

**Sermon for
Exploring Yom Kippur
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

Date: October 13, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Leviticus 23:23-32

Epistle Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Gospel Reading: Mark 2:1-12

Sermon Text: Leviticus 23:23-32

Sermon Title: The Feast of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

Introit: Psalm 51:2-11; Antiphon: Psalm 51:1

Hymns (Trad):

LSB 610 – Lord Jesus, Think on Me
P&W #140 – There is a Redeemer
LSB 606 – I Lay My Sins On Jesus
P&W 96 – Make Me a Servant
LSB 609 – Jesus Sinners Doth Receive

Hymns (Cont)

Hide Me in Your Holiness
We will Glorify (P&W #154 in new Praise Songbook)
Sermon Song - (P&W #140 – There is a Redeemer)
To Know You More
Knowing You More (All Once Held Dear)

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Corporate Confession and Absolution p. 290

Sola Scriptura Service



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: Leviticus 23:23-32

The Lord spoke to Moses, “On the tenth day of this seventh month is a special day for the payment for sins called the Day of Atonement. There will be a holy assembly. Humble yourselves, deny yourself food and bring a food offering to the Lord. Do not do any work that day. It is a special day the Day of Atonement.

It is a time when you make peace with the Lord your God. Those who do not deny themselves food on that day will be excluded from the people. I will kill those who do any work on that day. Do not do any work. It is a permanent law for generations to come wherever you live.

It is a day of rest, a day when you don’t work. Deny yourself food starting on the evening of the ninth day of the month. From that evening to the next, observe the day of rest as a holy day.”

NOTE: Copyright information.

Bible Translation: GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Some readings have been adapted to better reflect the original Greek or Hebrew.

Credit for Images:

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2019 James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Two weeks ago we looked into the Feast of Rosh Ha-Shannah (Head of the Year). A day that calls us back to the Lord. A day that is meant to call us back to the awe and wonder that is our living and saving God. A day that reminds us that our God will return for us on a day called the Last Day. He will come in power and might to carry the faithful home. A day when we are taught to “seek the Lord,” and we learned that we seek Him here: in His Holy Word, in Holy Baptism, and in Holy Communion, those small foretaste of the great feat to come. Rosh HaShannah is followed by the Ten “Day of Awe.”

The Days of Awe, in ancient Israel, were meant to be a time for the people to work at living a more devout and faithful life, a life that reflects our faith to others in kindness and hospitality. This is the time during which debts are repaid, animosities are forgiven, and *mitzvot* [good deeds] are done. Good deeds that will persuade God to give life for another year.

(Following the Babylonian captivity the Jewish religion turned away from God's promise of salvation through Himself to a faith built on works. As such many of the traditions and festival of the Jewish Faith became works to earn God favor rather than remembrances of His love and salvation.)

The Days of Awe were to be a time to emulate Abraham, because Abraham performed the best *mitzvah* [the best good deed], that of trusting in God completely.

The record of the binding of Isaac, or the *Akedah*, is read on the First Day of Awe. The Shofar, or trumpet, is blown. The sound is a reminder to the Jewish community of this historical event. Abraham had been called out of his home. God said, “Go!” so he went. He took his wife, his nephew Lot, and all his possessions, following God's promise that he would become a great nation.¹

Imagine, if you will, traveling back to land of Moriah² during Abraham's time. We are at the base of the mountain. Three days earlier Abraham had been asked to take his son, his son of God's promise, and sacrifice him on that mountaintop. Abraham has now come to Mount Moriah with Isaac, two servants and a donkey.³ He must have been deep anguished. Not only was this his son, the flesh of his own flesh, but also the evidence of God's promise for His people.

