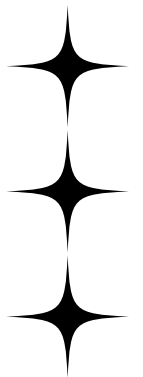




THE SACRIFICE OF FELLOWSHIP

Banning Liebscher

Sunday Message



Teaching Text:



(NKJV) Romans 1:8-13

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established — 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

recap.

This week Banning Liebscher continues a teaching series focusing on the theology and necessity of the local church. In the teaching text Paul distinguishes between what can happen through a letter and what happens when we gather in person. There are particular gifts that are released only when we come together as a church. Gifts that are needed so that we can be established (to make stable, place firmly, set fast, fix, to strengthen, make firm).

What Banning is talking about this week only makes sense when we view the church as a

house and not a restaurant. There is a tension that lives inside of each of us, and it begs the question: are we consumers or contributors? Consumers show up to a restaurant, but contributors show up to a house. We must treat church as our house and our family so that we show up contributing our unique gifts.

We all must decide if we are going to approach church as a consumer or a contributor. It is all too easy to determine that we have nothing to offer or contribute to

the church if we are not on the stage worshipping or preaching the sermon. But we all have something to show up with and offer to the family. We can all come with our faith.

Contributors bring gifts to the church body and when we don't show up on a Sunday, there is something missing from the family. Online works at some level because we have embraced a consumer concept with church. What's the difference if we watch at home or in a chair? Our lives actually bring something to the gathering. In Deuteronomy 16 the Bible talks about a contributor concept. "Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the Lord empty-handed" (Deuteronomy 16:16)."

The most important gift we bring each and every Sunday is our faith. Our faith, connected to the faith of others, releases something powerful and transformative. There are times we come to church and we get what we didn't even know we needed. When God shows up to you it spills out of your life onto everyone around you.

We must acknowledge that we are being disciplined by a "culture of convenience". Culture influences our thinking in ways we don't always see. We don't even realize that we are no longer thinking as the Kingdom but as the world. One of those areas is around the issue of convenience. We have been programmed to think that inconvenience is bad. But we must understand that God is not trying to make our lives more convenient.

Ekklesia is inconvenient. It is convenient to be a consumer and inconvenient to be a contributor. The Bible refers to it as a sacrifice. The Christian life is rewarding and fruitful but not convenient. Choosing to be a contributor means showing up when you don't want to because your presence matters. Others have what you need.



Discussion Guide

Emotional Health Check In:

Take a few minutes to do an emotional health check in with your Life on Life group, creating space for each person to answer the question below:

**What was a highlight of your week?
What felt like a challenge?**

If the need arises, spend a few minutes praying for one another, asking God to meet needs and help each person carry what feels heavy right now.

ENGAGE

What particular gifts have you received and how have they impacted you?

What sort of feelings arise when you think of the church as a family?

How have you been affected by the “culture of convenience” ?

Are there any roadblocks that keep you from fully contributing to the church family?

ENCOUNTER

Spend a few minutes in stillness and quiet (you may want to play soaking music) in your group and ask the Holy Spirit the following question:

Holy Spirit, have I been approaching church as a consumer? If so, what is holding me back and keeping me from fully engaging? If there is a lie attached to that area, replace it with Your truth.

If time permits, allow those who want to, to share what God spoke to them during the encounter time.

EQUIP

Take some time to evaluate whether or not you have been approaching church as a contributor. Ask the Holy Spirit how He would like to utilize your gifts and then think of practical ways to begin to step into that (join a Host Team, Life on Life Group, etc).



