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Give What Will Cost

“But King David replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.’” (1 Chronicles 21:24)

My mom reminds me of Araunah—
incredibly generous and accommodating. Araunah is a Jebusite (that is not what reminds me of my mom), but he is chosen by God to be His vessel at a critical time in David’s life. King David has committed a sin of great pride against God: He asked for a census of his troops. It is a request of arrogance and pride. The commander of David’s troops, Joab, knows this and advises the King that it is the wrong thing to do. King David goes ahead with the request nonetheless. God is, indeed, not pleased and goes about punishing the nation because of the King’s pride. David quickly recognizes his sin and says,

“Was it not I who ordered the fighting men to be counted? I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? O Lord my God, let your hand fall upon me and my family, but do not let this plague remain on your people” (1 Chronicles 21:17).

This is where Araunah enters in. God tells David to build an altar on the threshing floor of Araunah so that he might offer a sacrifice to appease God’s wrath. Araunah is more than willing to offer his floor, and he is even willing to give the oxen for the offering, wood for the fire, and wheat for the grain offering. Araunah says, *“I will give all of this”* (v. 23). David responds to this offer by saying,

“No, I insist on paying the full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing” (21:24).

Araunah and David agreed on a price, and that site would eventually become the site of the future temple of Jerusalem, where countless sacrifices would be offered up to God by generations to come.

The connection between Araunah and my mom? Generous and accommodating. Mom is a person always ready to offer what she has to help someone else. I witnessed this personally when as a young boy she would always offer me money to place in my Sunday offering. Not a bad thing, I suppose, for a young boy who did not have deep pockets. Years later, I was at her home visiting with her. She was unable to attend church with me due to illness. Before I left the house, she handed me her offering envelope and then a little cash for my offering. Once a mother, always a mother. I kindly turned her offer down and thought about what David said to Araunah:

“I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.”

It is so easy to look for the less demanding way. The scenarios are all too well known. We are asked to bring a dish to the potluck supper, and we ask ourselves, “What is the easiest thing to bring that will cost me little in time or money?” I wonder what would happen if someone were to bring to the next potluck, say, crab legs or Baked Alaska? When we are asked to give toward a special offering for those in disaster, we ponder and ask ourselves what amount will not cost us too much? What if we were to hold off from

purchasing that one new accessory in our life in order to give a gift ten times what we might have otherwise? The church is having a special toy drive for some hurting families, and all too often we go looking for the most inexpensive toy. I wonder what it would be like if someone rolled in a new bicycle or offered a new Playstation?

Jesus has given us a mission. It is a mission that is rooted in a sacrifice that cost Him everything. He held nothing back.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

There is no way that we can pay Him back. That is not what He expects or asks from us. Yet, the very nature of discipleship is being willing to decrease in importance as Christ increases in importance and focus in our lives. He calls us to offer our lives as a living sacrifice.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1).

The following testimony of David Livingston offers me insight on this:

“People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply acknowledging a great debt we owe to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward in healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of a glorious destiny? It is emphatically no sacrifice. Rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering, danger, foregoing the common conveniences of this life—these may make us pause, and cause the spirit to waver, and the soul to sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing

compared with the glory which shall later be revealed in and through us. I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not to talk, when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father’s throne on high to give Himself for us.”

We are called upon to offer our lives to God as a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Often, though, that sacrifice will come to us in what may seem the smallest of ways. The Rev. Dr. Fred Craddock, in an address to ministers, caught the practical implications of living for Christ:

“We think giving our all to the Lord is like taking a \$1,000 bill and laying it on the table. ‘Here’s my life, Lord. I’m giving it all.’ But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there. Listen to the neighbor kid’s troubles instead of saying, ‘Get lost.’ Go to a committee meeting instead of doing what we want to do. Giving a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home instead of hanging out with our friends. Usually, giving our life to Christ isn’t glorious. It’s done in all those little acts of love, 25 cents at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it’s harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul.”

It is in those moments that we have the opportunity to give generously in ways that may cost us but in the end bring witness to Him. I have seen the power of this kind of generosity in my friend, Art. He is one of the most generous people I know. When we go out, he is more generous with tips than I have witnessed in anyone else. Waiters in restaurants remember him. He does it not to impress the people with him but because the generosity of Christ flows through his being. In the end, this is what people remember about

him. The impression he leaves is one of a child of God who is generous with the gifts he has been entrusted with in life. I suspect Art would be the one who would bring the crab legs or offer the Playstation.

The next time you are asked to offer a sacrifice unto God, don't look for something that will cost you little or nothing. Try offering the "crab legs." It is in those moments when we are asked to offer a few of those quarters that we are helping to construct living temples in the lives of those to whom we give, where sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving can be offered up to God.

Prayer: Jesus, you held nothing back. You sacrificed everything on my behalf. The cost, as great as it was, did not cause you to shrink away from doing your Father's will. I thank you and praise you for your gift. There is no way that I could ever repay you. If I had all the resources in the world at my disposal, it would not be enough. Yet, this is not what you ask. You desire instead that I offer to you my life as a living sacrifice. Fill my heart with such joy and grace that when the opportunity to sacrifice for you is before me, I give generously and joyously out of love for you.
Amen.

Challenge: Who in your life is a generous person who holds nothing back with you and others? Give thanks to God for them. Consider even telling them of the witness they are to you.

Scripture Reading: 1 Chronicles 21 and 2 Samuel 24:18-25

From the Book of Concord: "However, the law does not teach how and why the good works of believers are pleasing and acceptable to God, even though in this life they are in fact imperfect and impure because of the sinfulness of the flesh. The law demands total, perfect, pure obedience if it is to please God. Instead, the gospel teaches that our "spiritual sacrifices" are pleasing to God "through faith" "because of Christ" (1 Peter 2:5; Heb. 11:4; cf. 13:15). In this respect Christians are not under the law but under grace. This is so because they are personally freed from the curse and condemnation of the law through faith in Christ and because their good works, though imperfect and impure, are pleasing to God through Christ. This is also true because they act in a God-pleasing way—not because of the coercion of the law but because of the renewal of the Holy Spirit—without coercion, from a willing heart, insofar as they are reborn in their inner person. At the same time they continually do battle against the old creature" (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VI, p. 591.22-23).