Was God already breaking the covenant He had established with Abraham? Certainly not. Abraham knew God's character was sterling, his integrity

1 Genesis 12:1-3
2 Genesis 22:2
3 Genesis 22:3-5

unquestionable. God does not break His word. Still Abraham must have asked himself, “Why am I climbing this mountain to sacrifice my son?” Abraham’s faith in God’s character and word gave him strength. Perhaps he believed that this would be an opportunity for God to show His magnificence. Abraham shows his faith when he tells his servants:

“Stay here with the donkey while I, and the boy, go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.⁴”

Abraham places the wood for the offering on Isaac’s back while he carries the fire and the knife. Isaac asks the question that begs to be asked:

“We have the burning coals and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?⁵”

How can a father tell his son that he is the sacrifice? Abraham, however, in faith, gives him the answer:

“God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.⁶”

An altar is built, Isaac is bound, and the knife blade flashes in the sun, raised above the head of the child of the promise. Then suddenly, God stops Abraham and leads him to a ram caught in the brush by his horns, a ram provided by God.⁷ Again God promises that His covenant with Abraham will be fulfilled, and that all nations will be blessed through him.⁸ So, in the reading, as we return from Mount Moriah, the Shofar sounds again, as a reminder of Abraham’s faithfulness, and of God’s promise.

Through the Ten Days of Awe we prepare for what we are looking at today, Yom Kippur, [the Day of Atonement.] For this festival, another of God’s “permanent laws for generations to come wherever you live,⁹” the faithful assemble at the Temple and fast.

Now I want you to travel with me forward in time. We travel for about 2,000 years and we arrive at the time of Jesus. We now stand at the city gates of Jerusalem. Ahead of us are the high walls looming and foreboding. We pass

4 Genesis 22:5

5 Genesis 22:7

6 Genesis 22:8

7 Genesis 22:13

8 Genesis 22:15-18

9 Leviticus 23:31

through the great gates in our journey toward the Temple and the courts. On this day in Jerusalem there will be a death.

God has decreed that there will be a sacrifice. A sacrifice unlike any other throughout the year. On the Day of Atonement the high priest intercedes for us with God, and the sacrifices he offers make atonement for our sins. He begins with a young bull for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. The young bull is sacrificed for the sins of the high priest and his household. Then the priest will take two goats and present them before the Lord. He casts lots for the goats with one goat chosen for the Lord, and one goat chosen as the scapegoat. The lot is cast, the Lord's goat is sacrificed as a sin offering for the sins of the people.¹⁰

The blood from the sacrificed bull and goat, is taken and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant [the atonement cover] and also applied to the horns of the altar to make atonement even for the Most Holy Place [the Temple and the altar] because of the uncleanness, and rebellion of God's people. The other goat is taken out to the people. The high priest places his hands on the goat and confesses the sins of all the people, transferring them to the scapegoat, which then is released into the wilderness desert and left to die. Finally, the burnt offering is made among the people. The ram is sacrificed as atonement for the priest and all the people. Then the ram is burned with the fat from the slain bull and the goat. The bodies of the bull and the goat are taken outside the city gates and burned.¹¹

With the conflagration¹² complete, the sacrifices have been made. The blood has been shed, and has covered the sins of the people for another year. The scapegoat is alone with no food or water in the deserts. Back in Jerusalem the people are rejoicing because they once again have been affirmed in their covenant with God. Through no work of their own, beyond the offering they have brought before God, He has once again turned away His wrath and granted forgiveness.

All are joyous, except for One. As we stand in the Temple court, the sunset brings a new day,¹³ and we anticipate a festival meal. All are happy, but our Companion is quiet. Imagine Jesus coming to the Temple year after year, witnessing the people of God carrying out this command of God, this Day of Atonement. Witnessing this foreshadowing of His own sacrifice. Knowing He soon will be both the sacrifice and the scapegoat.

God promised through the prophet Jeremiah that He would make a new covenant with His people, not like this ceremony that must be completed each year,

10 Leviticus 16:8

11 Leviticus 16:6-22

12 A 'Conflagration' is a great raging fire.

13 The Jewish day begins at sunset. You eat and rest before the day's work.

year after year. The new covenant, the New Testament, would forever change the people's hearts. God would forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more.¹⁴ There would be a "once-and-for-all" sacrifice whose blood would pay the penalty for the sins of all people. For those over whom this blood flows, it covers their heart, recreating them in the images and likeness of God,¹⁵ an image of righteousness in which God is pleased.

