

Scripture Reading: I John 1:1-9

“4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Making God a Liar

In our second message on worship we will consider our confession of sin and what is called the absolution, or the declaration that our sins are forgiven. Now I used First John chapter one as my text, not because I thought Jeff did not expound on it well in his sermons, but rather because it is the clearest statement of importance of this portion of the worship service: While I have used various passages in my messages on the other elements of worship, I have used this passage each time for confession and forgiveness. Now I was a bit more provocative in my sermon title this time and I am sure it will draw some attention on Sermon Audio...

- But is not without good reason.

The Apostle John clearly says that IF we say we have no sin, then we make God a liar. Now we know that God looks at us in the righteousness of Jesus, so why must we speak about our sin?

It is pretty simple really:

- Did anyone here this morning keep from sinning this past week?
- IF anyone raised their hand, the Apostle John says they would be making God a liar.

So, keep that in mind as we dig into the second element of our covenant renewal worship:

We have considered the importance of how God calls us into His presence and now we consider the confession of our sins & a declaration of forgiveness: Although we find such confession and forgiveness in the orders of worship from all corners of Christendom for the first 1800 years of church history it has been largely lost in the Baptist, Evangelical, Charismatic and even many reformed Churches here in America today.

- This should remind us of how important it is to have a right understanding of worship & why we must make sure to pass along these truths to our children!

We are not striving to just return to traditional worship for the sake of tradition but rather to understand why we see such uniformity down through the centuries:

- We are striving to understand how the Bible can inform us about the right worship of our God.
- We want to always be searching the Scriptures and seeking the Lord's direction for how we should approach Him in worship each week.

Last week, we saw how God calls us into His presence and we respond with a song of adoration and a salutation that affirms that we are coming before the one true, Triune God of Creation.

- At this point we have a problem and need God's gracious help.

- We have the same problem that we often see other Saints having as they are brought into God's presence in the Bible:

Isaiah is taken before the very throne of God and he cries out, "'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.'

- This is not the cry of a wicked person thrust before our Holy God:
This is God's chosen and faithful prophet!

It is the same with the Prophet Ezekiel who when brought before God proclaims, "I fell on my face."

And this is also what we see in the New Testament when the Apostle John comes before the risen Jesus on the Lord's Day: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

- Now these verses should be very familiar because we often use them to introduce our time of confession and the declaration of forgiveness in the worship service.
- Even as redeemed sinners we are humbled when we come into the presence of God!
- AND then we need to be reminded about how and why we are forgiven and able to stand, or be lifted up before our Holy God.

We are reminded of this need with a reading from the Scriptures and then sing a Psalm or hymn of confession together remembering our need and that Jesus is our gracious Savior! After our psalm or hymn we take time for individual and corporate confession of sin: Here is where we practice the great truths that we read this morning from the first letter of John: John begins his letter with the great truth that through Jesus we have been called into the very presence of God:

- Having been called into the presence of our Holy God, The Apostle then points out our problem:
6 "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."
- Remember that question I asked? Who was able to come here this morning declaring they did not walk in darkness this week?

Now this is much more than merely having avoided the REALLY big sins like murder or adultery or theft or lying! But did we keep the commandments on either side of the "big" ones?

- Honor your parents & do not covet?

Consider the list of sins that Paul presents at the end of Romans... "being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness... *[now we are quick to condemn sexual sins or witchcraft, but notice they sit right next to coveting!]*, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, *[again we see envy & murder right next to each other!]* strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, *[there might be a lot less gossip if we took that seriously]* haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, *[sorry kids you don't get a pass]* 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."

Now I want you to notice two pretty important points that Paul makes there at the end of this long list which show why we must be very serious about the confession of sins: Both major & minor

- He does NOT say SOME of these things are deserving of death...

ALL of them deserve death because ALL sin is serious! Paul also argues that if we do not avoid and condemn all such things, then we approve of them!

- Honest confession demonstrates our disapproval of these sins!

Now Paul will go on to drive home these points until he declares in Chapter three that ALL are under the guilt of sin and then presents the glorious Good News that we can be declared righteous because of what Jesus has done.

- This is the very point that the Apostle John now makes in verse seven of our text this morning:

7 “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

- There is only one way for us to walk in the light, only one way for us to properly approach our Holy God and that is through the blood of Jesus!
- John then clearly states why we need, even as forgiven sinners, a time of proper confession...

8 “If we [speaking to the Saints] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

- During our time of confession, silently or corporately, we are NOT telling God anything that He does not already know!

Driving this home a 3rd time John says in verse 9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

- Some have argued that we don’t need to do this in the service each week because Jesus has already forgiven our sins!

This is true, but only part of the great truth about our justification...

- By faith we know our sins were forgiven when Jesus declared ‘it is finished’ from the Cross, was raised in power from the dead and ascended to God’s right hand!
- However, we experience the forgiveness of sins each time we obey John’s call to confess our sins.
- And, we will know fully the final forgiveness of our sins when Jesus reads our name from the Lamb’s Book of Life at the final judgment in our resurrected bodies!

