

Victory of the Lamb – Ash Wednesday 2019 – Psalm 32 – Pastor Bill Limmer

Allegedly, London play write pulled off a diabolical prank in the mid 1900's. Reportedly he wrote an identical anonymous letter to 10 of London's influential men. The note said: "We know what you have done. If you don't want to be exposed, leave town." Within six months all ten men had moved. Pretty horrific prank but it shows the power and influence of guilt.

One of the facets of guilt is insecurity. People feel insecure because we are worried that someone will find out what they are really like or what they have really done. Police officers make some of their biggest arrests because they were going to pull someone over for a minor offense but the person ran because they thought the police knew about their bigger crime. Proverbs 28:1 (The Message) says, **The wicked are edgy with guilt, ready to run off even when no one's after them;** When people do bad things they can feel vulnerable and will do anything to not get caught. That is the reason for David writing Psalm 32, his adultery with Bathsheba and his cover up that led to murder. Guilt is like carrying around a heavy weight that has sharp handles. It brings stress, uneasiness, sleepless nights, headaches. Have you ever noticed how your stomach keeps score when you have guilt? Guilt keeps people stuck in the past. People replay their sins over and over again. If Only I had, I should have, I could have . . . Psalm 32:3-4 **When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.**

Our reasons for guilt are exponential. Our disobedience to God as much as we try to cover it up and hide is crystal clear to God and we know it, meanwhile we try to cover up with busyness, condemnation, drinking, eating, education, exercise, hobbies, gossip, reading, recreation, self-righteousness and the list goes on. But the guilt remains. Did you know there is an antidote to guilt that is just the opposite of covering up. Psalm 32:5 **Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

Guilt is feeling bad when we have done something wrong. Shame is feeling bad even after we have confessed our sins. The name Satan means accuser. And through the centuries he has become very skilled at accusing us that we are pathetic and the God doesn't love us because of sinfulness. He has led so many of us to think that God will or will not bless us on the basis of what we do or don't do. In other words, he has lied to us about God's character. God is the same, yesterday, today and forever and yet Satan assures us his character will change based on what we do and don't do.

There is no sin or weakness that is greater than God's grace and forgiveness! And it is not even close. In greatness, God's grace and mercy and forgiveness and love are like Mount Everest compared and the greatness of sin who wages is death is like a grain of sand. Psalm 103:12 **As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.** Isaiah 1:18 **Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson they shall be like wool.**

Here is the truth. God is not holding grudges. God is not planning your demise. God is unleashing his love and forgiveness. God is planning you eternal future.

Imagine: You are a college student who is home over spring break. You drop your mom off at the Salon and go to hang out with your friends at a coffee shop downtown. But you lose track of time. You look down and in horror recognize that you were supposed to pick your mom up three hours ago. Your dad's boss is coming over for dinner tonight at 6:00 and it's 5:30. You run out to the car in the rain. When you get in the car you see your cell phone. And it is blown up with missed calls from your mom. You get in your car and you are driving too fast as you call your mom's cell. As the phone is ringing you think, what am I going to say? Coffee shop went on lockdown. Ran out of gas. I got lost. And she answers the phone interrupting your excuse process. And all you can say is all that you can say, "Mom, I'm sorry. I forgot." Your heart is pounding. You feel horrible. With her new styled hair ruined by her walk home in the rain she says, "I know. When you get home just get cleaned up for dinner. And by the way I made your favorite dessert." The weight drops from your shoulders. When you get home all you want to do is give her a hug and a kiss because she has been so good to you, and you knew you didn't deserve her love or her forgiveness or her blessing.

And Psalm 32:1-2 says, **Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them.** Relief. Joy. Blessed! Another way to say this is Congratulations your sins are forgiven. When people pay off the mortgage on their house there is often a party and celebration. Congratulations all around. Congratulations your sin mortgage is paid for in full.

Here is Jesus' invitation to you today and every day: (Matthew 11:28) **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest!**