

1 John 1:1 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. 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.”

"Confessing Our Sins"

- This morning we focus the confession of our sins and hearing the Good News that we are forgiven!

In our study of how and why we worship the way that we do here at Church of the King, we are moving through the five major elements of what we call Covenant Renewal Worship which have ALL been part of most Christian worship for almost two thousand years, but something we should still study and learn today. This morning we come to God’s command to confess our sins & hear the Good News of forgiveness:

- I trust we will NEVER tire of hearing the Good News presented at this portion of the service!

This element of the service is especially meaningful to your pastor personally and practically: Hearing the Good News for myself and its presentation to others:

Just as our salutation in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit confirms our Trinitarian worship each week, this time of confession and forgiveness preaches the Gospel each and every week:

- The Good News that Jesus came to save His people from their sins!

It is Good News that gives great comfort to the Sheep & it is Good News that confronts unrepentant sinners!

- We certainly want to be friendly, open and inviting to all unbelievers who need Jesus & we encourage them to join us in our worship service.

However, being confronted by their sin will make them uncomfortable and Paul reminds us that for those with hardened hearts the aroma of the Gospel is the stench of death...

The Apostle Paul in addressing the reaction of unbelievers in the midst of right worship in 1st Corinthians said, “he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.”

Thus our hope should be that those who the Lord is calling would be moved by seeing the people of God honestly confessing their sins & receiving forgiveness!

[and also an important example for our children!]

Now, although we find such confession & absolution, or the declaration of our forgiveness, in the orders of worship from all corners of Christendom for the first 1800 years of church history, it has today been largely lost in the Baptist, Evangelical, Charismatic & even reformed Churches here in America.

- 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 along to our children!

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

- We must look to the Bible to inform us about the right worship of our God and if later studies have shown us that this portion was not needed, so be it.
- If on the other hand it has been dropped for the wrong reasons or out of neglect, then shame on us!

One consideration is that IF this 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 & believe the Bible: And so it does...

- In some churches a Gospel call to repent and believe is preached week after week as the major point of the sermon. *[We will consider why this can be a concern next week.]*
- Many charismatic or Baptist 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 so that can all be right with Jesus!

And sadly, the proper time of confession is often for all practical purposes 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:
- And thus we see the need for a proper confession of our sins!

We saw last week that 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 all have a problem and we all need to appropriate God's gracious help.
- We have the same problem that we see with many Saints in the Scriptures when they are brought into God's Holy presence:

When Isaiah is taken before the very throne of God 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 pagan thrust before our Holy God...
- This is God's faithful prophet!

We see the same with the Prophet Ezekiel who when brought before God proclaims, “I fell on my face.”

We find another example in the New Testament when the Apostle John comes before the risen Jesus on the Lord's Day: When John recounts this he says, “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 absolution in the worship service.

- Even as redeemed sinners we are humbled when we come into the presence of God!
- So at this point in the service we are reminded of how and why we are forgiven and that we are now able to rise & stand before the presence of our Holy God clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

First we have a reading from the Scriptures about our sin & then sing a hymn of confession remembering we need Jesus as our gracious Savior!

After our hymn we take time for individual and corporate confession of sin... *[mention posture]*
 Here is where we practice the great truths that we read this morning from the first letter of John: John begins his letter with a reminder that through Jesus we have been called into the very presence of God:

I John 1:1 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

- We have been called into the presence of our Holy God, and then John 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.”

- So who was able to come here this morning declaring they did not walk in darkness this week?

If we use the world’s standard of ‘righteousness’ or even what some churches use, we might be able to get by: Thinking I’m OK & your OK! We might think to ourselves that we have certainly avoided the REALLY big sins like murder or adultery!

- But did we keep the commandments on either side of the so-called BIG ones?
- The Command to honor your parents or the command not to covet?

I would again commend to your study the list of sins that Paul presents in Romans chapter one. You know, the chapter that we always use to beat up on those really bad sinners like homosexuals out there in the world... Yes, Paul lists “their” sins, “sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness...

