



FROM THE PASTOR

Psalm 32

- ¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
- ² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
- ³ When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- ⁴ For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.
- 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.
- ⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.
- ⁷ You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.
- ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you
should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.
- ⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.
- ¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the one who trusts in him.
- ¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Our psalm for responsive reading this Sunday is Psalm 32. It certainly deserves comment. Our lectionary—or lesson series—however uses only about half of the psalm. The entire psalm is to the left. It begins with a stirring statement of the Gospel, **"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."** The psalm starts out with a beatitude. You remember those from Matthew 5, don't you? The first one is, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."** Perhaps you have heard in a sermon or bible study that the word, 'blessed,' may also be translated with the word, 'happy'. Try substituting the word, 'Happy,' for the word, 'blessed' in verse 1 and 2 of Psalm 32.

There are a lot of words I could use to describe the culture we see around us in this world. 'Happy' is not one of them! It is not just because of the Coronavirus—although, that certainly has contributed to our unhappy condition. For the last decade or more, we have become less and less happy. We are quicker to anger and slower to forgive. We are also slower to receive forgiveness because we so often think we need no forgiveness. The actor and comedian Steve Martin used to be a big hit on Saturday Night Live, where he would say a long and drawn out, "Well, e-x-c-u-s-e me." We no longer want to be excused—we want to be affirmed.

We cannot truly know happiness until we truly know forgiveness. The psalmist says, **"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. 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." Hiding is hard work. Trying to hide from our sin is even harder. We have only one hope. As the psalm says of God,



"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."

Go back to verse one, ***"Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered."***

Happiness is not hiding from our sins. Happiness is the forgiveness of our sins. In forgiveness, our Lord does not hide us from our sins. Instead our Lord hides our sins from us. He "covers" our sins. He covers them not with anything we have but with His own righteousness. It is customary in our culture, when one comes across the dead, to cover them. When the Lord covers our sins it is because they are dead. In Christ, our sin is dead, but we are alive! Our sins are dead, covered with Christ's righteousness. In Christ, they attach to us no longer! Therefore only in Christ do we find true happiness. Christ's cross and resurrection have saved us from our sin! Therefore we may sing with the psalmist, ***"Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!"***

In Christ's service,
Pastor Brian Shirey

Post Scripts:

- † Our lessons for this Sunday, September 6, the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, are:
 - First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-9
 - Psalm 32:1-7
 - Second Reading: Romans 13: 1-10
 - Gospel: Matthew 18: 12-19
- † When we first started to struggle with how to deal with COVID-19 we looked ahead to Memorial Day in hopes of being back to "normal". Labor Day is now upon us and there is not a sight of anything approaching normal on our horizon. But God has provided for our needs and we are not only coping we are thriving. I am thankful to God for the good things He provides us in our need. But let us not forget that we are also called to be part of the good things God provides for others in their needs. Please be on the lookout for ways you might make the burden of some other person a little bit lighter. Please continue to support the ministry—especially the community and benevolent ministry—of St. Luke's. And keep praying.