

I don't care what the sermon topic is. That song could be sung every Sunday as far as I'm concerned. Anyone else feel that way? I love. I love.

It's true. It is true. In my life. It is not. There's been some really rough, bumpy parts of my life.

Yeah. Anyone else have rough, bumpy parts of your life? Yes, Nate does. Thank you. But through all of it, we just experienced God's faithfulness and goodness.

Time and time and time and time and time again. Hey. We're in a series called Humble and Hungry. And we're going through. It's really about prayer.

So last week, some of you picked up as you went out some little key rings with some just prayer prompts, prayer guides. Today we've got another one. We're talking about repentance. So this one has repentance on the back of it. It's got just some prayer points.

You can pick those up. There's a table for you. You may have seen it when you came in, but if you are collecting these and find them useful, grab one before you take off. Okay, let's dig in. And I gotta just share something.

Confession time. It always makes you scared when the preacher gets up and says, I gotta confess. So two weeks ago, we had a week of elearning. Anyone remember that horrible time in our country's history? Yeah, it was rough.

It was rough at our house. We got to Wednesday night two weeks ago, and I walk in and I mean, I'm just. I'm just hot under the collar. I'm complaining about everything. It's been a week of frustration.

It's been a week of yelling. There was cussing at some point in time. I'm not sure who did it. I suspect it might have been me. There was some crying.

We all ran to our corners of the house at one point in time and just isolated. There was confusion. There were accusations. It was not the best week of our family relationship. And so I get there Wednesday night and three days in, and I'm just.

I mean, I'm just like. If the school administration doesn't.

So Alan's leading that night. He goes, well, our topic tonight isn't James. And. And we're reading through the first book of James. I'm still in my head, you know.

And then we get to James, chapter one 19 and 20. I'm going to throw it

up there so you guys can see it. My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this. Everyone should be quick to listen and slow to speak and slow to become angry because Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. And I could look at Wednesday and going, yeah, it's not been that effective at our house to get to where we want to get to.

But my first thought, my first reaction was not to repent of my horrible attitude. My first reaction was to get just a little defensive. I go, okay, good, James, yeah, I see your point. But have you lived at my house for the last three weeks? No.

For the last three days? No. You have not until you step into my shoes, I don't want to hear what you have to say about being slow to anger.

I didn't quite have that attitude, but you get it. But it's amazing how God's word works in our lives, doesn't it? In Hebrews, chapter four, the writer tells us this. The word of God is alive and it's active and it's sharper than any double edged sword. It penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow.

It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. And that's exactly what God's Word from James did in my life. The Holy Spirit used that verse in James and he like a cleaver chopped into my heart. I'm like, oh, I don't like it. But it's true.

He cut open, he filleted my attitude and my behavior and he held them up to the righteousness of God. And in that moment where I was deeply aware of the disparity between God's righteousness and my self righteousness, it was alive. God's Word was alive. God's Word was powerful. And God's Word did something that we use a lot here.

We use this word conviction. And that's what God's Word did. It became very convicting. Today as we talk about prayer and what it means to be humble and hungry before God, it's imperative that as Christians we understand what conviction is. It's a good thing.

If we're not feeling convicted, that's a bad thing. You understand what I'm saying? This indicates that we are in good relationship with God. If we are feeling conviction, we've not gone too far yet. So today we're going to look at sort of the practical responses when the Holy Spirit uses God's Word to convict us of where we were or are wrong.

So if you're ready for that, then turn to Psalm 51. The book of Psalm is right in the middle of your Bible. Open it sort of right down the middle and you'll be in Psalm, the book of Psalms most likely. And Then you're going to just flip left or right to get to Psalm 51. That's where we're going to spend most of our morning this morning.

Heavenly Father, as we open your Word, we pray that from it you will reveal to us the things that delight us, things that bring delight to our hearts as we remind ourselves of the goodness of God and how you demonstrate it even in the midst of our sometimes unwillingness. But we also hope that you use it to just delve deep into our hearts and open up the places that we might prefer not to, not to discover or allow you to discover. But you know our hearts, you know them better than we do. And so today, as we open your Word, we pray that we would live in this place where we invite you to do this on a consistent, regular, all the time basis so that we live in this place of experiencing the goodness and the delight of being right with you. We pray this in Jesus name, Amen.

You may have heard this story. Once upon a time, there was a wealthy man, a very wealthy man. He had houses and lands, everything that he needed. He had. His property encompassed thousands of acres.