As Jesus must have considered these things on Yom Kippur, He must have wept for those in the crowd who would reject Him as God's final perfect sacrifice. Those who knew the record of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah, witnessed the picture that God painted in the blood of animals before them, and yet refused to see His deliverance. It is a great price Jesus will pay to redeem so few...too few.¹⁶

Yom Kippur today, among the Jewish people, is only a shadow of what God intended it to be. The ram's horn sounds, and it is said God closes the Book of Life and the Book of Death, having inscribed names in each. The Days of Awe are over. Jews have done what they believe they can to try to satisfy God. If He accepts the offering of *mitzvot* [good works] a name will be written in the Book of Life for another year. If He rejects the *mitzvot* as insufficient, a name will be written in His Book of Death. While the end of this day brings rejoicing and a meal, it is an empty joy, and a meal not much different than any other. Those who come together at Yom Kippur must ask themselves a question: How do I know in which book my name is written?

Jews have brought the sacrifice to God but they are sacrifices of works and good deeds. There has been no blood so no real forgiveness,¹⁷ no death... but then, the Temple is no more. Remember, in 70 A.D.¹⁸ the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, just as Jesus had said would happen.¹⁹ Its destruction was so complete that not one stone was left standing on another and it has not been rebuilt to this day. So how can God expect such a sacrifice? The rabbis say "Surely, people can reason with God. Changes must be accepted, following the destruction of the Temple."

With that the modern Jewish faith was born. It was reasoned that by prayer, repentance, fasting, and good works, forgiveness could be negotiated with God. Today in synagogues and homes throughout the world, the High Holy Days are

14 Jeremiah 31:34

15 Genesis 1:27

16 Matthew 7:13-14

17 Hebrews 9:22

18 A.D. is a Latin abbreviation for *Anno Domini* which means: 'the Year of the Lord.'

19 Matthew 24:1-2

observed with traditional prayers. The *Al Chet*,²⁰ an acrostic prayer that outlines sins and asks for forgiveness. In the *Kol Nidre*,²¹ a prayer dating back to the 800's, the people forsake all oaths, obligations, and commitments made during the year. Oaths that have hindered their relationship with God. Jews fast on this day, denying themselves in an effort to please God. Good deeds are done; 'surely,' they think, 'God is pleased.' The Shofar sounds; the books are closed. It is done for another year.

Can we truly please God? Scripture says:

O Lord, who may stay in your tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?²²

The Lord looks down from heaven on Adam's descendants to see if there is anyone who acts wisely, if there is anyone who seeks help from God. Everyone has turned away.²³

Then how can God be pleased? Scripture says:

Protect me, O God, because I take refuge in you I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord. Without you, I have nothing good."²⁴

Back at the Temple, as sun set on the horizon, we return to Jerusalem anticipating the meal we will share with our quiet Companion. He seems sad, His thoughts are distant. His eyes are gazing elsewhere. He knows what He must do. It is only His blood that can cover the sins of people forever. God said:

...blood contains life. I have given this blood to you to make peace with Me on the altar. Blood is needed to make peace with Me.²⁵

The question remains unanswered. "How do you know in which book your name is written?" While most simply wonder the adventurous might say, "If I live to hear the Shofar blown at Rosh Ha-Shannah again next year, then my name was written in the Book of Life. If I live another year, my work was sufficient." Only to start the endless cycle again.

20 See appendix 1

21 See appendix 2

22 Psalm 15:1

23 Psalm 14:2-3

24 Psalm 16:1-2

25 Leviticus 17:11

- - -

God does not want us to live on the treadmill of good works trying to shed our sins in the comfort of a controlled environment of our own making. He has shown us the path. It is dusty, uncontrolled by us, exposed to the wind and the elements, and sprinkled with blood. The blood sacrifice has been made once and for all. Jesus became that scapegoat. He was led into the wilderness, tempted, attacked by Lucifer, and He survived unblemished. He was brought to the Temple, consecrated by His Father, and then sacrificed. Now we can smell the blood. We witness the death. This is the One whose death can cover all our sins. He is the unblemished Lamb, an unblemished man.

