

A Heart to Sacrifice

by Stewart Ruch

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a heart of sacrifice, modeled by David, which is rooted in humility and an understanding of God's mercy.

Duration: 27:46

Scripture: 1 Chronicles 21:1

Topics: "Sacrifice"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares the journey of their church in raising funds for a building project. They started with a goal of \$7 million and began raising money two years ago. They called their campaign 'reach' because they wanted to worship, be in mission, and serve something greater than themselves. However, they soon realized that the initial purchase of the building was not enough, and they needed more funds to make it suitable for their needs. They hired a firm to appraise the building and determine the additional costs.

Transcript

Father in heaven, would you teach us this morning how to have a heart of sacrifice like David, or how to live a life of costly sacrifice as so many men and so many women throughout the ages have, and yet, Lord, numerous as well are those who have shrunk back from the life of costly sacrifice, even those who follow your Son, Jesus. So would you teach us this morning, from your Word, what it is and how it is that we can live these lives of sacrifice. By the power of God, and not our own energies, we ask this now.

Reveal to us the Word of God, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated.

Just about three years ago, on the first of November, which in the history of the church is the Feast of All Saints Day, I, with about twelve other people, toured this building. It didn't look like this. It looked like the vacated plastics factory that it had been for several decades, and we walked around it and began to dream about the possibility of actually purchasing this building.

The very next day, November 2nd, would be an auction by the Alcoa Corporation, who was the current owner of this building, and they would auction off this building, and we sent a leader representative from Resurrection to that auction, and by God's incredible favor and incredible grace, a \$4-5 million building, as it was appraised on the market, was purchased that day by Church of the Resurrection for \$400,000. And that was the beginning of one small or medium or even large-sized miracle after another to get us to this

point today, November 10th, 2013, where we're just worshiping in here, and it's happening. But after that miracle occurred and we were able to make that initial purchase, it became very clear to those of us, particularly those who are financially minded, that while \$400,000 was a stunning and amazing, miraculous deal, that wasn't enough to actually make this building even baseline possible for us to enter into, much less be the building that we would need for children and offices and worship.

And so we hired a firm, and they came in, and they did what they called an appraisal, and they walked us through all the details of what would it take just to get the envelope clean. They kept saying the envelope clean. This didn't look like an envelope to me, but that was language that they used.

How do you get the roof just right, and how do you make sure that everything's fine vis-à-vis environmental concerns, and all those questions. And that was going to cost us probably a million to a million and a half dollars. And I'm still thinking that's a pretty good deal for a hundred thousand square foot building.

But then they said, now to have the building inhabitable so that you can actually have worship services there and have children and youth and offices and all the kind of work you want to do with a cafe and everything else. Now we're talking far, far North of \$1 million. And they began to use numbers like 8 million or 10 million.

And they began to put question marks up on the whiteboard. Wow. We're an assessment firm and we do this for a living, but we're not exactly sure how much it's really going to cost to make this building happen.

And I went for this incredible sense of this is awesome. And I'm the luckiest, most blessed man in the Western suburbs too. I'm getting extremely nervous because while I knew that even 8 million or 10 million for a hundred thousand square foot building was incredible, that was still \$8 million.

And we offer marked so many zeros, so many zeros behind that number. And we had a late December meeting in 2010 with our best friends and leaders. And one of the most dramatic and for me, anxiety producing meetings I've ever been a part of a resurrection because it was then that we had to decide without really knowing, you know, we did our due diligence, exactly how much this place would cost, whether we would fully move forward, fully invest ourselves.

And I just hit a leadership crisis moment. And before I could pull that trigger, I had to get away for an overnight. I had to go meet with the Lord.

I went to a retreat center and on the way, I just called my brother. Who's also a pastor. It's a gift to have someone you can go heart to heart like that with.

And I just said, man, I am, I am so afraid. I've asked so much of this church already. And I know that if I had a leadership come to this church and we asked them to step into 6 million, 7 million, it would ultimately be \$7 million.

