

Pastor Daryl Diddle

Sermon Series: *The Color of Redemption*, No. 6

Red

April 15 (Good Friday), 2022

Prelude

*During the prelude, slides showing the words of
Mark 15:25-26; Leviticus 17:11; Luke 23:46; 1 Peter 1:18-19;
1 John 1:7 are shown.*

Silence

Solo (acapella)

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus, verse 1

The Color of Redemption (Part 1 of 3)

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

You've noticed, of course, that there is a lot of talk of blood in Christianity.

It's not a faith for those who are particularly squeamish, at least where blood is concerned.

Of course, there's lots of *talk* of blood because, well, there's lots of *blood*. There always has been. Christianity has faced stern opposition from its very inception. Its founder was killed, as were nearly all of its first major representatives.

As faith in Jesus spread beyond Judea, the criticisms continued, but their nature changed.

Rather than directly opposing Jesus and His teachings, most attacks against Christians arose out of either ignorance or fear. Most of those critics had very little, if any, firsthand experience with Christ-followers, their worship, or their beliefs, and so after Jesus' death and resurrection, for a couple of centuries anyway, attacks on Christians tended to be the restating of stereotypes and misconceptions, accusing Christians of being barbaric and even cannibalistic.

And this came, of course, from all the talk of blood that was, and still is, so prevalent in Christian literature and liturgy.

Some of it came from Jesus' words of the Eucharist in Matthew 26, where He said about the bread, "**Take and eat, this is my body,**" and about the cup, "**Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**"¹

There are also Jesus' words in John 6:53, where He says, "**Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.**"

To Gentiles, this kind of Christian talk had to seem, well, unsettling at the least. And it still is to Gentile unbelievers today.

It's different with Jews, though. They, of course, understood this sort of talk about blood, since, even if they didn't receive or understand Jesus. Still, Jews know that the color of redemption is red, because Jews knew, then, and know today, that blood has always been required to remove sin.

From nearly the beginning, God's message to humanity is that we're broken. The world is broken, and because of that, we need repair: we need to be forgiven and restored and redeemed.

And the first step toward all that, the first step toward redemption, is to **believe that we need it**.

If you don't believe that, you'll never get Jesus.

God says that because we have sinned, because we have charted our own course and not always listened to Him, we have not only hurt ourselves and others, but we have, even worse, offended Him and we stand in need of His pardon.

We need redemption.

But how is that possible?

Well, God saw to that by initiating a sacrifice—a whole system of sacrifices, actually—that would allow the innocent to die for the guilty.

That alone would satisfy God's requirement of justice.

The blood of the innocent pays the price for the sin of the guilty.

Now, maybe that sounds cruel to you, but it really isn't. It's actually incredibly kind and merciful.

You see, we deserved to die ourselves. Because all people had sinned, all people deserved to die. But the Jewish sacrificial system was God's way of maintaining both His character of love and also His character of justice.

God spelled all that out to Moses when He called Israel to represent Him and His merciful offer of forgiveness to the world.

Readings from the Old Testament

Leviticus 1:1-5

The Lord called to Moses from the Tabernacle and said to him, ² "Give the following instructions to the people of Israel:

"When you present an animal as an offering to the Lord, you may take it from your herd of cattle or your flock of sheep and goats. ³ If the animal you present as a burnt offering is from the herd, it must be a male with no defects. Bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle so you may be accepted by the Lord. ⁴ Lay your hand on the animal's head, and the Lord will accept its death in your place to purify you, making you right with him. ⁵ Then slaughter the young bull in the Lord's presence, and Aaron's sons, the priests, will present the animal's blood by splattering it against all sides of the altar that stands at the entrance to the Tabernacle." (NLT)

Leviticus 17:1-11

Then the Lord said to Moses, ² "Give the following instructions to Aaron and his sons and all the people of Israel. This is what the Lord has commanded:

