

Ponderings from Pastor Paul – March 2022

It seems like just yesterday that we were celebrating Christmas. Now I'm preparing for Lent, a time for remembering and celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus. Ash Wednesday begins this season, this year on March 2, with a time of reflection and repentance.

Why should we spend time to reflect and repent? I could just say, "Because the Bible says we should," but that doesn't help the process of reflection and repentance. To help, we should clearly understand what repentance is.

Most people, Christians and non-Christians alike, probably think repentance means saying you're sorry or asking for forgiveness. And while those are appropriate components of repentance, it is not the whole picture. The biblical interpretation of repent means to turn. So, if you are going down a sin filled path, to repent means to turn and get off that path. Repentance requires change, not just saying you're sorry and then continuing as you were before. Please read that again... Repentance requires change.

The most common New Testament usage for repent is in reference to a change of mind, or a change of thought. If you are going down a sin filled path in your thought life, turn your thoughts off of that path. If you are thinking wrongly, change your way of thinking. This is a critical aspect of repentance because wrong thinking leads to all kinds of other wrong. Repentance requires a change in thinking.

However, we cannot stop our repentance with a change in our thought patterns. We must also turn from our sinful actions. It doesn't do a lot of good to think good thoughts and then act in sinful ways. If you are walking down a sinful path, turn off that path and walk a different walk. The change should be noticeable to the world around you. Repentance requires a changed life.

Yet God wants more than a changed mind and a changed life. He wants us to turn our hearts as well. That's why in Joel 2:13 God says, "rend your hearts and not your garments." He doesn't want us to simply turn outwardly, he also wants us to turn on the inside. True repentance requires change in our thoughts, in our actions, and also in what we desire. This is repentance that no one other than you and God can see. And it is the repentance he desperately wants.

This understanding of repentance hopefully helps the process, but what does reflection have to do with repentance? Quite often we look at our reflection in a mirror and choose to ignore the physical imperfections. We must be more honest with our spiritual imperfections and look in the mirror of our mind, heart, and actions, and humbly own those imperfections. When we do, we begin to recognize our need for a Savior.

This is why reflection and repentance are focuses during Lent, because they lead us to the cross. We have a Savior who paid the price for our imperfections, for our sins. He died to pay the price for our wayward thoughts, for our wayward actions, and for our wayward hearts. His rightness for our wrongness.

But Jesus did not stop there. He also empowers us with his Holy Spirit so that we can repent, so that we can truly change. That is the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the power of the cross. That is the power of repentance.

May God bless you this Lenten season with real and lasting change.

God loves you and so do I!

Pastor Paul