

GREATER LOVE: A FAMILY LEGACY OF SACRIFICE +++

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Good morning, Church. And happy Memorial Day weekend to all of us. And you know, this weekend is a weekend where we remember sacrifice. We remember the physical sacrifice that has been made. We remember a spiritual sacrifice that has been made. And we also are going to talk about a financial sacrifice that we make. This is a weekend where we show honor. And I have great anticipation for our next series where we're going to be talking about honor code and how do we live out honor in a culture where it's not really a value, but yet we know biblically it is.

And so today, I want us to think about how are we honoring and how are our lives also being sacrificial? My challenge for us is I want you to think about your own physical sacrifice, your own spiritual sacrifice, and your own financial sacrifice. What is the legacy that you're going to leave as we celebrate on this weekend and remember this weekend those who've left a mark and a legacy for us to live today?

So we're going to be remembering the real heroes, the real heroes, because Memorial Day is so much more than the barbecue, the lakeside living, the eating, and the pool, and the wonderful weather. I know. We're going to try to speak it and pray that God would make it. The reality is, though, this is a day that we remember.

We remember families that this Memorial Day and many Memorial Days, they've sat around with an empty chair because a loved one is no longer there, because they lost their lives defending your freedom. It's also a day where we remember that families sit around and they tell stories, stories of loved ones who gave their lives in previous wars and years past. It's a time where we remember moms and dads and aunts and uncles and children who wish their loved one was present.

I remember my Uncle Ron who fought valiantly in the U.S. Army in the Vietnam War. And I remember him not talking about much of the conflict, but he did talk about friends that were not able to come home. My friend and my assistant Julie just came back from Washington, D.C., where her stepfather spent some time at the Vietnam Memorial. And that is the most visited memorial of any of the memorials in our nation's capital. And she talked about the moment where the hand was placed over names of those he knew.

We remember. And we remember also in this great country, we remember the soldiers who we don't even know their names. But we honor them and we're thankful for them. In the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, this is a tomb where we remember that there are men and women that we can't identify, that don't get to come home. And this country has such a high value on remembering them that at this tomb, these soldiers are under 20, this tomb is guarded under 24-hour watch. And I learned recently that there's barracks underneath the tomb and soldiers, three soldiers live there. And they're in a constant rotation, regardless of the weather, regardless of what's happening, to guard this tomb.

KING OF KINGS CHURCH +++

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And it's a reminder for you and for me that heroes don't always wear capes. Sometimes in this nation, they wear dog tags. They're willing to pay the ultimate sacrifice. And I believe Memorial Day is a day where we remember not only our fallen heroes, but we remember too that they stand and they serve in the shadow of the greatest fallen hero ever, who also gave his life for freedom, not in a nation or a kingdom on this earth, but for freedom in the kingdom of another world. They stand in the sacrifice and the shadow of Jesus. And His willingness to give His life, which is why Jesus said in John 15, 13, and when you see the word in red, please read it with me. Greater has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

To make a physical sacrifice for someone else that they would be well, that they would do well. And this is what Jesus is leading us to see. And this is what we remember when we see those who give their lives for another. But it is not just Jesus that showed us what a physical sacrifice looked like. God has raised people throughout the history of humanity to give a physical sacrifice. I want to tell you of an unnamed girl. We don't know her, but we know a lot about her. She's not often preached about or talked about, but man, she is a hero. And she was one who physically gave and sacrificed for another.

She's a young servant girl of a commander named Nahaman. He was the commander of an army in Aram, which is modern-day Syria. And he was brave and valiant, well-respected and powerful. And he was defeating the Israelites. And he captured this young woman and forced her to become one of his maidservants in his household. Now, what we also know about Nahaman was that he had leprosy, which is a debilitating and terrible disease. One that people were fearful from. But he's a commander, so they couldn't show their fear.

And this young servant girl unnamed prayed and prayed and spoke up to her captor, whom she called Master, to get help. She says in 2 Kings 5, 3, If only my Master would see the prophet Elisha, who is in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy. Now, just put all the pieces of the puzzle together. She's a captive. She's not serving because she wants to or because she's receiving anything. She is an indentured slave. And so what does she do? She sees her Master has a need and she wants to help him. She's physically sacrificing for him.