I know they will do everything they can to respond. I don't know if I can bear the responsibility of being the one to ask them to do that. I know what they will do.

I know that there are singles who will empty their savings account. I know there are families that will take money set aside for college, for the children, and they will empty them. I know that there are those who are in their empty nesting days and have a kind of significant, you know, sort of, you know, restrained level of

income, and they will take huge risks with that.

I know resurrection. I know that they will be worldly irresponsible because they want to be so kingdom responsive. What do I do? Do I actually call our people into this moment? I don't know if I can handle this.

I don't know if I'm up for this. I just kind of poured out my heart to my brother and he just listened. And then he just said to me, Stuart, you remember David? You remember David? When he had opportunity to purchase the foundation of what would become the temple, the people of God, the threshing floor of Remember how he said, I will not make an offering that costs me nothing.

Don't ask resurrection to make an offering that costs her nothing. He said, ask her to make an offering that costs her dearly. Ask her to make an offering and a sacrifice that she will never, ever forget.

Isn't that the way of God? Isn't that the way of the Bible? Isn't that how we as Christians are called to live, not just financially, but emotionally and relationally and in our vocations and our work and our lives. He's like, why are you shrinking back at this moment? You should be most confident that you're doing exactly what the scriptures say. And three years later, after that biblical word of wisdom that my brother gave me, that emboldened me and strengthened our leadership team.

And we came to you and we did make that ask. And we said \$7 million and we're going to start raising that money. We're going to make the goal of \$4.5 million to get this incredible process started.

And then two years ago, we began that we called it reach. We called it reach because we want it to be reaching up in worship that as we gave it would be worship. We called it reaching out in mission because as we gave, we wanted it to be mission.

We called it reaching beyond ourselves in service to something greater than ourselves because we want it to be a work of service. Two years now, after that, as we come now to the very end of this process, we're eight Sundays away from completing this two year vision of reach. How thankful I am that Catherine and I sacrifice in such a way that it costs us greatly.

And I'm so thankful that I asked you to sacrifice in a way that costs you greatly. And I'm so thankful for literally the hundreds that have come in the last two years that you still have opportunity. Yes, in this, but beyond this reach opportunity to sacrifice in a way that costs you greatly.

But how do we get a heart like that? How do we come to a heart that sacrifices greatly financially, emotionally, relationally, vocationally? How do you get a heart like that? How do you get a heart like David who said, I will not give an offering that costs me nothing. It's very important. We understand this and we're given a profile.

We're given a teaching about heart like this develops in the story of David and first Chronicles 21. I want to look at that together this morning. This is a heart that is marked by two things.

Especially if you want a heart that can sacrifice in a costly way, you want to live a life of regular sacrifice. It's a heart of humility, of heart, of profound humility. It's a heart that's humbled to the point of being significantly sin sensitive at the heart of humility is a sin sensitivity and understanding of the depth of our sin and the breadth of our sin.

And secondly, it's a heart of hunger that in light of God's great mercy, which is greater than our sin, we have a hunger then to live our lives for God. We have a hunger that more and more of God pour into our lives and less and less of us take up the real estate of our own souls. It's a heart of hunger and it's a heart of humility.

Let's look at the life of David. If you have your Bible on your phone, pull that phone out. If you have your Bible with you, great, because I have to deal with the first part of this passage.

If not, just listen and chat with me closely. You need to look at the first part of chapter 21. The second part of chapter 21 is what's printed in your bulletin.

Okay, we're going to look at the first Chronicles for the next three weeks. So a quick orientation to first Chronicles, which is a very unique book. First Chronicles is a history.

A Chronicle means a story. We're not exactly sure who wrote it. The person that wrote is called the chronicler, the storyteller.

And what you have in here is a story. It's a history, but it's a history that has a theological and spiritual focus. It's a spiritual history.

As a matter of fact, it's a history as, as most history is written to, to cast a vision, to tell the story in this case, to tell the story of God's mighty acts in Israel. And it's told to a very specific audience. Now it's about the life of David around 1000 years before Christ would come to earth about a thousand BC.

