

Sacrifice - thoughts from Zaidie

What pictures or words come to mind when you think of the word sacrifice? The things which come to mind will vary according to your current context and also according to your tradition and culture.

For me the first words which come to mind are 'giving something up'. It is about giving something (usually the good thing) for the other which is probably not as good but worth it. When I think back to my nurse training, I gave up loads of opportunity to 'go out on the town' so that I could find the time to revise and get through my academic work.

There is the action of giving up something for Lent which feels like doing something good but that the outcome is even more significant.

Definition – it is not easy to define. Sacrifice is a language used by all and understood by none (Hicks 1946; 3 quoting Glover). Because of what it involves, sacrifice raises many issues.

From a faith point I have never associated sacrifice with feasts, festivals or marking a joyful event. Because of the way the word is used it has a deprivation factor to it and most of the times is associated with sadness. In ancient times the emphasis was on thanksgiving, joyous recollection and being an actual act.

Sacrifice has been identified with human sacrifice and has caused widespread revulsion against sacrifice as a whole. This has generally been associated with *cannibalism*.

The use of the word sacrifice has changed over the years with most people not using the word as part of modern day language. Looking at the origins of the word in Latin (*sacrificium*) meaning to make holy. This presents a challenge as in the action of sacrifice some change has to take place in the person doing the act and the thing (for example, animal) being sacrificed. There are the emotional overtones of what happens in the process, e.g., seeing one as a victim or the abuse which takes place in the act.

What role does sacrifice play in our lives today? Sacrifice is central to the OT and carries a sense of 'sacrificial living' into the NT, especially through the Pauline letters.

In Romans 12:1-2 Pauls urges that we should present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which our spiritual worship. How do we do this? Is this through Communion? Calvin saw this as much more as an offering rather than sacrifice. In Hebrews 13:15-16 – offering a sacrifice of praise.

Mic 6:6 – 8 – asks whether we should come to God with animal sacrifice and finally what does the Lord require of us... to act justly, love mercy and to walk humbly with God.

Salvation – Christ is seen as the ultimate sacrifice.. Christ's sacrifice and suffering are very closely linked. But in the Hebrew tradition sacrifice did not imply suffering.

As Christian we offer our lives as a living sacrifice (Roman 12: 1-2)... and that should be a joy. The cross is the symbol which is central to Christian faith and linked to the Christ's action is forgiveness which he offers actually from the cross.

If Jesus had not come would we still be carrying out animal sacrifice? In some cultures, there is the custom of praising God and then offering up sacrifice to the ancestors.

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