Sermon for the Second Sunday of Christmas

‘And the king went to
Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place. Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.’

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The wisest of kings, him whom God had blessed with the greatest of understanding, that he might rule with *discernment for what is right.* This one, King Solomon of Israel, the people of God, sacrificed *a thousand burnt offerings to the Lord.*

We, who think ourselves sophisticated believe that the sacrifice of animals to appease God to be the greatest barbarism. Why would God demand the blood of bulls and goats to allay his wrath against our sin?

And for asking this question, the Lord Christ once said, *‘You brood of vipers. You hypocrites! You discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it that you do not discern this time?*’

How do you *not discern your own time.*
You weep over the blood of beasts with cloven hooves and cries of doves, but not over the tears of men, and of children, and of their shrieks of terror.

For how many were murdered to appease the honor of a disgraced nation during the Second World War, and how many more eliminated in chambers of nerve gas to save the world from, of all things, international banking. A sin, if it be a sin, much less than the iniquity of all the children of man.

And in that era of bloodlust, the hatred throughout the world of petty men, owning petty land, living petty lives, poured forth more blood, more sorrow,

more suffering, than can be reasonably reckoned, seeking ‘equality’. Setting a number for how many were murdered under the thoroughly human utopian politics
of our past is meaningless, for once a number gets too large, we no longer are able to understand it.

Perhaps it is best to say that if one were to do nothing but
count all day, every day, without eating or drinking, one would not approach the number of those killed by their fellow man before reaching their natural death.

And all this in not some distant past, but in the age of ourselves, our parents and grandparents.

To sacrifice so many human lives seeking some promised
Neverland, we brush off, and account it all as just a chapter of ‘history.’ Yet the enlightened among us, those very same who thought such murders in the past century as necessary to bring about a better world, those same count the slaughter of animals in the nation of Israel as barbarism.

We are *a brood of vipers. Hypocrites.*
For we thought that such human sacrifice would atone for the whimpering jealousies of our time. Yet we begrudge
the Lord for having provided turtledoves and lambs for the atonement of all the malice of the world.
We are not the sophisticated. We are the barbarians. But to Solomon was given wisdom, a *discerning mind.* And for
this reason, he *offered a thousand burnt*
offerings on the altar at Gibeon. For he knew that the Lord *takes pleasure in the death of no one.*
But desires a *broken and contrite heart.*
That no man may die, the Almighty allowed the blood of beasts to be substituted in the place of people. And yet, not because He desired such animal sacrifice, but that we might know that our sin against our neighbor has a cost. That guilt requires a recompense. That, before a just God, no evil is allowed to go free.
For if God is good, God cannot allow the sin of one man against another to go unpunished, for He hears *the blood of the*
innocent crying from the ground.

Yet, He desires for *all to be saved.*
Therefore, in the days of old, the Lord instituted the substitution of animals for the lives of men and women and child, that we might be made wise, knowing that our sin, even if not avenged against our fellow man, is yet still avenged.

So Solomon, wisest of all rulers, *sacrificed a thousand burnt offerings,* that the altar of the Lord would be a place a justice, where crime, our manifold crimes against God and one another, were made right. *'Vengeance in mine, sayeth the Lord.'*

This is what the altar of the Lord is. It is the seat of mercy, and the throne of justice. It is where those who have done wrong are forgiven, and where wrath is poured out upon the spotless sheep and doves that have done no wrong. For there is no reckoning a wrong without punishment.

Now when our Lord and God Jesus Christ was twelve, He was in Jerusalem. And as His parents, Mary and Joseph left the Holy City after the Passover, Jesus remained behind. His parents, when they saw that He was not with Him, panicked, as any parent would, and searched everywhere. *And after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress?'*

And he said to them, 'Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'

Indeed, He must be in His Father's house. The seat of mercy, and the throne of justice. For it is where those who have done wrong are forgiven, and where wrath is poured out upon the spotless sheep who have done no wrong.

He must be in His Father's house, for Jesus, the lover of all humanity, who longs in everlasting love with His holy heart to save mankind; this, our Lord, must be killed by those He loves, that His love might atone for those by whom He was killed. This, and this alone, is the sacrifice, the peace offering of loving-kindness, that the Father has always desired.

A cross awaits this young child. A cross of wood, awaiting His passion, that we might be made whole. We, whom He came to redeem, shall break Him. We, whom he
came to save, shall crucify Him. The last sacrifice.

And before He dies the death of thieves and traitors, He
shall speak gently, *'Father, into your
hands I commit my spirit.'*

*For thus sayeth the Lord, 'I do not
delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.'*

'But a broken spirit I will not despise.'

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*Preached by Pastor
Fields*

*Sermon Texts: 1 Kings
3:4-15; Ephesians 1:3-14; Luke 2:40-52.*