And so that you know the story and don't see me afterwards or send me an email and say, what happened? I'll tell you. He went and saw Elisha. And he was cured. The physical sacrifice of this unnamed woman made a difference. And it's a reminder for you and for me, how are we physically sacrificing, but also how are we honoring those who've made sacrifices for us that we don't know their names. That we don't know their names.

This weekend is a reminder for you and for me too, that we all stand upon unearned freedom that has been won by the sacrifice of soldiers. And conversely, we stand upon unearned freedom that has been won for us by the sacrifice of our Lord and our Savior Jesus. And so I want to invite you this weekend to remember that your light and your freedom of light shines because of Jesus and because of unnamed soldiers that you may not know, that you'll never know their names, but their sacrifice has allowed you to celebrate and to be free. That's a physical sacrifice. How are you physically sacrificing for others in your life? How are you thinking about that?

Second, we are called to be a spiritual sacrifice people, meaning that we live for Jesus every day. That Jesus shines forth from us, that we get to be bearers of his light in the world. And I want to invite you

to think about offering, think about Romans 12, 1, where Paul writes this, and again in red, read that, offer your bodies as a sacrifice. This is your true and proper worship. Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, that we are out there spiritually sacrificing because this is who we are called as Jesus people, as followers of Jesus.

Don't forget that Jesus didn't just die for you. He lived on this life. He lived with kindness. He lived with courage and he lived with obedience to God. He was a living sacrifice and you and I get the call to be a living sacrifice of kindness, courage, and obedience in the shadow and in the way of Jesus. This is a spiritual sacrifice.

You and I are called to live. Think about this for a minute of Jesus's kindness. Jesus was kind to those that no one else was kind to. He was kind to the leper. He was kind to the blind man. He was kind to the widows who were wailing. He was kind to the poor and the oppressed. Jesus was kind. He was so kind that crowds wanted to gather around him. That women who had been outcast and ostracized just reached out to touch the hem of his robe in prayers that his kindness would flow through and would heal them. Jesus was kind.

How are we kind? When you look at Jesus, Jesus spent time with those who no one had time for. I love what recently deceased theologian and modern day sharer of the good news of Jesus, Tim Keller, said. He said, you can always make more money, but you can't make more time. When you give someone your time, you're giving them a portion of your life that you'll never get back. How are we spending our time? How are we living out spiritual sacrifices to those who are in need? Are you giving your time to those no one has time for? Are you sharing and showing what it is to sacrifice in the same kind way that Jesus did? How are you sacrificing time with those whom Jesus would be with? Right?

And so the second piece of being a living sacrifice is courage. Now, Jesus had great courage. And yes, we know Jesus was kind, but he also had the courage to stand up and stand against those who were against what God wanted. And so while Jesus was known as kind and kind to the weak, the widow, the orphan, the downtrodden, the diseased, he also got killed.

Kind people don't get killed unless those who are in authority don't think they're very kind. And Jesus was not kind to those religious elite who wanted to keep people out and keep their power and authority up and stay on the inside. And Jesus had the courage to stand up to the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the religious leaders of the day and say, you are not walking in the way and the will of God, that you are outside the kingdom of God, that you're missing everything that you may know all the scriptures and the old Testament and think you know Yahweh, but you have no knowledge of him in your heart and he does not know you or your ways.

Martin Luther stood firm on this as well when he shared courageously and he wrote in his Diet of Worms, not worms, verms, no one should have a diet of worms, but he said famously, here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. He also wrote in another writing, said, you're not only responsible for what you say, now get this, but also for what you do not say. And Martin Luther was inviting us to be courageous as Christians and as disciples.

And he wrote and said these things as he was saying to, at that time, the church, the Roman Catholic Church, saying, you just need to recant, you just need to go back, you just need to get back to the scripture, back to the basics. He actually wasn't trying to start a revolution, if they had just simply said,

you're right, indulgences are wrong, that we have lost our way, we're going to get back to the very word of God, the Protestant Reformation would never have flourished in his day. But he would not sit silently by and allow people to be abused in a spiritual way, so that others may be propagated and held up.

And it's not only what we say, but it's also what we don't say, what do we allow? It is not courageous to sit silently by and say to those who are being oppressed, to those who are being hurt, to those who are being weak, that's not my problem. We must stand and we must speak. How are you using your voice that God has given you to courageously speak for those who don't have a voice, for those who shout to deaf ears?

