

*Jesus* : The Scapegoat  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Advent: December 5, 2010  
Bonita Wood  
Leviticus 16

I'll bet lots of you know John 3:16.

This was probably one of the first Bible verses I ever learned.

Say it with me if you know it:

**"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life".**

John, one of Jesus' disciples wrote that.

And he also wrote in Revelation 13:8 that, Christ the lamb of God **"was slain from the creation of the world"**.

Before God even created the world, Before He set the stars in place, Before He breathed the breathe of life into the nostrils of man, God knew that Mankind would fall, He knew that mankind would sin and rebel against Him.

And knowing this, God planned and God set in motion, the means for mankind's redemption, through the death and atoning sacrifice of the Lamb, His Son, Jesus Christ.

Today, we are going to take a look at The Day of Atonement that is described in detail for us in the 16th chapter of Leviticus, in order to gain a better understanding of Jesus the Scapegoat.

I want to look at this chapter through God, the master painter's, eyes as he **paints for us 3 Great pictures of the Atonement.**

And then as we share in the Lord's supper, you will get to see that canvas come to life before your eyes as Jesus the Scapegoat takes on your sins so you can take on his love and forgiveness and cleansing.

In this chapter, God the master painter, takes out the canvas, the paint, and the brush of His Word.

And, as He skillfully blends the colors, that make up this masterpiece, the words of the 16th chapter of Leviticus come to life on the canvas.

As as He dips His brush, for that last and final stroke of red, the heart of God is heavy, and a tear rolls down the cheek of the Almighty God, as the colors, as the shadows, and as the images on the canvas, tear at His heart bringing to his mind, the great suffering that His own Son would one day endure.

**Turn with me to Leviticus 16 (pg\_\_)**

Let's stroll through the art gallery of the Word of God to see 3 masterpieces, 3 great works that bring to life the power and the purpose of the Day of Atonement.

**Atonement – sometimes referred to as "at-one-ment," – means the reconciliation of sinful humanity with God or being at one with God.**

As we look at all the pictures today, we will first look at the picture, in the shadow of the Old Testament.

Then we will pull the picture off the wall and enjoy it's full beauty and glory as we examine the painting through the LIGHT of Jesus Christ and it's New Testament fulfillment.

**Read Leviticus 16:1- 7**

1. The first picture that we come to is entitled, "**The Great Priest**", and it is a portrait of Christ our Mediator.

The Israelites have left Egypt and are camped at the bottom of Mt. Sinai on their way to the Promised land.

And it is here that God instructs them on how to live holy lives.

In this 16<sup>th</sup> Chapter we see The Israelite crowd slowly gathering around the Tent of Meeting, which was their mobile sanctuary.

They were quiet; they were reverent and even a little afraid, as they gathered

After all this was the great Day of Atonement, this was the day that God Himself had appointed, this was the day when Aaron their High Priest, would be their Mediator.

**When Aaron their High Priest would stand between - God and the people.**

On this day - atonement would be made for their sins.

This Atonement provided the way- by removing their sin - for the people to be AT ONE with God – reconciled with God.

Moses' brother Aaron was the high priest, He was the one chosen to be the mediator, chosen to stand between God and the Israelites.

And although this was without doubt, a high and honorable position, even Aaron, the High Priest was only allowed to go into the Most Holy place, once a year - on the Day of Atonement.

This Most Holy Place was located behind the thick veil in the tabernacle. And it was in this room that the Ark of The Covenant was kept. And on top of the ark of the covenant made of Gold was the Atonement cover with 2 angels on top with their wings folded down bowing towards the center of the cover.

And above that center was a cloud in which dwelt the presence of God.

This is the place Aaron gets to go into.

Can you imagine how Aaron must have felt as he slowly walked through the Holy place - passing the golden lamb stand, the altar of incense - and then with head bowed low He walked past the thick veil, And Now He stands in the Most Holy Place, **The Holy of Holies.**

And right there above the ark of the covenant was the very glory of God.

Jewish Tradition tells us that they sewed bells into the bottom hem of the High Priests robe. And they tied a rope around his ankle.

So that whenever the High Priest walked around in the Holy of Holies, the people would hear the bells.

If the bells stopped ringing, that would mean something had happened to the High Priest.

And since no one dared to enter the Holy of Holies to see what happened, the rope was used, to pull out the High Priest.

The God of Israel, Our God is a Holy God, and man, even if he is the High Priest, could not simply crawl out of bed, walk out of his tent and walk into the presence of God.

The High Priest had to meet certain requirements before he was allowed access to the Holy of Holies.

