

What God Wants for Christmas

Psalm 50:1-15

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What God Wants for Christ

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Psalm 50:7-15 (NLT)

⁷ "O my people, listen as I speak. Here are my charges against you, O Israel: I am God, your God!"⁸ I have no complaint about your sacrifices or the burnt offerings you constantly offer. ⁹ But I do not need the bulls from your barns or the goats from your pens. ¹⁰ For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know every bird on the mountains, and all the animals of the field are mine. ¹² If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for all the world is mine and everything in it. ¹³ Do I eat the meat of bulls? Do I drink the blood of goats? ¹⁴ Make thankfulness your sacrifice to God and keep the vows you made to the Most High. ¹⁵ Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory."

Advent is the season of preparing our hearts for the coming Christ. It is also the season where many people start to prepare their Christmas lists. There will come a point in this season, if it hasn't happened already, where you will think to yourself, 'What do I want for Christmas?' If we're the one buying gifts for our family members or loved ones, we will probably ask them, 'What do you want for Christmas?' For our homily this week, the invitation was to consider what God wants for Christmas.

Questions:

1. This passage presents God speaking through the psalmist. There seems to be complaint/charge of God against Israel, but what exactly is the thing that God is unsatisfied with? Verse 8 starts off these charges by stating that God “has no complaint about your sacrifices or the burnt offerings.” That is to say, it appears that God is not completely done with the sacrificial system here, but there must be something *about* the sacrifices which causes him to bring charges against those whom are offering. Over the next few verses, God starts to unpack the nature of his charges.
2. What sticks out to you from verses 9-11? Two important elements of these verses are the ideas of **needing** and **ownership**. God states that He doesn’t need the bulls or goats to be sacrificed to Him. Why does He say this? The next verse explains – “For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a thousand hills.” This is an opportunity to reflect on *why* we give sacrifices to God. Here’s the question at the heart of it all – Do we sacrifice to God because God needs something from us? (I would say no to this, but I invite you to wrestle with it!)
3. Verse 14 gives us the command of God which shows His heart’s desire. What are the two things that God wants us to ‘sacrifice’ to him? How do these two things contrast to the nature of sacrifice as shown in the verses prior?
4. Why might God desire thankfulness to be one of the sacrifices He desires? Is it difficult for us to give thankfulness as a sacrifice to God? Why or why not?
5. The other sacrifice God asks for is for us to keep the vows we made to Him. In the Christian context, what might some of these vows look like?
6. Now, in light of these two sacrifices that God is desiring, think upon the person, life, and ministry of Jesus. How does Jesus model these for us? Consider how Jesus invites us to be one with him. When we put our faith in Christ, we are united to His offering to the Father. Reflect on the implications of our being united with the offering of Christ to the Father.