But the story is not written at the time of David. It's not written in at the time. It's told like a history.

It's told later. It's probably told and scholars differ on this, but the best guess is around 500 BC, 500 years later than the life of David, 500 years before Christ would come to earth at a time in Israel where there was a temple that would be built by David's son, Solomon father. Kevin will teach on that next week, but at that temple has not been torn down by pagans and all of Israel was moved out of Jerusalem and Israel, and they were exiled into pagan lands in 500.

They have just returned. The temple is in tatters. There's hardly even walls around it.

They have nothing of what they used to have. This story is being told to those who have so little and yet want to see the glory of God returned to Israel. The story is told for those who need more, who are looking to God for more.

And the story of David is told in that light. It's a history, but it's a spiritual history. Let's look at David.

What we see is the heart of humility. The first eight verses of this passage will show us the heart of humility in David. We read that David begins by going to his general saying, I want to take a census.

I want to number particularly all the soldiers of Israel. Now Israel taking censuses before this had not been anything that had just pleased God before to take a census intrinsically was not a wrong thing, but David wants to take this census and we begin to realize as we read it that something's not right with this census. The way we realize that is his key general and extraordinarily courageous and brave, albeit complicated man in Joab says basically, why would you take a census? Verse three, may the Lord add to his people a hundred times as many as they are.

Why do you need to count? God got the numbers in control. God will give us more if we need more. Why? He says, David, should you require this? This will be a cause of guilt for all of Israel.

But David's desire prevailed. It says in verse four and Joab goes and he numbers the fighting men, nearly 1.5 million fighting men who draw the sword in Israel and Judah and the nation. But the king's command, it says in verse six was abhorrent to Joab.

Okay. This is, this is fascinating from lots of levels. First of all, we have a literary device going on here as a reader.

We don't understand exactly what's wrong with the sin. There's a way in which we can't quite figure out something seems wrong. Joab is very upset.

We'll see that God will definitely judge David for this sin. And yet the census sin has a hidden quality to it. It has a, it has a subtle quality to it.

And what we see in a heart of humility is that a heart of humility is a sin sensitive soul. It's a soul that understands this, that no sin is too small. No sin is too small.

That no sin can be too secret. No sin can be too hidden. That one might not even look like a sin or even be explicitly a sin.

They've taken sentences before is indeed and can profoundly be. If the heart has gone betrayal, if the heart has gone sour, if the heart has gone hard against the living God, then that sin can be an even greater sin than an explicit sin that one might see. And that's the nature of a census in quotation sin.

A census sin is a sin. It is a sin of the soul. It's a sin of pride.

It's a profound sin against the way of God and the life of God, but nobody else will necessarily know it. What's the nature of this sin besides being hidden in secret. It appears to be a sin that has the idolatry of increase the nature of hidden sin.

So often as the sin of an idolatry of increase, David has become obsessed with his fighting men. He wants to know just how strong his military arm is. It's not that increase itself is sin.

The increase of money, that isn't sin. Bible teaches the increase of influence, the increase of knowledge. He thinks in themselves aren't sin, but when increase, when increase, which is an end becomes a means and the focus becomes on the increase itself.

And one begins to pull up the screen and look at one's portfolio more often than one needs to. And one begins to sort of reflect upon the growth of the portfolio. And one begins to reflect upon the way in which their influence is being spread throughout the office.

And more people are talking about them. And one begins to reflect upon the increase of their influence within a particular academic department as a student or as a faculty member. One begins to think about the increase that's happening and nothing on the outside looks like anything is wrong.

It's not wrong to have a portfolio. It's not wrong to get good grades, but the heart is beginning to create an idolatry of increase himself and the increase becomes the means. I must increase.

I must increase. I must increase. Oh, how quickly this can happen to the heart.

