

Chat with Children

- How do you choose a birthday present for someone?
 - what would they like?
 - what can you afford or offer?
- Are there some people you give "better" presents to than others?
 - why?
 - (perhaps they are more precious to you...)
- *Who do you give the best presents to?*
 - if we are Christians....

Introduction

- Working our way through Leviticus:
 - seen how the **sacrificial system** (chapters 1-7) points out the realities of what Jesus did on the Cross, dying in our place, covering over our sin
 - saw how a **priest** was required, because **God is a holy God** (chapters 8-10) - and how **Jesus** is that perfect priest, the only one able to stand on his own merits on our behalf in the presence of our holy God
 - we've seen how **every aspect of life**, even the most routine or even ignoble, lies within God's interest and concern - what we do matters! (chapters 11-15)
 - pinnacle in the **atonement**, chapter 16 - the covering of our debt of sin, how the rituals of the sacrifice point to the reality of Christ, and how we need atonement
 - and last week, as we reflected on "**I am the Lord your God**", how his laws are still relevant, not for entering a relationship with him but as marks of that relationship, as recognition of his Lordship, and therefore worthy of our careful attention today!
- In other words, a wide ranging survey of how God deals with his people!
 - which begs the question: "**In light of all of that, how can I respond to God's gracious reaching out to me?**"
 - clear first stage is by accepting his offer of salvation, **becoming a Christian**
 - but Leviticus 27 points to something else

What was happening then?

- This is not an easy chapter to deal with, because it is quite hard to see exactly what the background or context is!
 - what, precisely, is being spoken of in these verse?
 - its one of those chapters where the details (**for instance, the comparative values placed on people of different age & gender, or the conditions on which property may be bought back**) can obscure the main point!
- Passage is about "**special vows**" (v.2) or "**votive offerings**"
 - these people or things vowed, or promised over to God as an act of worship, as promise to God or a response to what he has done
 - these are things promised above and beyond the requirements of the law
 - seems to be that this was an accepted, if not common, expression of faith in the culture of the day
- We don't have many examples:
 - Samuel, devoted to the Lord's service by his mother after the Lord answered her prayer for a son - see all of 1 Samuel 1, but (1 Samuel 1:11) "**And she made a vow, saying, 'O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.'**" and (1 Samuel 1:27,28) "**I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD.**"
 - less positive is the story of Jephthah and his daughter in Judges 11 - (Judges 11:30,31) "**And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD: 'If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the LORD's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering.'**" - only it was his daughter who came out on his return!
- Some verses in Deuteronomy (23:21-23) reflect the seriousness with which God viewed such vows:
 - "**If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your**

God with your own mouth."

- What we actually have here are regulations given by God to moderate the possible effects of rash vows!
 - promised, serious vow, made in good faith... but the reality when we come to it is different, or our circumstances have changed...
 - God in his grace, in his gentleness with our weakness, leaves the door open for us to redeem (in its literal sense of "buy back") that which has been given
- In broad sweep, the regulations here are intended to dissuade over-enthusiastic vow taking!
 - and help vow takers to only vow things that fitted in with the character of the Lord to whom the vow was taken!

What might happen now?

- So what has all of that got to do with us now?
- Whole thrust of the regulations, the safe-guards God has put in place in this chapter, is to help people sort out their **motivation** for their vow.
 - why am I making this vow? why am I devoting this part of my family, this property, even myself, to God?
 - is it in a way that honours God?
 - is my motivation to draw attention to myself, to what **I** have given?
 - or is it to draw praise to God because of what **He** has done?
- What is our response to all that God has done for us?
 - to accept him as Saviour, as Lord, certainly...
 - but there is a freedom to demonstrate in concrete, practical ways our worship by giving over to God our lives;
 - for family, fields, property, animals, these cover the whole range of what might make up someone's life in early Palestine!
 - this is all that I am and have!
 - this is Romans 12:1: "**Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.**"
- *Notice:*
 - *urge, not command*
 - *worship, expression of how we hold and regard God, how we honour him*
- What can I give him?
 - **money** - not just the tithe, the fit proportion, that was required
 - **job or career**
 - family - perhaps implications from what you do?
 -?

Conclusion

- So, in light of all that God has revealed to us, what may we give him?
 - ourselves!
 - nor because we have to, because he won't be happy if we don't, because he won't accept us if we don't
 - but because we want to, because, we delight to respond to all that he has done for us - particularly in the Cross, in the Atonement, in the covering over of our unpayable debt of sin
- **(Romans 12:1) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.**