



of an idol. It's been centuries since a lamb or a goat was properly offered for the forgiveness of sins. Obviously God has not changed his opinion of the deadly nature of sin. There must be another way.

That other way is NOT to minimize sin. God himself tells us that innocent blood still needed to be shed. But it was not the blood of some family pet that was required for sin; it was the blood of Jesus. If our sins were to be paid for, it must be by the shedding of this innocent lamb's blood.

It wasn't just anyone who could preside over such a sacrifice. It took a very special High priest. *Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*

And it couldn't have happened in Rome or Alexandria or Antioch that such a sacrifice could be offered, but right there in the holy city of Jerusalem. There, and there alone, the sin could be paid for but it was on a lonely outcropping of rock called, "Golgotha."

Imagine the sights and sounds and smells of that day too! Imagine the smell of the unwashed bodies slowly pouring out their lifeblood. Imagine the sight of the mocking crowds and his distraught mother. Imagine the scornful sounds of the criminals as they gasped for breath! But the greatest sound was in the words of our Savior: "It is finished." How could we look and smell and hear and believe that somehow sin is not serious?

But then how can we go through our lives believing that offerings that are crippled animals can somehow be pleasing to God? How can we look God in the eye and say that our wandering thoughts and selfish concerns are acceptable worship? How can we mock God's servants – in the government, in the home, in the church – and not see how necessary was all of the tragedy of Calvary? How can we not say, "I am responsible for this innocent man's death?"

God's solution we hear in the words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them." His actions were far different from those other lambs. For this lamb fulfilled the blood price and set us free from all those sins of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. He offers this benefit to you simply through faith. He offers faith to you in baptism, in the Lord's Supper, and in his word. Because his was a perfect sacrifice of both God and man, his sacrifice counts for all, for all time.

So what shall we do? How shall we treat this great offering, once for all? Are we the unappreciative child who gleefully announces, "My parents will buy me another?" No, we are humbled and blessed by our Savior's sacrifice. We come before him with hearts full of sorrow for our unworthiness, and rejoicing that we should be loved this much! We take him at his word believing that our salvation is accomplished and then desire to spend the rest of our lives acting as if it is up to us. We preach Christ crucified ONCE FOR ALL TIME. Amen.