¹ Matthew 26:27-28

³ *If any native Israelite sacrifices a bull or a lamb or a goat anywhere inside or outside the camp ⁴ instead of bringing it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to present it as an offering to the Lord, that person will be as guilty as a murderer. Such a person has shed blood and will be cut off from the community. ⁵ The purpose of this rule is to stop the Israelites from sacrificing animals in the open fields. It will ensure that they bring their sacrifices to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle, so he can present them to the Lord as peace offerings. ⁶ Then the priest will be able to splatter the blood against the Lord's altar at the entrance of the Tabernacle, and he will burn the fat as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. ⁷ The people must no longer be unfaithful to the Lord by offering sacrifices to the goat idols. This is a permanent law for them, to be observed from generation to generation.*

⁸ *"Give them this command as well. If any native Israelite or foreigner living among you offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice ⁹ but does not bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to offer it to the Lord, that person will be cut off from the community.*

¹⁰ *"And if any native Israelite or foreigner living among you eats or drinks blood in any form, I will turn against that person and cut him off from the community of your people, ¹¹ for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the Lord. It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible." (NLT)*

Solo (acapella)

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus, verse 2

The Color of Redemption (Part 2 of 3)

You see, what was just sung is really true. Nothing, apart from blood, can atone for sin. Nothing can set sin right with God—nothing that we can do ourselves, anyway.

We could work and work and work, but we'd never be able to do enough.

That fact seems hard for some people to grasp.

Even in those people who really do understand their need for redemption, it seems to take a long time to realize that we can't earn the forgiveness we need.

From way back in Moses' day, to Jesus' day, and right down to today, people have tried to save themselves. People have tried to work their way to God.

But they've never succeeded—because sin cannot pay sin's debt.

In order for redemption to happen, God had to act. God had to do something to make forgiveness possible.

So, He took the initiative with His people centuries ago and set up these altar sacrifices.

Animals that were perfect and valuable were required, such that by their death (by their blood), we people could be forgiven.

By the blood of the innocent, people would be pardoned.

That may sound strange to us. Again, it may even sound cruel—but really it isn't. It's actually merciful and perfectly just, because when wrong happens, someone has to pay for that. And for years, centuries, God allowed animals to pay for human sins.

But you know, even as all that was set up, God knew it would be temporary, because the blood of mere animals can never substitute for that of a person. It would work temporarily, but never permanently, because people are just that much higher and more significant to God than animals.

Now, in our day, when certain animals are all but humanized (that sounds odd and maybe even cold), the truth is that although we are to care for animals responsibly and humanely, humans—people—are very, very different than are animals in God's eyes. Humans are far, far more valuable to God, because we are the ones He made in His own image.

Which means that, in order to set us truly right with God, a perfect *human* sacrifice would be needed, you see?

No lamb, no goat, no bird, no bull could ever do it—for real, forever.

And of course, the problem was there was no person that perfect, so we couldn't provide our own.

So again, if this were to happen—if an adequate sacrifice was to be offered, God would have to act—God would have to provide it.

And that's where Jesus comes in.

Congregational Song

Lamb of Glory

A Reading from The Gospels

John 19:16-37

Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified, and they took Him away. ¹⁷ Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha). ¹⁸ There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ And Pilate posted a sign on the cross that read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ²⁰ The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it.

²¹ *Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, "Change it from 'The King of the Jews' to 'He said, I am King of the Jews.'"*

²² *Pilate replied, "No, what I have written, I have written."*

²³ *When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴ So they said, "Rather than tearing it apart, let's throw dice for it." This fulfilled the Scripture that says, "They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing." So that is what they did.*

²⁵ *Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother*

standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son."²⁷ And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

²⁸ Jesus knew that his mission was now finished, and to fulfill Scripture he said, "I am thirsty."²⁹ A jar of sour wine was sitting there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put it on a hyssop branch, and held it up to his lips.³⁰ When Jesus had tasted it, he said, "It is finished!" Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹ It was the day of preparation, and the Jewish leaders didn't want the bodies hanging there the next day, which was the Sabbath (and a very special Sabbath, because it was Passover week). So they asked Pilate to hasten their deaths by ordering that their legs be broken. Then their bodies could be taken down.³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus.³³ But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they didn't break his legs.³⁴ One of the soldiers, however, pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water flowed out.³⁵ (This report is from an eyewitness giving an accurate account. He speaks the truth so that you also may continue to believe.)³⁶ These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures that say, "Not one of his bones will be broken,"³⁷ and "They will look on the one they pierced." (NLT)

Congregational Song **The Old Rugged Cross**

A Reading from the New Testament

Hebrews 9:1-22

That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth.² There were two rooms in that Tabernacle. In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place.³ Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was the second room called the Most Holy Place.⁴ In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant.⁵ Above the Ark were the cherubim of divine glory, whose wings stretched out over the Ark's cover, the place of atonement. But we cannot explain these things in detail now.