It is because of His sacrifice that we can say:

You have probed my heart. You have confronted me at night. You have tested me like silver, but you found nothing wrong. I have determined that my mouth will not sin.²⁶

Once this final perfect sacrifice was made God had no use for a Temple, so He allowed it to be destroyed. A new temple was built, within the hearts of those covered by the blood of the Lamb.²⁷ Then we are sent to walk that path in the footprints of Yeshua Ha-Mashiach [Jesus the Messiah]. God did not leave His Son in the bowels of the tomb. He brought Him out to walk the path ahead of us, leaving His footprints for us to follow. It is not a path of our making, and sometimes the wind and elements that blow are uncomfortable and disquieting, but the path goes somewhere,²⁸ and the wind that chaps our face is prompting us on. It is the Breath of God giving us life,²⁹ leading us home.

This why we praise God saying:

I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my Savior, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the strength of my salvation, my stronghold.

For we Christians, Yom Kippur is not a solemn day of wondering how to please a God. It is a day of repentance and then joy. A day for praising God for the payment He has already made for us. A new covenant, a New Testament, has been

26 Psalm 17:3

27 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

28 Matthew 7:13-14

29 Genesis 2:7

given. He has forgiven our sins and remembers our wickedness no more.³⁰ The treadmill has stopped and we are on the narrow way home.³¹ Now we can answer the question. We now know in which book our name is written, because we have God's promise.

Our names are in the Lamb's Book of Life.³²

The teachings of the Lord are perfect. They renew the soul. The testimony of the Lord is dependable.³³

To God alone be praise.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Appendix 1: The *Al Chet* Prayer

For the sin that we have sinned before You under duress and willingly;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You through hardness of heart.

For the sin that we have sinned before You without knowledge;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You with the utterance of our lips.

For the sin that we have sinned before You in public or in private;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You through immorality.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through harsh speech;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You with knowledge and deceit.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through inner thoughts;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You through wronging a neighbor.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through insincere confession;
And for the sin that we have sinned against You in a session of vice.

For the sin that we have sinned before You willfully and carelessly;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You by showing contempt for parents and teachers.

For the sin we have sinned before You by exercising power;
And for the sin we have sinned before You through desecration of the name.

30 Jeremiah 31:34

31 Matthew 7:13-14

32 Revelation 20:11-15

33 Psalm 19:7

For the sin that we have sinned before You through foolish speech;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You through impure lips.

For the sin that we have sinned before You with evil inclination; And for the sin that we have sinned before You against those who know and against those who do not know.

For All These, O God Of Forgiveness Forgive Us, Pardon Us, Atone For Us.

For the sin that we have sinned before You by causing subservience through bribery.

And for the sin that we have sinned before You through denial and false promise.

For the sin that we have sinned before You through evil talk;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You through scorning.

For the sin that we have sinned before You in commercial dealings;
And for the sin that we have sinned before You with food and drink

For the sin we have sinned before You through interest and extortion;
And for the sin we have sinned before You through haughtiness.

For the sin we have sinned before You with prying eyes;
And for the sin we have sinned before You with idle chatter of our lips.

For the sin we have sinned before You with haughty eyes;
And for the sin we have sinned before You with brazenness

For All These, O God Of Forgiveness, Forgive Us, Pardon Us, Atone For Us

For the sin we have sinned before You for throwing off Your yoke;
And for the sin we have sinned before You in Judgment.

For the sin we have sinned before You through entrapping a neighbor;
And for the sin we have sinned before You through a begrudging eye.

For the sin we have sinned before You through light-headedness;
And for the sin we have sinned before You with obstinacy.

For the sin we have sinned before You with legs that run to do evil;
And for the sin we have sinned before You by gossip-mongering.

For the sin we have sinned before You by vain oath-taking;
And for the sin we have sinned before You through baseless hatred.

For the sin we have sinned before You in the matter of extending a hand;
And for the sin we have sinned before You through confusion of heart.

For All These, O God Of Forgiveness, Forgive Us, Pardon Us, Atone For Us.

Appendix 2: The *Kol Nidre* Prayer

All vows: Prohibitions, oaths, consecrations, vows that we may vow, swear, consecrate, or prohibit upon ourselves from this Yom Kippur until the next Yom Kippur, may it come upon us for good regarding them all, we regret them henceforth. They will all be permitted, abandoned, canceled, null and void, without power and without standing. Our vows shall not be valid vows; our prohibitions shall not be valid prohibitions; and our oaths shall not be valid oaths.