What happened to David? If you don't think about the Bible, you might remember that David was once a boy called to go against a giant of a pagan people called the Philistines. And all he had were five smooth stones in which he took into a slingshot and took down the giant of the Philistines. What happened to him who had nothing but five smooth stones? Oh, the David of the smooth stones and not the David of the 1.5 million military men.

But a shift occurred. God trusted him with increase. God gave him favor and David took that increase and he would wield it as his own sword.

And God has trusted you with increase. God may have given you favor. He's given you intelligence.

He's given you the ability to make money. He's given you the ability to influence other people. He's given you many, many friends, whatever it might be.

And you begin to take that and hold that as your own. And that's taking up more and more space and energy in your imagination, in your mind. And you're reflecting on yourself.

It's a sense of sin, but it's a grave sin. No sin is too small, but no sin is too great. Amen.

No sin is too great. But God's mercy is not greater still. Now, while this sin indeed might even be greater than the sin against Bathsheba's husband, who he murdered so he could have Bathsheba.

While the sin and this impersonation may be greater than explicit sin, the mercy of God is greater still. And God comes to him with his mercy. He reveals to him that he has sinned.

And we read first that David says to God in verse eight, I have sinned greatly in what I have done in this thing. Please take away the sin of your servant. He says in verse eight, for I have acted very foolishly and God begins to show his mercy.

Now, the first show of his mercy is a bracing show of mercy. God now sees that David understands the depth of his sin, but David does not understand the breadth of his sin. He understands that he has sinned greatly against the Lord, but he does not understand.

He has sinned against the whole entire people of Israel, then betraying the goodness of God and the provision of God and making an idolatry of increase. All sin only has depth, but it has breadth. Sin sensitivity understands that when I hurt my wife, I hurt my, my roommates.

I, I hurt my church. I hurt all those around me. And that's an even greater awareness and understanding of how deeply and profoundly we need the mercy of God and God in his mercy.

And you're going to have to stretch your mind on this because the Bible takes our sin far more seriously than we usually do. God in his mercy gives David a choice. There will be a consequence to your sin, David, but you can have an army come in and ravage Israel for weeks upon weeks because a few options.

And then the final option he gives is he says, oh, I can act in judgment. David says, I'd rather be in your hands than the hands of any military men. And God sent the pestilence that kills 70,000 men.

And David sees not just the depth, but the breadth of his sin. And David sees that the idolatry of increase God in his mercy has now decreased David. And then what God is saying in a mysterious act that we in our 21st century, American minds have a very hard time getting our heads around.

Admittedly. So is that I bring increase and I bring decrease and you have not the power to increase yourself. And David in the horror of seeing what he has done and the 70,000 widows that he's created and over a hundred thousand orphans that he has created in his sin and his hardness of heart and the idolatry of increase.

He now pulls back and he says, not only have I sinned against you, I have sinned against all of Israel. Oh Lord, have mercy on me. And God is moving towards Jerusalem.

And he's going to be pressed upon Jerusalem as he has upon these 70,000 men. And when he hears the cry of David, he holds his hand back from Jerusalem. And he will not bring full, full recompense for what David has done.

And David sees the mercy of God and he falls before the living God. And he says, I will give whatever I can of my life to you now. Oh, I understand the breadth and the depth of my sin.

Oh God have mercy. Oh God, forgive me. That's the foundation of a heart of sacrifice is that we understand just how desperately we sin and just how profoundly God comes in his mercy to show us our sin and then to move in mercy and to shower his love upon Israel.

And David develops a hunger now to decrease. David develops a hunger now to run and to flee from the idolatry of the increase that he once had. And he now wants to become less that God may become more.

He now wants to become less that God may bring blessing and fruition to Israel. That God may bring his very presence upon this earth. David looks up and he sees this angel of the Lord is bringing this judgment and the angel is standing between heaven and earth.

It says, and God's David sees heaven coming to earth and earth coming up to heaven. And then he would understand why in our passage today, God says, now build me an altar for an altar always signified the meeting of heaven and earth. Build me an altar.

