

## Viral Messages #4

### Atonement

April 19, 2020

Before we begin today I want to give you the definition of two words. Important words. The first word is "appeasement"

**APPE'ASE**, *verb* To make quiet; to calm; to reduce to a state of peace; to still; to pacify; as, to *appease* the tumult of the ocean or of the passions; to *appease* hunger or thirst or a wrong done.

#### Definition of *atonement*

- 1 : reparation for an offense or injury : satisfaction
- 2 : the reconciliation of God and humankind through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ
3. Expiation; satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing or suffering that which is received in satisfaction for an offense or injury;

In the ancient world, and even today, those who worshiped pagan gods lived in constant fear and darkness. The gods were always angry and malevolent. They needed to be continually appeased, most often with animal and human blood.

The worshippers of Molech offered up their children to the fire to be sacrificed (2 Kings 23:10).

The followers of Baal would cut themselves with stones as a sacrifice. (1 Kings 18:28).

The Philistines worshipped Dagon, the god of war and offered him the heads of their enemies. (1 Chronicles 10:10)

I want you to know that it is to be expected that the unholy pagan gods, made by men in man's image, would be just as bloodthirsty as their creators.

In contrast, in the Old Testament, the god of Abraham never asked to be appeased. Though sacrifices were a part of the Worship of Jehovah, the character of those offerings was completely different. The purpose of sacrifice to Jehovah was not appeasement, but atonement.

#### Here's an example: (Turn with me to Psalm 51)

In Psalm 51 you will find David's lament over his sin with Bathsheba. One thing you will not find is fear. David is not broken by his fear that God is going to punish him. David's heart is broken, because of God's lovingkindness (*hesed*), and has brought him to a place of repentance. David comes to realize the unbearable burden of his sin before God. In psalm 51, David sees, maybe for the first time in his life, that there is nothing he can do to make it right again. His only hope is the compassionate mercy of the Lord.

God must blot out his transgression, (Ps. 51:1), and wash and cleanse him (verses 2,7), only the Lord can blot out his iniquity (verse 9), and only God can create a clean heart within him and renew his spirit (verse 10). Only God could restore the joy of his salvation and sustain him with a willing spirit (verse 12).

David brings the only thing he has left. It's not a lamb that he needs to offer but his heart.

David brings his own broken heart and his broken spirit to God...

God must do for David what He did for us on Calvary...God must provide the sacrifice.

Here's the hard part of this: though most of us would not admit it, we live as if our God was always angry and in need of appeasement. We spend our lives between messing up and then trying to sacrifice enough to make things right between us and God.

Enough hours in a day, enough good works, enough worship songs, enough tears...maybe then God will be appeased and not angry at me anymore.

David find out that all we have left is all God ever wanted in the first place, that we come to the end of appeasement and begin to celebrate the "true worth of God." The atoning sacrifice that His holiness required could have only been offered by Himself...in the sacrifice of Himself. The motivation of the sacrifice of Jesus was not anger, but holiness. One the cross, God was not appeased, He was satisfied.

Satisfied means: pleased or content with what has been experienced or received : paid in full : desires fully gratified; made content.

The price of death and sin was satisfied. Christ died to make us holy. Christ came to steal our hearts away.

Jesus came to this earth to steal away humanity from the very grip of death and hell... All of this motivated by God's Scandalous Grace.

Hear this: "God's grace has a drenching about it. A wildness about it. A white-water, riptide, turn you upside downness about it...

Grace...God's grace...comes after you. Overwhelms you...and topples your little raft over...and throws you into God's wild river of life and love...and it never stops until you wash up on another shore...

Here's my case in point.

Grace reveals in us something that we almost never reveal. In public or private.

Our weakness.

Weak: having little physical power or ability : not strong

: having little power or force

: likely to break or stop working properly : not able to handle weight, pressure, or strain

Turn with me to **Luke 23:32-33 (Read)**

I want you to see the difference between appeasement and atonement.

