historical texts. It works for me and I'm thankful when someone takes the time to make history come alive as she did last week. The most salient point for me in the commentary was the sacrifice, the suffering that Johann Adam Gruber was willing to endure so that the word of God would be served.

Independence day is coming

Couple this with the fact that in about a week we will celebrate Independence day, a day that represents nothing, if not the willingness to sacrifice, and you will be able to see why the Lord put sacrifice and what it is for the Christian today in my heart. How much does each of us sacrifice? What is it that any of us has given up for God in the last day? Did we choose to eat a cheaper meal so that we could give to his work? Did we relinquish an addiction that kept us from his sight? In the context of understanding that this church was built on sacrifice, that this country was built on sacrifice, and on the understanding that God still expects sacrifice, we will take Jesus's ministry focusing on the final days and determine what types of sacrifice there are and what we have done or must still do to meet the demands that God puts on us to further his work in the world.

Why? Testimony reference

The Testimony puts it this way: Why have you entered into My service? Surely not to sit idly by, living a life of leisure, but to proclaim the Lord's will to His people. It is important to understand that the sacrifice we give is to further God's work on this earth which is clearly defined repeatedly in the Bible as just what the Testimony indicates "to proclaim the Lord's will to His people". Or as Jesus so clearly put it in **Great Commission Matthew 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commended you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age".**

Beginning ministry

That is, in fact, the primary reason that Jesus had a ministry. To proclaim God. This ministry was fraught with sacrifices and provides us examples of the types of sacrifices that we might be asked to make. The first thing that Jesus did when he began his ministry was to leave home. He found and recruited 12 other young men to leave

home over the next months. These young men gave up family and friends, joining a ministry without any history or fame. Imagine what it was like when one couldn't text home that everything was okay, when leaving a family meant that the family may not have enough hands to bring home the money or food needed to survive, when leaving home meant you might never see it again.

Families will be separated

Matthew 10:34-36 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword! For I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A person's enemies will be members of his own family."

Jesus and his disciples and all those who followed him had to give up their dependence on family. I also think back to when Jesus was at the wedding at Cana. Remember the scene. **Wedding at Cana** His mom comes to Jesus and asks him to help out with a little miracle to turn water into wine. He asks her "why do you get me into these things?". Oh, mothers of the congregation doesn't that sound familiar? But she tells the servants to do what he tells them and he does the miracle. His own mother set him on the path. She had to have know that this would be a heartbreaking experience, but God used her to push Jesus into the miracle that started it all. We are asked to do the same. We are asked to sacrifice our families so that we can follow Jesus, or wait is that what Jesus is saying really? Hearts will be broken. Just as we can't make cookies without breaking a few eggs, God's will doesn't happen without breaking a few hearts. The joy comes in knowing that when we and our family members are all working to God's glory then the broken hearts are healed and strengthened. We are able to love each other with renewed love and a love that binds 100 fold over the old love because it is enveloped in God's love.

His recognition-fame fortune power-Pride

The next thing Jesus gave up was his own priorities. He travelled, used his time, and performed miraculous signs as God directed and required. After the crowds were fed they followed him to make him King. Image the appeal of being the King. Having you leadership recognized and your authority put into place. But not for Jesus.

Matthew 6:14-15 tells us that After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world. Jesus knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

God had not indicated that he would be a king in the sense that the people thought he would be a king so he had to remove himself from the situation. Something that most people would love to have was given up because it didn't fit into God's plan. What recognition, what high office, what muckety muck job are we pursuing

or enjoying that interferes with our ability to find God and his purpose? Are we lured by the promise of recognition, fame, power, the ability to direct others? These are all wasted rewards if they are not part of the plan God has for us. The Devil can tempt us so effectively with the adoration of others, the belief we are important. As we read in **Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.** We need to sacrifice our arrogance, belief in self, reliance on self. We need to seek the Lord's favor. Glorifying in the Lord's "job well done my good and faithful servant" rather than the adoration of people.

His Will Testimony reference

Next we sacrifice our will. Where more do we see the dedication to his father than in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed so fervently and wept but remained true in stating "**not my will but thine be done**". He knew the way things were going to go down. His disappointment in his disciples wasn't that they didn't stay awake to **protect him, but that they didn't grasp the importance of the time and stay awake to comfort him, to support what he had to do. Jesus clearly was ready to change** the course at the time that he knelt to pray, but relinquished his will for his father's. We have to do the same. What we want is not the issue. Though we put God before family and friends, though we shun the adoration of man, we can still get caught up in our will and the way we think we should serve the Lord. Listen to our **testimony "Then why is it that so very few among the called have the steadfastness to step forth? What is missing? Could it be that you still cling to idols, your ideas of righteousness and your own perception of hos God is to be served? You still run around aimlessly in your selfishness, start to do this and then that, but accomplish nothing"** Prayer, meditation, quiet reflection, a focus on the inner eye are needed to hear and follow God's will. It doesn't happen when we are rushing from thing to thing. It happens when we are poised to hear.

His being

During his captivity Jesus was robed in purple and presented with a crown of thorns. He lost his identity. No one recognized him anymore as the son of man. Perhaps giving up his will for the father's began this process but suffering at the hands of a merciless and ignorant group of people had to be the ultimate. Especially when with one word he could have taken them out. He tells Pilate very clearly that he would have no power over Jesus unless it had been granted to Pilate by God. We have to be willing to go to that degree of following God. I remember when I was little I was very afraid of the dark, now I'm just a little afraid of the dark. My mom and oma would tell me to pray. So I would pray that God would watch over me and that he would keep me safe. Then we would pray the Lord's Prayer and I got messed up with the Thy will be done part. Sure I would trust in God, but what if his will was for someone to steal in during the night and kill me. Hey, he did at least that much

to Jesus, why not me? Truly we have to be prepared for humiliation and shame at the hands of others when we are ready to do God's will. It could happen to us, it very well will when we follow completely. When we give to that level then it doesn't matter anymore. The taunts and jeering of the crowd becomes so much back ground noise to a soul that is focused on God. God, God, only God. Again from **the Testimony "Blessed be all Children of Grade. No longer need they ask about the world because they live in the Lord and the Lord shall be their defense and protection in all danger."** To be poured out as a drink offering just as Paul so often wrote.

His body

Jesus was beaten and flogged. Clearly physical comfort goes out the door when we sacrifice for God. Our physical comfort cannot be a concern of ours at all. Whatever God brings we have to take it with a prayer. Today many are serving in places where most of us would never even think to lay our heads. People give up food and shelter to help stop the practice of making young boys soldiers in Africa, to dig wells in arid, poverty stricken places in the world, to fight for what is right. How much would we give up.

His life

Finally, Jesus gave up his life to God-so that we could be saved, God wonderful creation. Ultimately, we have to give our lives in giving up our right to ourselves. Our human selves with worldly ways have to die and our God directed selves have to rise out of the trash of that life.

Complain? I think not

We need to think hard on this during the coming week. When we are ready to complain about our jobs, our lack of money, our neighbors, our community, anything-think of the sacrifices that we have not given and those that being given by many throughout the world. Instead of complaining give a huge prayer of thanks no matter what the circumstance. If things are well then thank the Lord he has given you this time on the Mountain if things are bad then thank him for the challenges that allow you to see his path, be on his path, or remain on his path.

And most of all be thankful that when the rubber hit the road, Jesus was able to sacrifice all so that we could live. **Testimony "When they die, they shall be taken up in Grace and glorified through the grace of Christ Jesus for all time and in eternity".**