He had cattle on a thousand hills, thousands of head of cattle, thousands of head of sheep. Very wealthy, wealthy man. His next door neighbor was a very poor man, just enough to really take care of himself. A small garden for vegetables, maybe a cow and a chicken for milk and eggs. And he had a little pet, it was a lamb, little pet lamb.

And the lamb followed him wherever he went, slept with him, laid at his feet in the evening when he was just enjoying the quiet and of fire. He loved that little lamb. The rich man got news from a friend that he was going to be traveling through the area. And so the rich man said, come and stay with me, I'll treat you right. And so the rich man's friend said, absolutely.

And so the rich man began thinking, what am I going to, what am I going to serve? How am I going to entertain this friend? I want to treat him right. What can I do to really impress him? I want to do something great.

He goes, I know what I'll do. I'll serve him a fine meal. I'll serve him lamb with some mint jelly and maybe some roasted vegetables. It's going to be a great, great meal. And so the rich man gets up out of his chair, he walks out of his mansion, and he walks across his expansive lawns and across his fields, passing on the way all his herds of cattle and all his sheep.

And he climbs over the fence to the Poor man's farm. And he marches to the poor man's door and he bursts open. He walks in and he grabs the little lamb from the poor man's lap and bleeding and crying, meh, meh. He took the lamb back to his house, killed it, and served it for dinner. I was telling that story out in the foyer to one of the young kids, and I said, what do you think about that?

She's like, well, that's not. That's not nice. Yeah, it's not nice. It's wrong on so many, so many, so many, so many levels. And if you feel shocked and outraged, then you have something in common with King David, who had the same reaction when he was told the story by a friend who cared enough to tell him the truth.

David's response was this. Second Samuel 12. He says, as surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die. He must pay for that lamb four times over because he did such a thing and had no pity. And his friend, who cared enough to tell him the truth, said, David, you're that man.

And David didn't need to be told anymore because he knew exactly what the man was talking about. You see, David was the wealthy man. David was the man who had wives and concubines, too many to spare, who lusted after another man's beloved and only wife, took advantage of her, got her pregnant, and then had the unsuspecting man killed in battle. We know the story, if you know the story of David. And so when this friend who cared enough to tell David the truth, told him these words from God, they became alive and powerful and convicting, and they cut David to the quick.

In Second Samuel, we see what David tells his friend. David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. Now his friend will tell him, that's great, that's good that you recognize that there are always consequences to your sin. And those consequences were horrific. Sin oftentimes has horrific consequences.

And the consequences broke David and sent him to his knees. David's a songwriter. And so David expressed his prayer, his lament, his anguish before God in this amazing psalm. This is Psalm 51, where if you've got your Bibles, you can turn and read through this. We're going to touch on it.

You may want to read the whole thing. It's a powerful, powerful psalm, but it begins this way. And I'm going to have you guys just read it with me, if you will. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion. BLot out my transgressions, Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. So you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. This is just the first part of that song, but it shows something very powerful about this process of living in right relationship with God. And the first thing it shows us is, is just the maturity that it takes, the personal maturity that it takes to own our own behavior. This is something we want our children to learn, right?

To own our own stuff. Why is it important? Firstly, it keeps us honest with ourselves. We don't delude ourselves about our own innocence or guilt. It keeps us in good relationship with others if we keep that openness and honesty.

But as David indicates, it also keeps us in right relationship with God. And that's why this morning, if you're here, you consider yourself a believer, someone who follows Jesus. If you consider yourself someone who cares about their spiritual health and the place they live in the goodness of God, it matters that we are serious about our spiritual health. That requires sometimes, as the word of God is open to us and it does what it is designed to do, to cut and pierce and open up some stuff that needs to change. It is so important that we are honest to God.

David doesn't deflect from this. Did you notice that? He doesn't offer excuses. He doesn't say, well, listen, I'm the king, and all my buddies told me it was perfectly all right to do that. No, he takes a very humble and honest approach.

And he says, I know what I've done wrong. I recognize my transgressions, and I acknowledge that, God, you are correct in calling me out on them, and I trust you with the consequences of what I've done. He says, you are justified when you judge. So I trust you in whatever you determine. Is the next thing when the Holy Spirit convicts a spiritually mature Christian?

Well, just be honest. Yeah, I did it. I was wrong. No excuses, no justifications.

Now that's a bad place to stop. And God doesn't want us to stay there, living under the weight of our own guilt. He invites us to pivot towards him. And this is what David does. In the next section, David pivot.

