

What a Sin Wants
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, Year B
Amos: 7-15; 2 Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29
July 11, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

You've heard me say it before, but it is something that is worth repeating... often...

"Sin does not want to be sin. Sin wants to be righteous." I heard that from another pastor on a podcast that I listen to. I heard it, pondered it, and have adopted it.

"Sin does not want to be sin. Sin wants to be righteous." Think about that. Think about your sin. Think about how you broke the First Commandment, the Third, the Sixth, the Eighth, the Tenth and all the others.

We have already confessed our sins this morning before the Divine Service. You confessed to God your sins and failures and He spoke to you through His messenger, your pastor, to deliver and proclaim His forgiveness.

How many of those sins are you truly sorry for? How many of those sins do you think have grieved the heart of your God? And, how many sins did you not confess, because you have already justified them in your own mind and heart, and have decided that they really weren't that bad, or that they were no sin at all?

I wonder which list is longer...

"Sin does not want to be sin. It wants to be righteous." We are very good at dismissing our sins and grievances.

Did you listen to the Collect that we prayed earlier? The words are very poignant. They were both disconcerting and comforting. *"O Lord, You granted your prophets*

strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance. Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death."

This prayer has two parts. Part one: "O Lord, You granted your prophets strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance."

Amos was a prophet from out of town. Actually, he was from another country. He was from Judah, the southern kingdom, but he was preaching in Israel, the northern kingdom.

Also, he didn't desire to be a prophet. He was a herdsman and arborist of sorts. But, when God called Him, he answered.

And, the message that he brought to Israel, was one they did not want to hear. God showed Amos a plumb line; a builder's tool, used to make sure that walls are built straight. A leaning wall is no good. It is not structurally sound and will throw off the rest of the building. So, a plumb line, as simple as it is...a piece of string with a weight at the bottom... was a very valuable, useful, and important tool.

God said that He is setting a plumb line to measure His people. He was not going to let them lean any longer. Their sin was throwing things off.

He even says that He was going to go after the house of Jeroboam, the king of Israel.

When the local priest, Amaziah, hears of this, he immediately tattles to the king. He sent word that Amos was conspiring against the king.

Then Amaziah turns on Amos and tells him to go home. He wants Amos to go back to Judah and to never prophesy in Israel again.

"Sin doesn't want to be sin. It wants to be righteous." Sin does not want to be exposed for what it truly is. It wants to stay hidden. Sin loves the dark. So, shut up Amos. Do not tell me where my wickedness lies. Do not speak to me of my naughty little habits. Do not try to expose my greed, my lust, my addiction, my precious little idols. Just go away. Be silent!

Herod was very much like Amaziah. In our Gospel reading, Herod had taken the most well known prophet of his day, John the Baptizer, and had thrown him in to jail. Why? John had exposed Herod's sins. Herod had taken his brother's wife, Herodias, as his own.

Herod had divorced his first wife in order to marry Herodias. Herodias had divorced her husband, Philip, in order to marry Herod. Two divorces. Two wrongs do not make a right.

As a side note, both of those men, Philip and Herod, were also her uncles.

John exposes this. He condemns them for this. John was put in prison for this. And, ultimately, is beheaded for this.

Why? "Sin doesn't want to be sin. Sin wants to be righteous."

Shut up John and leave us alone. We are in love. We aren't hurting anyone. Mind your own business. Love is love.

I have actually confronted a couple who were living together outside of marriage. I had disallowed them to receive the Lord's Supper until the matter was resolved. Separate or get married.

I was told that they and God had an understanding and that I should just butt out and that they were no longer going to be at church.

It was hard. It wasn't fun. But, "Sin doesn't want to be sin. Sin wants to be righteous." Thankfully, they did return.

"O Lord," we prayed this morning, "You granted your prophets strength to resist the temptations of the devil and courage to proclaim repentance."

That prayer has a second part: "Give us pure hearts and minds to follow Your Son faithfully even into suffering and death."

Is that your prayer? I suppose it is, you said 'amen' when we prayed it earlier. I assume you were listening and meant it. But, just in case you missed it or didn't have time to contemplate it before placing your endorsement on it with your 'amen,' let's talk about it a bit.

"Give us pure hearts and minds...". Do you have a pure heart and mind? Seriously? Do you? If you said, 'Yes' then let me remind you, "Sin doesn't want to be sin. It wants to be righteous."

If you think you have a pure heart and mind, then you have deceived yourself and the truth is not in you (1 John 1:8). If you already have a pure heart and mind, then why did you pray to receive one?

No, you do not have a pure heart or mind. You have a heart that is "*deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Your heart doesn't want to hear the case against it. Heh... "You want the truth? You can't handle the truth" (quote from 'A Few Good Men').

What we want is for our failures, our wickedness, our haughtiness, our law breaking... our sins... to be left alone. We keep them in the closet. Shhhh, the dust under the rug is hidden and no one sees it. Just don't pull back the rug. Don't expose the grotesqueness of the sin sick and hardened heart.

No we don't have anything in us that is pure; not our hearts, not our minds, not our... wait a minute...

We do have something pure in us. But, it wasn't there when we were born. No, it is something that has been implanted there. No, it's not the pace maker, the fake knee, the new hip, the stent or any of that...

No, it is a gift from Christ Himself. St. Paul has comforted us this morning by telling us, *"In [Christ Jesus] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory"* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Through the Word of God, through the waters of Baptism, through the words of Absolution, you have received a pure heart and a pure mind. Not that it doesn't have evil, wicked, perverse thoughts... But, because the Holy Spirit lives within you, leads you, guides you, convicts you, encourages you, counsels you... you cling to Jesus. And Jesus, took all of those sinful things to the cross, sacrificed Himself to make sure that before your God, your heart and mind, your spirit and soul, your body and strength, are pure.

And, as you come to His table, to receive that sacrifice of His body and His blood, it again purifies you so that you may “follow [God’s] Son faithfully even into suffering and death.”

“Sin doesn’t want to be sin. It wants to be righteous.” Unfortunately, sin can never be righteous. EVER. But, you, the sinner, can be... and because of Christ... you are!

Now may the peace that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ

Jesus.

Amen.



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