Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Taking a photo, today, is very simple – you just point your phone at your subject and press the screen, job done. And this is amazing compared to how complicated taking photos used to be! You first had to load the the film into your camera, then get a light reading with a light meter, the set the aperture opening dial and the shutter speed dial and the film type dial, then adjust the focus, then press the button to take the photo, and then remember to wind your film forward so you didn’t take multiple shots on the same piece of film. And there are probably even some of us here who were the subject of photos that had a hood over the camera and a powder flash or a light bulb flash, and the light bulb needed to be replaced each time! So taking a photo today seems so simple compared to how complicated it was back in the day.

Well, as we come to the third of the five offerings in Leviticus 1-7, I trust you are starting to see that the whole business of offerings was incredibly complex; not only were there five different offering *types*, each offering also had lots of options and details and regulations about how it was to be presented!!!

Well, what we have to do today is far simpler; we just have to repent of our sins and believe in the once for all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. That’s it! **Hebrews 10:10** says, “*We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*.” So just like we saw in relation to taking photos, we have it much easier today, right! We just have to repent and believe! That is the beautiful simplicity of the gospel; that is the privilege of living on this side of the cross.

Now, that does not mean that studying the offerings in Leviticus is a waste of time for us. In fact the opposite is true – the more we understand these offerings, the more our appreciation of what Jesus did for us on the cross will grow.

So today we are going to see that **the Peace offering is about fellowship with the Lord and His people**. And just as we did last week, our four points will be the **details**, the **method**, and the **meaning** of this sacrifice, and finally, it’s **relevance** for us as New Testament believers. And in God’s providence it is perfect that we consider this offering today, because there are beautiful connections between the peace offering and the Lord’s Supper!