We don't know much about these two men. We don't even know the details of their crimes. We don't know how much they stole or how often. From whom or why. We only know that they are thieves. A wayward son over whom some mother's heart has been broken; a father's son whose hopes are now being crucified.

We do know that robbery was not a capital crime in the Roman system of law. So that tells us that what brought them there was something greater than just stealing. But whoever they were, and whatever their crime, three men received the sentence of death that day. All three were flogged. And all three were taken outside of the city and crucified.

One thing we know for sure. From Matthew's account, we know that the thieves joined in with the crowd in mocking Jesus. **Matthew 27:42-44**

**"He saved others, but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, "I am the Son of God." In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him."**

Luke tells us that they hurled their insults at Him. Like a warrior hurls a javelin. Yet in the midst of all of this carnage, one of the thieves turns and defends Jesus.

**(Read Lk. 23:39-41)**

This thief is too weak to appease the Roman empire, much less a King.

And then a miracle happens. The thief turns to Jesus and pleads before a crucified King. This thief didn't know much theology. He only knew three things; that Jesus was a king, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that this king had the power to bring even the most unworthy into his kingdom.

But that was enough. And in one moment a lifetime of moral debt is cancelled.

**"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."**

**Lk. 23:42**

This sentence could have easily have been the first prayer of an entirely misspent life.

With these words an unnamed thief becomes the only one that we know of that speaks to Jesus on the cross without mocking Him.

This unnamed thief is the only person in the Bible who calls Jesus by His personal name, without any kind of title attached. It's as if their mutual suffering has placed them on an intimate, first name basis. And with these words, he is the first to be drawn to the grace found at the cross.

Jesus raises his head and answers this thief's request with a guarantee.

**"Today...you will be with me...in paradise." Lk. 23:43**

Paradise...is one of the oldest words in existence. The best that linguists can tell is that the word originally was Persian and referred to a walled garden. In Revelation 2:7, John says that Jesus uses the word to describe the place where the tree of life grows.

Today...today Jesus promised we will be in paradise together...and in just a few hours...a thief was in a place where there is no need to steal...

That thief could never make things right...But Christ's sacrificial atonement opens the door to life..

When Jesus lived here with us He, God's only Son came to steal us back...

Can I show you some of the treasure that He has come to steal?

- In a woman that the world sees as only a prostitute he sees a little girl worth rescuing.
- He sees a greedy little man up a sycamore tree and he reaches out and steals away a generous heart.
- In the dead of the night, he crosses an angry sea to reach into the tombs of the dead and find the heart of a family man.
- In the poor he found hearts that will become rich, in the blind he found hearts that could truly see...
- He came to steal the lepers away from loneliness and disease.
- He even stole away a thief's heart, and in that thief's darkest moment...gave him a place at the table...a place where he could be trusted...

I want to show you one more theft that Jesus committed on the day of His crucifixion.

**(Read Matt. 27:22-26)**

If you aren't careful you will miss the theft.

In order to cool down the simmering crowd Pilate tries an alternative. It was a custom at that time that during the celebration of Passover, a prisoner of the Jews' choice could be released from jail and set free. Pilate offered them a

Thief and murderer. The one who was to occupy the center spot in-between the other two thieves...To Pilate's horror the crowd chooses Barabbas.

One moment Barabbas was in his cell awaiting the horrors of crucifixion, the next he hears from the jailer, "You're free to go." "What?" "You're free. They took the Nazarene instead of you."

In a moment orchestrated by God, Jesus steals Barabbas' place on Calvary.... Jesus stole away the spit, the beating, stole Barabbas' crown of thorns...and even stole Barabbas' place on the cross...

and then He steals the old murderers' heart...you see, Church history is recorded as having Barabbas dying while preaching about a Savior that found him in a cell...stole his place, and then set him free...Jesus stole Barabbas place so he could live up to his name...

Know what his name means?

**Barabbas means "son of the father" Papa's son. Because of a stolen place, and a stolen heart....Barabbas lives up to his name...**

**Selah.**