Aaron had to bathe himself and he had to put on sacred garments.

The High Priest had to be spotless in dress.

And because no one is without sin, including the High Priest Aaron, he first had to make atonement for his own sins and for the sins of his household by sacrificing a bull.

Only when Aaron, the high Priest had made himself ready, could he take the blood of the sacrificed animal into the presence of God, to make atonement for the people.

**Read verse 17**

**Every year the High Priest bore the heavy burden of being the mediator between God and His people.**

Every year he would offer the same sacrifices.

Every year the responsibility was all his, he had to do it alone.

No one was allowed to be with him or help him as he carried out this vital task.

What a tremendous responsibility, what a colossal burden the High Priest carried and after each year he knew that in 365 days he would have to do it again.

This work was so painstaking and trying, that after it was over the Israelites would gather around him with sympathy and congratulations that he was brought through it safely.

**Now, let's take this Old Testament painting, "The Great Priest", off the wall, and view it in the LIGHT of the New Testament.**

Aaron was a good High Priest, and over the next 1400 years I am sure there were many more good and honorable High priests.

They did the best they could but they were still merely men.

Friends, today, we too have a High Priest.

But our High Priest is much greater and far better than any of the Old Testament Priests.

**Our High Priest is Jesus Christ our Lord.**

And as the light of God's revealed Word shines on the Old Testament High Priests, we will see that it is a portrait of Christ, who is our Mediator.

He is **The ONE** who stands between God and all people.

The book of Hebrews shares in several passages of how Jesus is the true Great Priest.

*"Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this **once for all** when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people's sin." (Hebrews 7:27)*

***all the people's sins not just the Israelites but Yours and mine as well.***

In Jesus - the Glory, Splendor and Power of the High Priest comes to full life.

We saw how Aaron bore this heavy burden of responsibility all alone.

However, it was only a picture of the much more crushing load which lay on upon the shoulders of our High Priest Jesus.

All through His life, this heavy weight was upon Him, pressing with ever increasing force upon His soul.

And in the garden this burden would reach it's cruel, crushing climax.

**In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was on His face praying, He was tired, He was afraid, and yet He was determined to do His father's will.**

He saw in the distance the flickering lights of torches and He heard the familiar sound of soldiers in armor as they marched up the hill.

**He knew the time was at hand.**

He what the coming hours would bring.

He would stand before Jewish and Roman leaders.  
 Beatings, insults, pain, nails and a cruel cross of wood is what lay before Him.  
 AS he stood up from His place of prayer, he watched as His disciples scattered in terror.  
 No one could help Him or be with him as He performed His High Priestly duty.  
 Even His Heavenly Father would have to turn His back on Him.  
 Jesus is our High Priest and He is far better than any other.  
 Aaron was spotless in dress - Christ was spotless in character  
 Aaron entered the earthly tabernacle - Christ entered the heavenly tabernacle.  
 Aaron entered behind the veil - Christ ripped opened the veil  
 Aaron offered for his own sins - Christ offered only for our sin  
 Aaron entered once a year - Christ entered once for all  
 Aaron offered for the whole Israeli nation - Christ offered for the whole world.  
 Aaron offered many sacrifices - Christ offered one sacrifice  
 Aaron offered blood of animals - Christ offered His own blood  
**The Great Priest** – Christ not only adds color and beauty to this Old Testament painting  
 – He brings it to life.

## 2. The next painting we see is "**The Great Pardon**"

And it is a portrait of Christ our Scapegoat.

**Scapegoat - one that is made to bear the blame for others.**

**Read Lev 16: 7- 10 and 20-22**

The Atonement for the Israelite people involved 2 goats.

These 2 animals constituted 1 sin offering.

Aaron brought the 2 goats to the entrance of the tent of meeting.

And there the fate of each goat was determined.

One goat was to be sacrificed and the other goat was to be the scapegoat.

Israel's sin demanded an offering – it required a price.

One goat was to be sacrificed and its blood carried into the Holy of Holies.

Then Aaron placed his hands on the head of 2nd goat, the scapegoat, and confessed the wickedness, the sin and rebellion of the people.

The scapegoat was led out of the Tabernacle, past the tents of the people, out of the encampment and released into the wilderness carrying with Him the sins of the people and symbolizing that God had forgiven, and God had forgotten the sins of the people.

*Psalm 103:13 tells us, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us"*

**What a powerful image! One goat takes on punishment, the other carries away iniquity.**

As we take a closer look at **the Great Pardon** painting, through the LIGHT of the New Testament, we see that it is a portrait of Christ our Scapegoat.