And he says, God, I don't want to stay in this place. I need you to intercede and to do something. And so David prays for a change of heart. He says, help Me. He goes, I don't want to be this way.

It strains and breaks my relationship with you and I don't want that. In verse seven, he says this. Cleanse me with hyssop. Hyssop is a. A traditionally cleansing herb or plant.

It says, cleanse me with hyssop and I will be not just clean, but spiritually clean. Wash me and I will be whiter than snow. He goes, I want to hear joy. I want to hear gladness. And this wasting away, this bone crushing weight that I feel.

I want that to be relieved so that I can rejoice again. Hide your face from my sins. Don't look there and blot out all my iniquity. Cover it

over, paint it with three layers of whatever grace that you have. I don't want you to see this.

I'm ashamed and embarrassed about what has been exposed, about my life. God. What I want you to do is to create in me a clean, pure heart. I want you to renew a steadfastness and a faithfulness with you. Don't cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Instead, restore to me the joy that I had before, the joy of your salvation. And grant me a willing spirit, a spirit that says, I want to follow you and I desire to do so. And I will do what it takes to make sure I stay in that good relationship. Grant me a willing spirit that will sustain me. I love this prayer of David's and it points me to one of the most incredible promises we have in all of Scripture.

In 1 John 1:9, here's the promise. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. God. God is eager to forgive sin, but he asks us to ask for that forgiveness. So ask God to change your heart and transform your desires into something that pleases him.

I think that's important. Ask him to transfer and change and to change your desires into something that actually pleases him. That's a big step. Sometimes we really don't want our desires to change that much. But this is part of confess, confession and repentance.

Ask God to change your heart and then thank him for his love. Because this is the big one. God loves to show mercy. He loves to show mercy. In Isaiah 30, verse 18, he says, the Lord longs to be gracious to you.

He longs for it. Therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. The picture that I have in my mind, and I don't know if you have a Mental picture when you read scriptures, but I picture God on his throne, but on the very edge of it, just waiting for us to say, I need forgiveness. And God jumps to his feet and says, you have it, it's yours. I freely give you grace and forgiveness because of Jesus.

He longs to do that. He's waiting to jump to his feet. That rise up also has another meaning, though. It has this meaning of righteousness in it, in the rising up. It is God showing himself in his glory, in the magnificence of who he is.

God says, part of my glory and part of my awesomeness is this, is this thrust to forgive. It is part of who I am to forgive. I show my glory when I forgive. He wants to forgive. It is part of his nature to forgive.

And all he asks is that we ask for it. If I'm going to be honest, I'm not a grudge holder per se, but I do remember quickly what I've

forgiven you for in the past. Anyone else like that, you're forgiven. But by golly, if you do it again, it's not going to be a long trip for me to get back to where I was when it happened the first time. I'll say, mm, mm, okay, okay, yeah, I'm gonna make you work a little bit harder for it the second time.

But God isn't like that. In Hebrews 8, he says, I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. Now does that mean that God forgets? I don't think God forgets. At least not the way we do.

Instead, God makes a determination to not stay there in that place. But he moves intentionally forward with us past the sin. And what happens is he begins to make all things new. Where there was a break, God creates a weld. He seams us back together with him.

And the seam is stronger than the, than the original connection. When we live in this place of repentance and forgiveness, he doesn't just say, okay, all is forgiven. He does so much more. He immediately, immediately starts to actively reverse the wasting away process. You know where David says, my bones are crushed?

God immediately begins to re knit those bones stronger. The. The relationship grows and strengthens as we live in this place where we confess quickly and receive grace and forgiveness and move on. Vitality is renewed. Life is refreshed and restored.

As David prayed the joy of our salvation, that relationship between us and God is made new again and stronger than ever. And this feels amazing.

So should we sin so that grace may abound Even more. That was the question. No, no, no, no. God says as we move forward, we do it differently. And that's the last point.

We live differently because again, these moments of repentance and confession are intended to be our life, really. We think of them as isolated little instances where we really, really mess up and then we have to confess. But God doesn't want us to wait until we really, really, really mess up. He wants to live in this place where everything we do comes under sort of the examination of his righteousness. Okay, is that a good way to respond?

It wasn't wrong, but wasn't right. You know what I mean? And we live in this place where I want to. I don't want to do that. I want to live right righteously before God.

This is a lifestyle of recognizing and repenting and being renewed. And this requires the humility. Hence, humble and hungry. As we deal with conflict and struggles in our house, relationally, we often ask

this question, and you guys may have asked it in your house as well. Okay, looking back, can you think of anything you would do differently if you could go back and do it again?

