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| **Psalm 51 – Sermon – Ash Wednesday – 2/3/22** | |
| Lent is the season of preparation for Easter. It is a time for repentance and renewal, discipleship and walking the way of the cross.  Lent begins today, Ash Wednesday, and lasts for 40 days. These 40 days exclude the Sundays.  Psalm 51 is a great Lenten psalm. This psalm follows the pattern of the Christian life of sin, confession, forgiveness, renewal, and witness. A pattern that we are encouraged to reconnect with during lent.  Let’s read through psalm 51 and as we do reflect on how it relates to our life. | |
| 1You are kind, God! Please have pity on me.   You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins.  2Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt. | **It isn’t easy to admit that you have done something wrong**. What does make it easier though is when you know the person you are admitting your sin to will not reject you or disown you no matter how bad you have been.  The great thing about confessing our sins to God is that **we know his character.** We can be honest with God because we know that God is always kind and merciful.  We know that God will not condemn us or reject us because of our sins but instead will always wash us clean and remove our sin and guilt. |
| 3I know about my sins,   and I cannot forget my terrible guilt.  4You are really the one I have sinned against;   I have disobeyed you and have done wrong.  So it is right and fair for you   to correct and punish me. | **Guilt is a terrible thing.** It can sap all of your strength. It can keep you awake at night. Guilt can infect every part of your life. Guilt can make you see the world differently and mess with the way you relate to people.  Furthermore, the more we get to know God the more we realise that every sin is first and foremost a sin against God.  **When someone does something to upset or hurt a little child**, it is an offence not just against the baby but also against the parents of the child.  In the same way when we upset or hurt another human being we are sinning against God the Father who knits together each person in their mother’s womb. Each person we hurt or upset is a child that God the Father is intimately connected to and loves.  Whenever we sin against another human being or any of God’s creation we are sinning against God and God has every right to correct and punish us. |
| 5 I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.  6But you want complete honesty,   so teach me true wisdom. | **When we look deep inside ourselves and are totally honest with ourselves**, we have all sinned as far back as we can remember. King David came to realise he had sinned since the day he was born, and we are no better.  **It is hard though to admit that we are sinners.**  **We don’t like to hear it do we**? It is very hard for anyone to admit that they have done wrong. Our pride gets in the way. These days it isn’t fashionable to talk about our sin because it may hurt our self esteem, so we are told that we are basically good people who make the occasional mistake.  **But it is only when we admit our sin that we become truly wise.** It is only when we become aware of our sin that we really begin to know ourselves. And it is only when we admit our sin that we can begin on the road to change.  **True self esteem is when you can be completely honest with who you are warts and all and know that you are still a precious person,** not because of how good you are but because you are the apple of God’s eye. You are important and valuable because you are loved and valued by the Creator of the universe! |
| 7Wash me with hyssop  until I am clean and whiter than snow.  8Let me be happy and joyful!   You crushed my bones, now let them celebrate.  9Turn your eyes from my sin and cover my guilt. | **The truth is that we are all sinners and we cannot change ourselves.** Not our deep inner selves. It is only God who can wash away the stain of sin and heal us of this inner sickness.  It is only God who can make us clean and whiter than snow. It is only God who can take away the bone-crushing burden of guilt and bring joy back into our broken lives.  It is only God who can turn us away from our sins toward a new way of life. God covers over our guilt so that we no longer need to be obsessed with our past sins and guilt and instead focus our attention toward God and the new life available through Jesus Christ. |
| 10Create pure thoughts in me   and make me faithful again.  11Don't chase me away from you   or take your Holy Spirit away from me.  12Make me as happy as you did when you saved me;   make me want to obey! | **God doesn’t only forgive us. Jesus died so that our sins could be forgiven and** Jesus rose again so that we too can rise to a new life.  Jesus reminds us that in the same way that good earthly parents will give us good things, so our heavenly Father will give us the Holy Spirit if we ask him.  The Holy Spirit does not merely wash us clean but fills us and changes us from the inside out  With our sins forgiven, our guilt washed away, the Holy Spirit creates a new heart in us that has a new desire and a new focus. A heart that desires to obey God. A heart that passionately wants to do good. |
| 13I will teach sinners your Law,   and they will return to you.  14Keep me from any deadly sin. Only you can save me!   Then I will shout and sing about your power to save.  15Help me to speak, and I will praise you, LORD. | **Changed by the Spirit and God’s Word and sacrament, we become light and salt to those around us**. By our words, actions and example we show others how full a life based on God’s love can be.  As the Sprit works in us through word and sacrament and as God continually forgives and cleanses us, we shine brighter and brighter. We become beacons of hope in this world, drawing other people to God.  As we praise and thank God not only in our worship but in our daily lives, people around us will also turn away from their sins toward Jesus. |
| 16Offerings and sacrifices are not what you want.  17The way to please you   is to feel sorrow deep in our hearts.  This is the kind of sacrifice you won't refuse. | **This Christian life always begins with us becoming aware of our true selves**. Becoming aware of how broken we are and how far from God we have strayed. The new abundant life Jesus has promised us always begins with us admitting the truth about ourselves, and realising that there is only one Saviour, Jesus. **Amen.** |