May heaven come to earth and earth be raised up to heaven. And now may my mercy spread throughout the worship of the living God. And they all know the goodness of the living God.

And David moves from a profound humility to a hunger for God, a hunger to decrease. How is it now that he says to Ornan? How is it now that he says to him, Oh, I cannot make an offering that will cost me nothing. It's a concrete and financial manifestation of a much deeper spiritual reality.

The money itself was that a huge sacrifice for David? Probably about \$275,000, the level of shekels he paid. No, that's not the heart of the sacrifice. The heart of the sacrifice is that this is a king who realized how profoundly he affected his people.

And he humbled himself before the almighty God. This is a king who a runner had every reason to give the threshing room floor to because he's the king. And instead, he insists on a servant position.

The heart of sacrifice and David is a profound spiritual heart that says, Oh, with great joy that I might decrease that God might increase for his mercy is glorious and full of love. David wants to make concrete

his Thanksgiving. He wants to make concrete his awe of God's mercy.

And so in a sacramental way, and money has a sacramental quality, money captures spiritually in a concrete way, our own hearts and our own minds. David says, let me just give. How could I ever, ever take this from you? Let me pay for it.

Let it cost me. Yes, financially, but especially spiritually. Orden provides quite a foil to David.

For David's, the one that had idolatry made an idol of his increase. But Orden, in his response, actually shows a profound heart of sacrifice. David gets there by God's mercy and grace.

David gets there. But Orden was already there. His king comes to him and asks him for something.

And Orden says, not only can you have the threshing floor, which is the foundation of my livelihood and business, but you can have everything associated with my business. You can have my entire career, my entire livelihood. Everything that I have is yours, David.

Take it all. Take more. Orden is looking for more ways to give them what David asked him for.

He's searching for stored resources that God hasn't even asked for. David hasn't even asked for it. How can I give that as well? Oh, Orden understands the hunger to decrease.

What a contrast he is to David's initial heart. Money built this building. But your hearts of costly sacrifice, they're building a sanctuary of transformation.

Money built this building. It took money to build this building. That's how it works.

But that money sprung forth from hundreds and hundreds of hearts here in this church that made a costly sacrifice. It sprung forth from the family who wrote us a letter and said, we've always been skittish about church, suspicious of church, but we are going to pledge over and above what we can financially handle because we've come to love Jesus and his church so much. The costly sacrifice of a family who had no conventional business giving 5% of their money away.

They have so little. And they said, we'll give 20% for the next two years because God has done so much in our lives. How can we not give even more away? Money built this building, but your cost of sacrifice is building a sanctuary of transformation.

When we give of our lives and we give of our money, we build, if you will, a threshing room floor, a foundation. What would be the foundation? What would be built upon that foundation? The very temple of the living God would be built on that foundation. David coming to a place of absolute abandonment to God, of absolute hunger to be decreased, that God may be increased, and his purchasing of that threshing room floor, that would be the foundation upon which the temple would be built.

But there's even a greater foundation that occurred before Arunah ever had a threshing room floor there. But Chronicles tells us that on that very place where that threshing room floor was, on that very place where the temple would be built, on the very place where the Temple Mount is to this day in Jerusalem, Abraham took his only son Isaac, oh not Moriah, and prepared to sacrifice his son a costly sacrifice unimaginable to any of us. And it was there in the midst of that willingness to give everything he had that God said, on the Mount of God it will be provided.

And that's the foundation of the work of God. And that's the foundation of every sanctuary of transformation, every place where heaven meets earth, and the ministry of the living God is released. If you have given in a costly way, and you've had moments like Katharine where you've gone, wow, I could use that money.

Be encouraged. Be encouraged. You've lived out of a heart of humility and hunger.

If you've never made a costly sacrifice, you've never given yourself relationally in a costly sacrifice. You've never given financially in a costly. Before you just decide to do that, ask God for profound sin sensitivity.

Ask him in his mercy to show you the depth and the breadth of your sin. Ask him to show you his mercy and out of that humility, let that hunger to decrease come.

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