Anyone ever asked that question to your kids or to other people? What would you do differently if you could do it again? Now, invariably, it's always nothing. I wouldn't do nothing different. They go, okay, well, let's take a different approach moving forward.

If something like this happened again, would you do anything different? No, nothing. Nothing.

It's a human, perhaps response, but it doesn't move us very far, does it? Confessing our sins quickly and honestly and receiving God's forgiveness is the step one of this place of living in right relationship with God. But part two of this is the repentance part. And repentance is not just saying, I'm sorry, but repentance is moving forward in a way that's better. It's humbly committing to doing it God's way the next time There's a guy named Zacchaeus.

If you grew up in church, you know a little song about Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus story is found in Luke 19. And Zacchaeus, for our purposes, is a tax collector. But he's a corrupt tax collector. He's gotten very wealthy charging people more than they owed.

People know this and they dislike Zacchaeus immensely. But Zacchaeus has heard about Jesus somehow. And when Jesus comes to his town, Zacchaeus wants to meet him. And if you know the song, you know this story. What does he do?

He climbs up in a tree so that he can see Jesus, why does he have to climb up in a tree?

He was a wee little man. He was a little guy. He was just a little guy. Now, I don't know about you, but if I'm walking down the street and some adult is hanging out on a tree limb, it's going to catch my attention. Yeah.

So Jesus looks up and says, zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house today. There's a whole sermon about how God intrudes into our lives, oftentimes without us really asking him to. And he says, I don't care. I'm going. I'm moving in.

I'm shoving my way through your stuff to get right there in the middle of your nonsense. And this seems to be what Jesus did with Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus showed enough interest in Jesus to climb up in a tree, but Jesus had a much greater interest in Zacchaeus. He says, I'm going to your house. I'm gonna sit there among all your fine china and your wealth, all the corruption around me.

I'm gonna live right. I'm gonna step right into that. That's a whole different sermon. But here's what is interesting.

Everyone around is shocked that Jesus says, I'm going to your house, because Zacchaeus is a horrible person. But because of the graciousness of God, because of the graciousness of Jesus, something sparks in Zacchaeus heart. Over dinner, something changes in him. And after dinner, Zacchaeus does something incredible. Zacchaeus repents.

He makes a decision to do life differently. So in Luke 19, verse 8, here's what he says to everyone at the dinner. He says, look, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. Half of my wealth I release to the poor what remains. If I have defrauded anyone of anything.

Yeah, you have. I restore it four times. Zacchaeus is going to be left destitute. If you do the math on that, he will have nothing. And yet that is what repentance called for.

Repentance for Zacchaeus wasn't a big emotional moment. I grew up in a Pentecostal church where the altar was where you came and you cried and you wept over what you'd done wrong. I don't see that wailing and crying at an altar.

It doesn't seem to be showy in the sense that we sometimes think of repentance being showy. It was just a decision, and a public one at that, to do life different and to do what he could to make up what he had done wrong. Now when we get our heads around this. It can change everything. So remember that Bible study that I show up in?

And the Bible calls me out on my bad attitude and my behavior. So I owned up to it. I talked about it with the guys and around the table, they were incredibly gracious and encouraging. I received the grace of God really from the conversation that I had with the guys there. But here's the deal.

The next morning at 5:30, I got a call from the Lawrence County Community school system.

It's another day of elearning.

Will it be different?

Okay. I decided it was going to be. I did not want to live in that space anymore. I wanted. I love the boys and I would really like it if they liked me.

That would be a pleasant, pleasant thing. So I decided, you know what, today's Thursday. We're going to do it different. I started by praying for them. That in and of itself really helps.

I don't know if you pray for the people you have difficulty with, but pray for them. That helps a lot. And then I woke him up. And I woke him up differently. I didn't wake them up like, okay, boys, get out of bed.

Like, hey boys, it's another day of elearning. I'm sorry, I'm as upset about this as you are. But we're going to do it. We can do it. And so they got up and I released a little bit of control.

I gave them permission to work on their e learning wherever they wanted to in the house. Find a spot that you feel comfortable and just do what we need to do. Now I did shut down xboxes and the TVs because I'm not an idiot. So I did remove as many distractions as possible. But at the end of the day, we mostly showed up for every class we were supposed to show up for and got credit for doing so.

We got most of our stuff turned in. Whew, that was good. And at the end of the day, we all were talking to each other and liked each other. It was a good, it was a good day. I did something different than I had done the three days previous.