One way, and I will say this, every single one of us is a person of influence. We all have those who are influential with, how are you leveraging your voice to speak for those who don't have a voice? How are you leveraging your influence to help someone else? Lastly, we know of the obedience of Jesus, that as a living sacrifice, it means we are obedient to God. And we know that Jesus was obedient to the Father. He said, Father, if there's any other way that may it happen, but not my will, but your will be done.

How are you and I being obedient to our God? A spiritual sacrifice means that I yield my life, I yield myself, I yield my ways to the Lord. And we let the Lord's will, the Lord's ways, the Lord's word be our life. We don't, we don't look at the Lord and say, you know, I know the word of God says this, but he's got to understand that I'm like this. That is not saying I yield my will or my way to God. That's saying, God, please yield your way to me. And it removes the hierarchy, which we do have, that he is the creator and you are the created. And so we get to be obedient as a living spiritual sacrifice.

And so how are you spiritually sacrificing to be obedient to God in your life? C.F.W. Walther, who is a theologian in our church body, he said this so well, true faith is never alone. It's always accompanied by the fruits of faith, love, obedience, self-denial, and sacrifice of our own will to God's will. And this came from a man who just had a lot of leverage of voice. He was ruggedly good looking, as you can see. I don't even know what to say. Honestly, they show pictures of him in our church body at seminary and it just loses our train of thought.

But in all seriousness, what he's talking about is true, right? That faith is never alone and obedience is a part of that faith. How are we living out as a spiritual sacrifice of obedience to God and the importance of that obedience? And one of the things that I have a couple of friends, very good friends, who've used this phrase with me, and I've really been compelled to think about this, especially in the ways of my life, and especially spiritually, is the word choose your hard.

To be honest, hard things of faith will come and you either choose to confront them now or confront them later. And it's always going to happen. And so when we think about spiritually sacrificing, I want to encourage you to choose your hard. And what does that mean?

Be a truth teller. Be a truth teller. The truth will always come to light. It will never stay hidden. And so you can either tell the truth and face whatever the consequences are now, or you're going to do it later. Either way, it's going to be hard.

Second, be a helper regardless of the effort and the energy. How are you helping others? How are you serving others? How are you using the gifts and the abilities that God has given you to make an impact and a difference?

And lastly, be an anomaly through obedience to God. And if you're living obedient to God in your life, in your physical living, in your words, in your kindness, in your faithfulness, in your marriage, in your faithfulness, in your singleness to marriage, in your faithfulness, in your giving. Can I tell you right now you would be living in a way that the world would say that's weird. That's not our culture. That's not common.

And that's what God calls you to do is to be uncommon, to be an anomaly, to be patient, and to just trust in him. I'm reminded of Moses. When Moses went up to receive the Ten Commandments, and you know what happened? The Israelites, they just got super impatient, and they got scared. And instead of being different, they said, let's be like what we knew and where we were.

And they went back, and they made a golden calf, an image, and they began to worship that because they were just saying, this is too hard right now. And they went back. And you know what happened? When Moses came down off the mountain, he got irate. And I think most of us might remember this story, and remember he got irate, and he threw down the tablets, and they broke, and then he yelled at the people, and we know there was a consequence.

But there's a passage that I also think is so often missed that shows us Moses' love for the people and his willingness to be a spiritual sacrifice for them. In Exodus 32, 32 it says this, But now, O God, please forgive their sin. But if you won't, then blot me out of the book you've written. And you know what Moses says here? God, please forgive them. If you won't forgive them, I will take their punishment. Cast me out of the promised land. Remove me from your presence, but let them be forgiven.

What a beautiful foretaste and prefiguring of what Jesus did for you and for me. What a beautiful foretaste and prefiguring of what Jesus did for you and for me. As he said to us, it is finished. And he received the full weight of the punishment for us. Moses was willing to spiritually sacrifice everything for the people.

So when you live spiritually sacrificing, you live for Jesus, which is the brightest kind of sacrifice. So I want to invite you to let your light shine brightly in the world as a spiritual sacrifice pointing your life to Jesus in everything you do. Living for Jesus is the brightest kind of sacrifice.

And that brings us to the third point today. As we think about our sacrifices, how are you financially sacrificing? How are you giving to grow the kingdom of God? How are you standing tall in order that others would be seeing the kingdom of God through your generosity, through your giving? And giving to grow the kingdom of God is part of that call to live a sacrificial life for Jesus.

