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**Date: April 13, 2025**

**Speaker: Sam Rainer**

**Series: The Purpose of Easter**

**Message: The Necessity of Sacrifice**

### **Reflect:**

- What is something you've sacrificed or given up (time, money, sleep, a hobby, etc.) for the sake of a loved one or an important goal? How did that sacrifice show what was important to you, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Share about someone in your life (a parent, mentor, or friend) who demonstrated sacrificial love. What did they give up, and how did their example impact or inspire you in your own life and relationships?

### **Encounter:**

- In Luke 19:35–38, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a young donkey as people joyfully spread cloaks on the road and praise God. Why do you think Jesus chose to enter the city this way, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9's prophecy of a humble king on a donkey? What does this contrast between a donkey and a typical war-horse reveal about the kind of Messiah and King Jesus is?
- Thinking back to the story of Abraham being asked to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22). What thoughts and emotions would Abraham have wrestled with as he took three days to journey to the mountain (Genesis 22:4) and prepared the altar (Genesis 22:9–10)? How did Abraham demonstrate trust in God's provision (notice Genesis 22:8, 13–14) and what does the name "Jehovah Jireh" (The Lord Will Provide) tell us about

God's character in this story? In what ways does Isaac's rescue with a ram point forward to God providing Jesus as the sacrifice in our place?

- According to Hebrews 10:11–14, how is Jesus's sacrifice on the cross different from the repeated animal sacrifices offered by priests in the Old Testament? What does it mean that Jesus' offering was "once for all", and how does His sitting down at God's right hand (Hebrews 10:12) show that the work of atonement is finished? How does this truth deepen our understanding of why Jesus's sacrifice was absolutely necessary for our salvation?

## **Transform:**

- As we reflect on Jesus' sacrifice, how does His sacrifice provide power and meaning for the sacrifices that we are called to make? How should His sacrifice empower us to embrace sacrifices in this life?
- "Victory has to come through sacrifice" was a key theme of this Palm Sunday message – the triumph of Easter Sunday came only after the sacrifice of Good Friday. Can you think of a time when a personal sacrifice or loss in your life eventually led to growth, healing, or a positive transformation (either in you or in someone you helped)? How does the pattern of the cross and resurrection encourage you to trust God with the sacrifices you make or the trials you face right now?

## **Related Passages:**

- **Genesis 22:1–14** – The Binding of Isaac. This passage recounts Abraham's ultimate test of faith in being asked to sacrifice his beloved son. It highlights themes of trust and surrender, and it foreshadows God providing a substitute (the ram) just as He would later provide His own Son, Jesus, as the sacrifice for our sins.
- **Psalms 118:25–26** – Prophetic Praise. Part of a hymn sung by pilgrims, these verses cry "Lord, save us!" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The crowd quoted this Psalm when Jesus entered Jerusalem (Luke 19:38), acknowledging Him as the long-awaited deliverer sent by God.
- **Isaiah 53:5–7** – The Suffering Servant. The prophet Isaiah foretold a Messiah who would suffer and be led like a lamb to slaughter for our sins: "He was pierced for our transgressions... by his wounds we are healed." This vivid prophecy, written centuries before Christ, describes the sacrificial death Jesus endured to bring us peace and healing.
- **Zechariah 9:9** – The Humble King Comes. Zechariah prophesied a king coming to Jerusalem "righteous and victorious, yet lowly and riding on a donkey." Jesus fulfilled this exactly on the first Palm Sunday, revealing Himself as a humble King of peace.

This verse provides important context for why Jesus chose a donkey instead of a warhorse.

- **Mark 8:34–35** – Take Up Your Cross. Jesus teaches that to follow Him, we must deny ourselves and take up our cross. He says that whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Him and for the gospel will save it. This paradox illustrates how surrender and sacrifice are required for true discipleship and lead to true life.
- **Hebrews 10:11–14** – Christ's Perfect Sacrifice. This New Testament passage contrasts the daily sacrifices of Old Testament priests with Jesus Christ's single, all-sufficient sacrifice. It explains that by Jesus's one offering on the cross, He has perfected forever those who are being made holy. It underlines the finality and necessity of Jesus's sacrifice, which accomplished what no other sacrifice could.
- **Romans 12:1** – Living Sacrifices. The apostle Paul urges believers, in view of God's mercy, to offer themselves as "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." Unlike Old Testament sacrifices, a living sacrifice means we continually devote our lives to God. This verse connects the theme of sacrifice to our daily worship and spiritual response – we lay down our lives out of gratitude for Jesus laying down His life for us.

### Interesting Facts and Tidbits:

- **Meaning of "Jehovah Jireh":** In Genesis 22:14, Abraham names the place of Isaac's near-sacrifice "Jehovah Jireh," which means "The Lord will provide." Interestingly, the Hebrew root of Jireh means "to see." It suggests that God "sees ahead" to our needs and provides for them in advance. This is the only time in Scripture God is called Jehovah Jireh, commemorating how God saw Abraham's faith and provided a ram as a substitute sacrifice.
- **Donkey vs. War Horse** – A King of Peace: In the ancient Middle East, kings rode horses when they went to war, but would ride donkeys to symbolize peace. By entering Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus signaled that He came as a gentle King bringing peace, not as a warrior bent on conquest. This fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 and would have been understood as a sign of His peaceful, servant-hearted mission.
- **Palm Sunday and Passover:** The day of Jesus's triumphal entry (Palm Sunday) occurred at the beginning of the Jewish Passover week. Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims celebrating Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The timing is significant – as crowds brought Passover lambs to the Temple, Jesus was presenting Himself as the ultimate Passover Lamb who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world.

- **Jesus Weeps for Jerusalem:** Luke 19:41 notes that Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem even as the crowds cheered. He prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed because many did not recognize “the time of God’s coming” (Luke 19:44). This came true about 40 years later in 70 A.D. when the Romans besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. Jesus’s tears showed His deep love and grief that people missed the peace He came to give.

### **Additional Discussion Questions:**

- What stood out to you about what God sacrificed for our sake (for example, think of the Father giving His Son, or Jesus laying down His divine privileges)? How does grasping God’s costly love influence the way you respond to Him?
- On Palm Sunday, many expected Jesus to bring an immediate political victory. Instead, He brought salvation through suffering. Have you ever expected God to work in a certain way and been surprised by a very different outcome? How can we align our expectations with God’s plans, especially when His way involves patience or sacrifice?
- Romans 12:1 calls us to be “living sacrifices.” In practical terms, what might it look like for young families like ours to live sacrificially day-to-day (in our schedules, finances, or how we serve others)? What is one change you feel prompted to make after reflecting on this theme, and how can we support one another in it?