

church of Christ at Greenwood

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Don't Show Up Empty-Handed

Joe and Mike had not seen each other in many years. After meeting, they had a long talk trying to fill in the gap of those years by telling about their lives. Finally, Joe invited Mike to visit him at his new apartment.

"I've got a wife and three kids, and I'd love to have you visit us."

"Great. Where do you live?"

"Here is the address. And there is plenty of parking behind the apartment. Park and come around to the front door, kick it open with your foot, go to the elevator and press the button with your left elbow, then enter! When you reach the sixth floor, go down the hall until you see my name on the door. Then press the doorbell with your right elbow and I'll let you in."

"Good. But tell me... what is all this business of kicking the front door open, then pressing buttons with my right, then my left elbow?"

"Surely, you're not coming empty-handed!"

As we approach God, surely we do not attempt to come to Him empty-handed. From the beginning, sacrifice has been a part of God's expectations for mankind. Think about the story of Cain and Abel — "So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering; but for Cain and for his offering he had no regard" (Genesis 4.3-4).

Also consider these instructions given to the Jews under the Law of Moses: "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you" (Deuteronomy 16.16-17).

Now that God has sacrificed His only Son on the cross, do we really think that He would expect any less of us today? Certainly not! He has always wanted and expected us to bring gifts when we come before Him. But God has also expected that gift to be on His terms — what He expects, when He expects it, and in the way He expects it. "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual [or reasonable] service of worship." (Romans 12.1-2) "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus." (1 Peter 2.5)

God has always had a standard, and that remains true today under the New Covenant. It is his desire that we offer ourselves to Him as **living, holy, and spiritual** sacrifices. Anything less is unacceptable and unreasonable. Let us each resolve to be the sacrifices with which God will be well-pleased. Don't come to God empty-handed, and don't come offering something that is less than He expects!