2 Corinthians 9:7 and read the red with me. God loves a cheerful giver, right? A cheerful giver, one who's saying, it is a joy for me to give of my treasures. It is a joy for me to do this. And by the way, Jesus gave us everything, not just his love, but his life. You and I were called to give joyfully, not your leftovers, not what doesn't hurt, not what doesn't make a difference, not what doesn't make you go, oh yeah, I feel this.

Please think about this, make this your priority, right? And this is why I love what we've been in, in the last nine months, which is the Let's Go campaign. And it's what it's all about. It's about us giving, right? And it's about us helping people come to know and to love Jesus, to live out our mission, which is to transform lives, to connect people to God and to each other and to the world.

It's allowed us to keep doing the ministries that you and I currently love. And it allows us to pour gas on the ministries that we are passionate about, which is the ministries of kids and of students. And man, is God just opening a new floodgate with our kids ministry as we just continue to see kids ministry flourish.

And right now, even in our student ministry, our student ministry is flourishing. I mean, we have students who are taking over the front row at our Millard campus. We've got 70 students who are engaged and passionate about worshiping Jesus. We have students connect groups right now that are going out into the city and meeting and showing that our students are ministers right here, right now in this place. How good is that? Right.

And I want to invite you, first of all, if you're a part of this journey and you're part of the campaign, I just want to say thank you because you've made a huge difference. And if you've come to our church after this started, or maybe you got here right away and you just weren't really sure, I want to invite you step in right now. Be one who's part of that. Click that QR code, make a commitment and live walking together shoulder to shoulder because this is our spiritual, our physical and our financial sacrifice, because giving starts or helps others start living for Jesus.

Your giving is making that difference, whether it's here locally, here in Omaha, whether it's in our state, whether it's in our nation or whether it's in our world. And so giving helps others start living for Jesus. And so shine that bright light because that has been the DNA of this church.

King of Kings has a rich story of sacrificing for future citizens of the kingdom of God. And if you look back at our history here in this church that began in 1962, it was all about reaching those who don't yet know Jesus. It was being willing to say we're going to pioneer as a church through any means necessary to reach those who don't yet know Jesus. And they went out and they did that.

And 2005, they bought land and they said, we're going to buy land. And those of you that were a part of that, thank you. We honor you. We're grateful for you. And you didn't stop. And you're still a part of this today. And that allowed us in 2023 to do what the dream was in 2005, which was to plant more churches to say, we need to create more churches to reach more people who don't yet know Jesus.

And so in 2023, we launched Northwest and Northwest. You are killing it. And we're thankful for you. And today you're one of the larger churches in our church body, worshiping nearly 250 people a weekend and way to go, keep it up and keep reaching that community.

And it allowed us in 2025 to begin the phases of relaunching Fremont and Fremont is growing, even though we haven't fully relaunched them yet. And today they continue to grow and they continue to be a beacon of light in Fremont. And we're so excited that this is a church that didn't close, but it's ready to blow open the doors of the gates of hell and ransom people to come and to be in heaven and be with us every day. So Fremont, we're excited and we're thankful for you.

And that's our story. We're going to keep going and keep going and keep going and being people who bring the light and the good news of Jesus to reach those who don't yet know Jesus. Some of you thought that'd be a white candle, didn't you? Yeah, I got a few tricks up my sleeves. And our lights will shine bright for Jesus because we're people that continue to live out the gospel story of Philippians 2, 5 through 8, have the same mind of Christ Jesus.

And it's to be of Christ Jesus. And it's to be sacrificial. It's to be willing to give up physically, spiritually and financially so that others would live physically, spiritually and eternally in the kingdom of God.

And so my encouragement for you is tomorrow, as you take a moment to remember those who made a great sacrifice for your freedom, ask yourself, what will they remember about you? What will they remember about you and your sacrifice that you've given for the kingdom, for heaven?

I'd invite all campuses to stand up right now and to pray with me.

Father God, we thank you and praise you for your son. For your son, we thank you and praise you for the sacrifice that was given through him. We thank you and praise you for those who've sacrificed for us to have earthly freedom in the shadow of the savior who's given us eternal freedom.

We ask, oh God, that we would be people who'd continue to live and to sacrifice physically, spiritually and financially. And may the kingdom continue to grow as you continue to use us to make heaven fuller, the kingdom stronger and lives greater.

And God's people everywhere said, amen, amen.