And then Friday, the Lord saw fit to show mercy and kindness to his children and they went back to school.

It is hard and humbling to own our own nonsense, but the healthiest thing we can do for ourselves, for the people around us and our relationship with God is to live in this place where we're moving in a God direction, we're moving towards God. And that's this place of like being aware. Lord, show me and confessing. Where we're wrong, receiving God's grace and mercy, and then moving in a new way. This is where we find refreshment.

This is where we find renewal. This is where we sing. I live in the goodness of God. So today at your chair, there's some clipboards somewhere around. We're going to do an exercise.

If you are alive, if you have breath, there is something in your life that you. You've been convicted about. Maybe during this sermon here, it's no good saying nothing. Nothing. I got nothing.

It's no good, because we've all got stuff. So here's what we're going to do this morning. And we've got this beautiful thing. I'll give you a hint. God redeems our stuff, doesn't he?

And we've got this beautiful way of redeeming our stuff in a way that I think will delight you, but it's going to require us to be honest. And so here's what I'm gonna have you do. There's a clipboard with some tissue paper on it. And here's what. Just take a pen and I want you to write as light as you want or as bold as you want.

Maybe use lemon juice if you wanna do it. Maybe just write a symbol on there. But something that, if you were to look at that, go, okay, this is my issue. This is my sin. This is the hurt that I've been hanging onto.

This is the hangup that I do not want to release. This is the habit that it's gonna be hard to say no to. This is the person that I'm having issues right now with. And just write that down small. You don't have to.

No big letters, just small. And then I want you to pull it off the binder and fold it up. Fold it up as many times as you want to, fold it up and pass it on to the person next to you. Now, if you don't know of something that you could confess, you can ask the person next to you. There's a good chance you're sitting beside someone who knows you pretty well and say, well, you could talk about that, but we're just going to take a time of quietness and give you a chance to do that.

If you're not writing, close your eyes so you don't see the person next to you and what they're confessing. But we're just going to do this. This is a good exercise. I want to be quiet. I'm going to let you guys do what you need to do.

And then we're going to follow that up. Hold on to those papers and I'll give you further instructions when you're done.

So maybe you're holding your paper in your hand right now. Here's what we do. Fold it up. We've still got some people writing. That's right.

Keep writing. Keep writing. You only have to confess one, by the way. I mean, isn't not a grocery list of sin just one? Then I'm going to ask those who are helping me right now to.

They're going to walk by, they're going to have a plate or a bowl. I'm not sure what they're going to use to put those in. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to tear it up. You can tear it up into four pieces, you can tear it up into 20 pieces, but you just shred that thing as much as you want to do.

And then you're just going to throw it in the bowl until they get here. I want you to hold that in your hand. I want you to acknowledge it, say, lord, this is my sin. I freely confess it. You are right in your estimations of my sin.

You are correct in your judgment of my sin. The life and the experiences and the consequences of this sin that I'm living in right now is due to my own stuff. So I confess it freely. But I'm so thankful that through Jesus you are eager to forgive. You live, you stand ready to jump up and run to us with forgiveness.

And then when you toss your shredded up sin in that bowl, you're going to receive communion, bread and juice that signify how much God loves you. Okay? Heavenly Father, this morning we thank you for the forgiveness that we can receive when we ask for forgiveness. And it's possible because the one who is perfect died for us so that we could be called your children, sons and daughters of God. You loved us so much that you gave your life for us so that we could have eternal life.

But you don't stop there. As we live this new life, this new place of confession and receiving grace and living life with true repentance, you care for us, you advocate for us. We can approach your throne of grace with confidence. We can find mercy and grace to help us in our time of need. We are so thankful for that.

Just because we've said yes to you, as we take the bread and the cup, we want to live in that place of gratitude. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Now, this morning, if you don't have a relationship with Jesus. He wants that to change.

You see, you may not yet know and love Jesus, but Jesus knows and loves you just like he did Zacchaeus. And beginning a relationship with Jesus is this simple. Confess. I am not right with you, Jesus, but I want to receive grace and forgiveness. You gave your life so that I could be right with you.

And then I'm going to live life differently from here on. From here on out, I give you control of my life. I encourage you, if you made that decision this morning, to talk to us afterwards. We want you to be baptized into God's family, here or elsewhere. This is just part of becoming a follower of Jesus to constantly be living in this place where we understand our need for God and his need to love and forgive us.

Father, meet us in this moment. In Jesus name. Amen.

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