

HOLY WEEK

WITH NORTHWAY CHURCH

Day 6 - Saturday

Bible Reading: Leviticus 16:5-10

"From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting. He is to cast lots for the two goats - one lot for the Lord and the other for the scapegoat. Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a sin offering. But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat."

Bible Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15

"But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.

Bible Reading: Mark 15: 21 - 41

"A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). Then they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it. And they crucified Him. Dividing up His clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was nine in the morning when they crucified Him. The written notice of the charge against Him read: the king of the Jews. They crucified two rebels with Him, one on His right and one on His left. Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, 'So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!' In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. 'He saved others,' they said, 'but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Those crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him. At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'). When some of those standing near heard this, they said, 'Listen, He's calling Elijah.' Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 'Now leave Him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take Him down,' he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed His last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how He died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!" Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed Him and cared for His needs. Many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem were also there."

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You're watching Jesus on the cross. His body is severely bruised and He can barely breathe. But as the day draws to an end, He pushes Himself up in order to cry out:

"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" And then, He dies. In Jesus' last moments, His Father —the reason Jesus willingly went to the cross—leaves His Son.

Why?

Once a year, the Jews took part in the Day of Atonement. On this day, the High Priest sacrificed a perfect goat and sprinkled its blood on the Most Holy Place (the place in the temple where God dwelled) to cleanse Israel of all their sins. Afterward, the priest took a living goat and metaphorically placed all of Israel's sins on its head. Then, the goat would get released into the wilderness, taking Israel's sins away with it.

"The life of the body is in its blood. ...It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible."
Leviticus 17:11 NLT

The shed blood of a perfect animal identified the Israelites as pure, which allowed God to forgive and dwell with them. But the sacrifices never permanently made people right with God. They just symbolized Israel's continual separation from Him. That's why God sent them a permanent solution in the form of His Son. It's because He loved the world that Jesus sacrificed His life for ours. His blood was given in exchange for our lives, and so the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior, we are forgiven and cleansed from our mistakes.

This makes us alive with Jesus because the "life of the body is found in its blood" - and the global Church is Jesus' body.

Jesus became the final sacrifice of atonement by taking on all of humanity's sins onto Himself. He allowed Himself to be separated from His Father so that we would never have to be separated from our Holy Father.

So today, spend some time reflecting on what Jesus' death on the cross means for you. What next step do you need to take to draw close to God right now?