*The prophet Isaiah tells how the Messiah would be "**pierced for our iniquities and wounded for our transgressions; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all**" (Isaiah 53:5-6).*

For over 1400 years, God had watched from heaven the endless sacrifices of lambs, rams and goats.

These were a mere rehearsal for the true atonement.

And now, as they led Jesus out of the garden, the moment of truth was at hand.

Now, was the moment when the True Lamb of God would be led, tied and bound like a lamb to the slaughter.

*“For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.” (II Cor 5:21).*

With vindictive, cruel hatred they beat, mocked, and whipped The Lamb of God.

After which they led Jesus’ tired and battered body up the road to Golgotha, carrying a heavy wooden crossbeam.

Have you ever wondered how God felt as He looked down from heaven and saw the suffering of his Son?

Max Lucado in his book, Six Hours One Friday, captures what he believes might have been the thoughts of God. He says this:

"Soldiers, you think you led Him? Ropes, you think you bind Him? Men, you think you sentence Him? He heeds not your commands. He winces not at your lashes. It is my voice he obeys. It is my condemnation he dreads. And it is your soul He saves."

"Oh my son, my child. Look up into the heavens and see my face before I turn it. Hear my voice before I silence it. Would that I could save you and them. But they don't see and they don't hear."

"The living must die so that the dying can live. The time has come to kill the lamb."

"Here is my cup, my son. The cup of sorrows. The cup of Sin"....

"Here is my cup my Son. Drink it alone"

"Every lie, every lure, every act done in the shadows was in that cup. Slowly and hideously they were absorbed into the body of the son. The final act of incarnation. "The spotless Lamb was blemished."

You see either we pay the penalty for our sins, or we accept a sacrifice made in our behalf to cover the debt of our sins.

We all deserve eternal punishment.

We all find ourselves in a moral wilderness.

Sin alienates--it defiles and separates us from a holy God.

Atonement provides a bridge to life and the removal of guilt.

Before Christ, forgiveness came through animal sacrifices.

These sacrifices found their fulfillment in the death of Christ, the Lamb of God.

Jesus Christ shed His blood, paid our penalty, suffered our death.

And Jesus rose from the dead, and He carried his blood atonement into the throne room of The Heavenly Father, removing our sin.

God was not obligated to forgive us; nonetheless, out of His great love, He provided the Source of our pardon – our Scapegoat

3. Which brings us to the final portrait – **The Great Possibility.**

**Look with me at Leviticus 16:29-31.**

The simple fact that the atonement sacrifice was made did not guarantee that an individual Israelite would benefit.

The Israelite people were not to come to the Day Of Atonement half-heartedly.

But they were to deny themselves and come humbly before the Lord, recognizing and acknowledging their sin and need for atonement.

As we take this painting off the wall to get a look at it in the light of the New Testament, we see that it is different from the other two.

It's a **mirror** and the portrait in the **Great Possibility** is a portrait of ourselves.

Jesus' death, burial and resurrection has made Atonement, His sacrifice has made forgiveness of sin and eternal life "**a great possibility for everyone**".

But in order to accept pardon, in order to have these great possibilities that God offers us, we first have to admit we have a problem, we sin.

We can blame our parents, society, genetics, government, or we may try to deny there is a problem, but ultimately we are accountable for how we choose to live, just as the Israelites were in Aaron's day.

Jesus has made it possible for you, and for me to be saved from our sin and to live an abundant life here on earth as we wait for the day when we go to our heavenly home.

But the choice is ours.

In the atonement we see 3 pictures – and all point to Jesus our Scapegoat,

**The Great Priest**

**The Great Pardon**

**The Great Possibility**

All fulfilled in Jesus our Christ.

Two innocent goats, and one sacrifice--one to receive what we deserve, the other to carry our sins away.

We replay this sacrifice in worship every time we observe the Lord's Supper.

We're reminded of our Savior's broken body and shed blood, in our behalf.

By God's strength, we turn and repent of our sin.

As we receive the Bread and Cup we depend on God's power and commit ourselves to His will.

Faith clothes us with the courage to face our sin honestly, and make the commitment to turn our lives over to the Lamb of God.

Then and only then are we are relieved of the burden of sin, knowing that Christ our Scapegoat has paid-in-full the debt we owe.

The body of Christ broken for you

The blood of Christ poured out for you

*"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who **believes** in him will not perish but have eternal life."*(John 3:16)

**The table is set, the feast prepared, the penalty paid in full.**