1. So let’s begin with the **Details** of the peace offering.
	1. And first off, like the burnt offering and the grain offering, the peace offering was a **voluntary** offering, meaning it was not mandatory. It was an offering that the worshiper chose to bring and which could be brought at any time.
	2. But the next thing to note is the **type** of offering you could bring:
		1. If you remember back to the burnt offering, the rich could offer a bull, average incomer earners could offer a sheep or a goat, and the poor could offer turtledoves or pigeons. But with the peace offering, your choices were a **bull** from the herd, as we see in verse 1, or a **sheep** or **goat** from the flock, as we see in verses 7&12. You could not offer a bird as a peace offering. And we will see why this was so, and what this meant for the poor, when we get to the meaning of the offering.
		2. But another difference from the burnt offering is that while the burnt offering had to be a male, the peace offering animal could be **male or female**. And we will say more about this too when we get to the meaning of the offering.
		3. But verses 1&6 also explain that whether it was a male or female, it still had to be **without blemish**. So it was still a *costly* offering; you were still giving one of your best animals to the Lord.
	3. And this reminds us of something we saw in relation to the burnt offering, which is that Jesus is the costly and perfect sacrifice that the Triune God paid that our sins might be forgiven. When you and me have to give something up, we typically offer the least precious, I don’t use it anymore, it’s a little bit broken anyway, thing we can find. Right? But not the Triune God; together they agreed that the Son of God would leave heaven and live on earth and endure all that He suffered so that our sins could be forgiven. And it is good for us to ponder that as we approach the table today!
2. But let’s look next at the **Method** of the peace offering.
	1. And the first thing to note is that the peace offering, just as with the burnt offering, had to be made “*at the entrance to the tent of meeting*,” meaning beside the altar in the tabernacle courtyard.
	2. And then, as we see in verse 2, and just as with the burnt offering, the worshiper had to **lay his hand on the head of his offering**. So once again there was recognition that this offering died in your place; that although you deserved to die because of your sins, this animal was your substitute sacrifice. And it is worth repeating here that for offerings to truly please the Lord the worshiper had to believe in the promises about Messiah. If there was no faith in Messiah, then the offering was an empty offering. And in the same way, being at church and singing and praying and presenting tithes and offerings is pleasing to the Lord *only if we have faith in Jesus Christ*. If you do not have faith in Jesus, then your worship is also empty worship.
	3. Well, after the animal had been killed by the worshiper and the priest had caught the blood and thrown it on the sides of the altar, the fat that lined the cavity that contained the internal organs, and the fat around each of the organs, and the kidney and the liver, were burned on the altar as a “*food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord*.”
		1. And in addition, if the offering was a sheep, verse 9 explains that the whole **fat tail** was to be burned as part of the offering. Now, I am sure you have seen many sheep, so you might be wondering what that is all about? Well, commentators explain that one common variety of sheep in that part of the world had an especially fat tail. It could be up to 45cm across and weigh 7kgs or more! And the fat of the tail was especially delicious and was often used for cooking instead of butter! Shepherds even built a kind of cart and attached the tail to it so it did not drag along the ground to protect the animal from discomfort and to protect your future delicious meal!
		2. So the fat and the kidney and the liver and the fat tail of the sheep were the tastiest and best parts of the meat, which is why they were offered to the Lord.
	4. Now, before we move on to consider the meaning of the peace offering, what **Leviticus 7** also adds to our understanding of this offering is that once the prescribed parts of the animal had been offered to the Lord, the breast and the thigh were given to the priests as meat for them to eat. But that still left a lot of the carcass. And the leftover part was **a meal for the worshipper and his family**. So the whole offering was presented to the Lord, and then part it was a food offering to the Lord, part of it was eaten by the priests, and part of it was eaten by the worshipper/s.
3. And that brings us, thirdly, to the **Meaning** of the peace offering.
	1. Chapter 7 also explains the three main reasons why the peace offering was presented.
		1. The first reason was for **thanksgiving**. And you could express your thanks to the Lord for any reason you liked – good crops, increase in your flocks, deliverance from an enemy or illness, were common reasons.
		2. The second reason was to **complete a vow** you had made to the Lord. For example, last week I told you about Hannah, the mother of Samuel. She asked the Lord to give her a son and she vowed that if He did, she would dedicate Samuel to the Lord’s service. And so, after the Lord answered her prayer and gave her Samuel, we are told that she brought Samuel to the tabernacle, along with a bull for a peace offering and flour for a grain offering. So the people of Israel would seek a blessing from the Lord and vow to offer a sacrifice if He would give them what they asked. And if He did, the peace offering was the appropriate offering.
		3. And the third type of peace offering was a **free-will** offering. So there was no particular reason for this offering other than your desire to honour the Lord. So thanksgiving for something, to complete a vow, or as a free-will offering were the three reasons for the peace offering.
	2. Now, the next thing we need to see in relation to the peace offering arises from its name – peace. The Hebrew word translated as ‘peace’ comes from the root of a word you may have heard before – **shalom**. It means peace/well-being/protection/blessing. So the idea behind this offering is that instead of you being at war with God or under His covenant curse or punishment, you were at peace with God and enjoying the fullness of His covenant favour – so it was well with you, in the fullest sense of the word. So this truly was a joyful feast.
		1. You see, the people of Israel, in and of themselves, were no different than the rest of the world – they were a sinful people who deserved God’s judgment. But God had made covenant with them – through them the Messiah would come who would conquer Satan and sin and death. And to teach them about the wickedness of sin and how God’s wrath at sin had to be satisfied, and to point them to Messiah, God gave them His law and the sacrifices. So the peace offering was a joyful celebration of fellowship with the Lord.
		2. But it was also a joyful celebration of fellowship with the Lord’s people. And this is where we return to the point we made earlier about **birds** **not being acceptable** for the peace offering. You see, there simply was not enough meat on a bird for the Lord, the priest, and the worshipper/s to enjoy a feast! And God wanted His people to have a peace-*feast*, not a peace-*nibble*! And while the burnt offering, because it was completely for the Lord, had to be the most valuable – a male, the offering that was a feast for the Lord and the people could be **male or female**. And we learn from Deuteronomy that the Lord expected the person presenting this offering to **invite the poor** to partake with his family in this peace-feast. And in this way the poor could also partake of this joyful fellowship celebration.
4. And that brings us, fourthly and finally, to the **relevance** of the peace offering for New Testament believers. And I am sure you can see how perfectly all this is preparing us for the Lord’s Supper!
	1. You see, you and me are no different than all the people in the world, in that we are guilty sinners. The Bible says that we are born with a sinful and corrupt nature. But even if we set that aside for a moment, just one lustful thought or one lie or one hateful thought or one bit of gossip or one disobedient thought or act is all it takes for us to be deserving of death and condemnation, because the God who is perfectly holy expects and demands perfect holiness. So sin breaks our fellowship with God. But earlier in the sermon I quoted **Hebrews 10:10**: “*We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*.” But we also read **Romans 5:1** earlier: “*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*.” It is no wonder then that the Bible calls Jesus the Prince of peace!
		1. Brothers and sisters, young people and boys and girls, the peace offering points us to Jesus as the one who experienced God’s wrath in the place of all who put their trust in Him. That is the gospel! **1 John 1:3** says this of the believer: “*Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*.” For you to enjoy fellowship with God, you must understand that you are a sinner who deserves to die and spend eternity in hell and you must believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for your sins. Do you believe that? If you do, you have peace with God! You are in fellowship with God and His people!
	2. And that is the very heart of **the Lord’s Supper**. In **John 6**, Jesus said, “*Whoever believes has eternal life. I am the living bread that came down from heaven … Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day … Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him*.” So just as some of the peace offering was handed back to the worshiper to feast on, together with others of the covenant community, so the body and blood of THE peace offering is given to us to eat and enjoy, with our fellow believers.
		1. So we will eat this meal as a celebration of our fellowship with God. By faith, we have been united with Christ and all of His benefits and blessings. So as you eat, God is reminding you that you enjoy peace with Him through Jesus Christ!
		2. But you will not be alone at the feast! So you are also celebrating your unity and fellowship with others who enjoy peace with God through Jesus Christ.
		3. Aren’t the parallels between the peace offering and the Lord’s Supper just stunning?! The Lord’s Supper truly is a joyful peace meal!
	3. But here are a couple more quick thoughts in terms of the relevance of the peace offering, which come to us from **Hebrews 13:15-16**, “*Through [Jesus] let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God*.”
		1. Your prayers and your songs are a sacrifice of praise to God. So don’t hold back! Don’t worry about what others around might think if you sing with all your heart; sing *joyfully* to the Lord!
		2. And just as those who offered the peace offering were expected to invite the poor to feast with them, in part to share what they had with them, so we too are to share what we have with those who are in need.

In 1772, Reverend John Fawcett, who was the pastor of a small country church, accepted the call to serve as the minister of a large church in London. So the day came when he had to preach his farewell sermon, which he did. The congregation then helped him pack everything and as they stood there to farewell him everyone was in tears. And Reverend Fawcett was so overcome by their grief that he changed his mind on the spot and decided to stay. And he stayed there until his death 45 years later! Reverend Fawcett wrote the hymn, ***Blest be the Tie that Binds*** our hearts in Christian love; the fellowship of kindred minds Is like to that above. The peace offering teaches us that in Christ we have peace with God and fellowship with Him and with each other. And that, congregation, is most precious and very beautiful! Amen.