Taking the time to confess your sins during the day or in your morning prayers does not obscure the great doctrine of justification: It confirms it!

- It is no different when we gather together for worship and also have the opportunity to confess our corporate sins together before God.

So, we take a moment to confess our individual sins and then we pray a corporate prayer of confession together: This is a prayer and we pray it together! *[young children too!]*

In our time of individual confessing we must simply be honest...

- No making excuses for our actions, like I was tired or sick
- No blame shifting, which we learned well from our first parent: “The woman YOU gave me...”
- No comparison confessions, thinking what I did was not so bad compared to what someone else has done.
- Be serious, remembering, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

And again we come face to face with a simple question as we did last week when we asked, ‘do we really believe God is calling us into His presence?’

- **Here we confront the serious question of whether God has really forgiven my sins...**

Here in the service each week we are reminded that God has forgiven us! Our sins are as far from us as the east is from the west and God remembers them no more, which is why we must not dwell on confessed sin! Having honestly confessed our sins we then stand to hear an officer in Christ’s Church proclaim Good News with a Scripture and the absolution!

- **The Bible teaches that we are forgiven in Jesus and the Scriptures and the minister now proclaim this truth!**
- **And we believe in faith!**

Please note that in giving the absolution, ‘Our sins are forgiven,’ as an officer in Christ’s church I am simply declaring the truth of God’s Word!

- **We are forgiven because God says we are forgiven and that is a great comfort to His people!**
- **As we saw with the call to worship we now respond to God’s declaration that we are forgiven!**

Here at Church of the King we use Come Bless the Father as our song of ascension as we celebrate this reality each week:

- **The words are a Trinitarian paraphrase of Psalm 134 set to some of Amber’s beautiful music and I pray it will always be a very special time for all of us in the service.**

It reminds us that we are coming boldly before the throne of grace, in the presence of our Triune God:

“Come bless the Father, all you servants of the Son, who stand by the Spirit in the House of the Lord...”

WE have responded to God’s call and now as those IN Christ, in the power of the Spirit we can stand before God blessing His holy name!

In the Old Covenant, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and then only once a year, with blood to represent the great sacrifice Jesus would make at the cross, but at the crucifixion, the veil was torn top to bottom!

- **Now we come boldly before this Throne of Grace and sing with the Psalmist...**
- **“Lift up your hands to the Holy place and bless your God!”**

So just how do WE bless God?

- **We do so as He sees us standing before Him clothed with His Son’s own righteousness!**

And as we gather for God to renew His covenant He graciously responds and thus the Psalmist declares:

**“May the Lord bless you from Zion,
He who made heaven and earth!”**

- **Our hands shift to receive blessings from God as our minds try to grasp the wonder of a blessing from Him who made heaven and earth.**
- **What can we need that He cannot provide? The Great God who we serve created all there is and He loves to bless His people!**

My prayer and hope is that we always continue to mature in our understanding of just how exciting it is to be called into the presence of Him who made heaven and earth!

This is the point of our transition to great joy – remember the Apostle John began by saying, “these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

- **And so we follow this with a Psalm or hymn of thanks with that joy in our hearts and on our lips!**

And let me briefly address our attitude as I did last week: We must never approach this subject proudly thinking that we have everything right and looking down on how everyone else does worship. As I mentioned, far too many churches do not have this formal time in their services so how should we approach discussing this with someone who might ask why we do what we do, or even argue we are wrong about this formality.

I would point out that since the Bible teaching that a time of confession and forgiveness is an important part of right worship it will show up somewhere in the services of churches who faithfully preach the Gospel and believe the Bible!

- **In some churches an emphasis on having to repent and believe is preached week after week as the major point of the sermon.**
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- **Many charismatic churches will end the service with an altar call to come and confess their sins and receive Jesus... Calls that often stretch out to almost everyone in the congregation!**

And sadly, the proper time of confession is often moved to the Lord's Table where there is a felt need to make sure we are all worthy to come...

- **Something that should have been dealt with closer to the beginning of the service.**

There is a proper flow to worship and so as those who have been called into God's presence and having rightly confessed out sins, we hear gladly the Good News,

- **"Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for our sins and to be raised for our justification; & for His sake forgives us all our sins."**

Then and only then are we ready and willing "by the mercies of God," to "present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service."

- **We are ready to be consecrated by God, to ascend into the very presence of God to be instructed by His Word and to present our gifts and prayers which we shall learn more about next week!**

But for now remember what John said, "these things we write to you that your joy may be full."

Communion Meditation: Jeremiah 17

**"12 A glorious high throne from the beginning
Is the place of our sanctuary.
13 O Jehovah, the hope of Israel,
All who forsake You shall be ashamed.**

**"Those who depart from Me
Shall be written in the earth,
Because they have forsaken Jehovah,
The fountain of living waters."**

**14 Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed;
Save me, and I shall be saved,
For You are my praise."**