⁶ When these things were all in place, the priests regularly entered the first room as they performed their religious duties.⁷ But only the high priest ever entered the Most Holy Place, and only once a year. And he always offered blood for his own sins and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.⁸ By these regulations the Holy Spirit revealed that the entrance to the Most Holy Place was not freely open as long as the Tabernacle and the system it represented were still in use.

⁹ This is an illustration pointing to the present time. For the gifts and sacrifices that the priests offer are not able to cleanse the consciences of the people who bring them.¹⁰ For that old system deals only with food and drink and various cleansing ceremonies – physical regulations that were in effect only until a better system could be established.

¹¹ So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world.¹² With his own blood – not the blood of goats and calves – he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

¹³ Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial impurity.¹⁴ Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.¹⁵ That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

¹⁶ Now when someone leaves a will, it is necessary to prove that the person who made it is dead.¹⁷ The will goes into effect only after the person's death. While the person who made it is still alive, the will cannot be put into effect.

¹⁸ That is why even the first covenant was put into effect with the blood of an animal.¹⁹ For after Moses had read each of God's commandments to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, and sprinkled both the book of God's law and all the people, using hyssop branches and scarlet wool.²⁰ Then he said, "This blood confirms the covenant God has made with you."²¹ And in the same way, he sprinkled blood on the Tabernacle and on everything used for worship.²² In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness. (NLT)

Solo (acapella)

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus, verse 3

Readings from The New Testament

1 Peter 1:18-20

For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value.¹⁹ It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.²⁰ God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake. (NLT)

1 John 1:5-7

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶ So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ⁷ But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. (NLT)

The Color of Redemption (Part 3 of 3)

In flawlessly following the will of God His Father, Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for us – for our sins.

Through His blood, He paid the price of our sin, so you and I would not have to pay it ourselves.

Jesus became the sacrifice that no bull or lamb could ever be, you see?

The sacrifice of pure perfection, so that once and for all, justice was done, and the debt of sin was paid.

No more animals on altars.

No more need for partial payments.

Jesus paid it all.

That is what happened on Good Friday's cross over 2000 years ago.

So, you see, the Christians' talk of the blood of Jesus is not some gross or repulsive thing.

Because to those redeemed by it, the blood of Jesus is the evidence – the representation of a love greater than this world has ever known.

It's tragic and sad, and yet at the same time, it's beautiful and majestic and truly good.

Not good that He suffered, but good that He loves you and me so, so much.

That's why we embrace the blood of Jesus.

Not because we're cannibals or masochists, but because we've come to understand that the color of redemption – our redemption – is red. Blood red.

Now, as if it doesn't seem strange enough to revere the blood of Jesus, we're going to sing about a whole fountain of it.

To the world around us, this song would have to seem so, so strange.

But you see, the idea of it is that, in Jesus, there is blood enough for the redemption of the whole world!

For all who will come to Him, for all who will follow Him, for all who will trust Him: Jesus' sacrifice, His death, His blood will redeem them, forgive them, transform them!

We're not grateful for the suffering that Jesus endured.

But we are grateful that He chose to endure it. Jesus chose to suffer and bleed and die on Good Friday's cross, out of love for us and for our world.

Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me.

How can it be that there is love enough – there is blood enough – to save the world?

Yet there is – because of Jesus.

He's the one, perfect, final sacrifice for the sins of the world.

He's the reason the color of redemption is red.

He's the reason Good Friday is good.

Congregational Song

There Is a Fountain

Solo (acapella)

Nothing but the Blood of Jesus, verse 4

Closing Prayer

Jesus, we give You our lives anew tonight, and we thank You for what You did for us. Help us to understand that more and more fully, so that we can worship You more and more completely, as we await Your Resurrection Day. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Benediction

Go in peace.