[oops how did that slip in here],
 maliciousness; full of envy, murder,
[envy & murder right next to each other!]
 strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters,
[guess all that gossip might be serious]

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 important points that Paul makes there at the end of this long list which shows why we must be very serious about the confession of our sins great or small:

- He does NOT say SOME of these things are deserving of death... ALL of them deserve death because ALL sin is serious!
- Paul argues that if we do not avoid and condemn such things, then we approve of them!
- Honest confession demonstrates our disapproval of these sins and our turning from them!

If you are familiar with the Gospels you know that Jesus had many confrontations with the Scribes & Pharisees... Very religious men who thought themselves righteous because they kept a bunch of outward rules, a few of which came from the Scriptures but many others that they just made up.

But Jesus explained how they simply did not understand man's problem with sin: Sin was not something that comes upon a person, it is something that comes from within a person...

- We don't avoid sin by eating clean food or properly washing the cups and bowls!

Listen to what Jesus said after His disciples were attacked by the religious leaders for not washing their hands in a special way:

Mark 7:14 "When [Jesus] had called all the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. 16 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" 17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" 20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man." [wow, that sounds a lot like that list Paul gave us in Romans one!]

- This is the problem of man, born as children of Adam.
- This is why we need to hear week after week, the Good News of forgiveness: The Gospel!
- This is the very point that 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 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 home these truths for a 3rd time John says in verse 9 & 10:

"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 today would argue that we do not need to do this in the service each week because as believers we already know that Jesus has forgiven our sins!

Taking the time to confess our sins whether as individuals or families in our daily prayers or when gathered for worship as the Body of Christ does not obscure the great doctrine of justification by faith...

➤ **It confirms it!**

**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 should 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 did.**
 - **We must 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.”**
 - **Again, we confront an important question: Do I REALLY believe that God has forgiven my sins...**
- **Some of us have very grievous sins in our past and always wonder if God could really forget all that...**
- **Some of us have struggles with particular sins that seem to come back week after week wondering if God can once again forgive us.**
- **Some of us may have suddenly fallen into some grave sin unexpectedly and thus question whether we were ever saved at all**

➤ **This is why having the declaration of the Good News in the order of worship is SO important...**

After we have honestly confessed our sins we hear an officer in Christ’s Church tell us to RISE & hear the 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 to us!**
- **And we believe it in faith!**

Please note that in giving the absolution, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ Steve or Michael or I as ordained Elders are 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!**

**We use Come Bless the Father as our song of ascension as we demonstrate 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:

“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.

- 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!”

How do WE bless God?

- We do so as He sees us standing before Him clothed with His Son’s 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 and 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?

This creator is the God who we serve and He loves to bless His people!

My prayer and hope is that we all 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 - Followed by a song of thanks

[like the New Song of Revelation 5]

Confessing our sins and believing the Good News prepares us for the remainder of the worship service as shown by one of the most sobering parables that Jesus told about a great marriage feast which the master called in Matthew 22. Jesus is showing how the nation of Israel had rejected the Messiah and refused to come to His great feast. The master then sends out a call to the highways and byways for all to come *[yes, you can think call to worship]* and the master’s servants work until the great hall is full. Jesus then tells us that “when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

- This sounds very harsh to our modern ears...

But it is NOT when you consider that the wedding garment in this parable represents the white robes of righteous that we must be clothed with to stand in the Holy presence of God!

If someone thinks lightly of the proper confession of sins, or outright refuses to confess their sins, they can certainly continue on in the worship service...

They can hear a good sermon, bow their heads in prayer and even drop a gift in the basket and approach the Lord’s Table... But ultimately God as the master of the feast will come and ask, ‘friend how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ ...and they will be speechless.

We on the other hand as those who have been called into God’s presence and having rightly confessed out sins, hear gladly the Good News,

- “Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for your sins & to be raised for your justification; & for His sake forgives you all your 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.”