

Preacher: Pastor Twyla

Scripture: 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 are righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!*

As a young man, Jack Guelker had purchased archery equipment and could hardly wait to try it out. Knowing that bales of hay would provide an excellent backdrop for a target, but having none readily available, he chose to use something else he had on hand.

Several sheets of insulation board leaning against an old outbuilding seemed to provide the perfect substitute. After centering the target over the boards, he stepped off the required distance to

practice shooting. He strung the bow, carefully fitted an arrow onto the bowstring, drew the arrow and fired.

Although the arrow struck the target, the instantaneous sound of breaking glass was the first indication that the target area might now have been a good choice. In the springtime, however, it had seemed the best place to stack all twenty of the storm windows from the house. The arrow had passed through the target, the insulation boards and the entire stack of glass windows, breaking everyone. I imagine Mr. Guelker wished he could have the chance to rethink his plan and make a better decision.

Have you ever wished you could have a second chance at something? You know, a do-over? I think we all have felt this way. Have you ever wished you had a second chance for a sin you committed? I think we all know what that feels like too. Well, our generous and gracious God gives us second chances, and I don't know about you, but I sure am grateful for this.

David, the writer of Psalm 32, was also grateful. He says that those who are happy and blessed are those who are experiencing God's forgiveness of their transgression, the covering of their sin, they are those whom, as Eugene Peterson translates in verse two of *The Message*, "God holds nothing against you; and you're holding nothing back from God."

Did you catch the second part of that statement? Let me repeat it: "and you're holding nothing back from God." Forgiveness requires an attitude of genuine confession of our sin. We deceive ourselves if we think that a life of sin against God and people has no real effect on our spirits and bodies.

Roger Barrier, author of "Listening to the Voice of God" wrote about this personal experience that made him think about his attitude towards confession. "When I left for college, my mother – who had always done my laundry – made a canvas duffel bag for me. 'Put your dirty clothes in this every night,' she said. 'At the end of the week, wash them at the Laundromat.

"Seven days later, I took my dirty clothes to the Laundromat. To save time, I threw the duffel bag in the washer, put in some laundry powder, inserted the proper change, and turned on the machine. Moments later, a loud thump, thump, thump, thump echoed through the Laundromat. A pretty co-ed approached me with a grin. 'I watched you load your washer. I think the clothes would get cleaner if you took them out of the bag.'

"One day, when my relationship with God was hurting, I remembered my laundry episode. I realized the way I confessed sins – 'Dear God, please forgive me for all the sins I've committed today' – was about as effective as my first attempt at washing clothes. Each sin needs individual attention."

Even as people of God, we have a tendency to gloss over or try to cover up our sin rather than to confess our sins before God. In verse 5, David acknowledges that at one time he had tried to hide his sin. You may remember at least one of his more well know sins he tried to hide from God—his affair with Bathsheba. Like Adam and Eve we sometimes try to ignore or conceal/cover up our sin from God and to shift blame to others. But when we acknowledge our sin, we discover that God will free us from our sin with forgiveness and then restore us. And we feel blessed and joyful in our renewed relationship with God.

And so, David, in prayer, broke his stubborn silence, his attempted cover-up of his sin, when he finally acknowledged and confessed it to God. And God forgave the guilt of David's sin. God knows all about our sin; but until we recognize sin as sin and prayerfully acknowledge it fully and genuinely before God, we will never be free of its insidious effects.

Police chief Richard Knoebel of Kewaskum, Wisconsin, accidentally drove past a stopped school bus with its emergency lights flashing. So Knoebel wrote himself a \$235 ticket (probably more than that by now), docked himself four points on his driving record, and paid the fine.

Most people wouldn't have known about the officer's deed, but months after the ticket, a newspaper reporter discovered the record of Knoebel's ticket and fine.

While on patrol, Knoebel said he had become distracted by a stopped dump truck. Worried that a car quickly approaching the truck might collide with it, he moved to the next lane to pass the truck and to give the oncoming car more room to stop. That's when he realized he was passing a stopped school bus in the far lane.

That didn't excuse breaking the law, however. The honest officer held himself accountable, even when most people weren't looking.

Honest confession frees us from the bonds of sin. It allows us to enjoy the privileges of God's forgiveness. David recognized three blessings he received when God gave him a second chance: God became David's hiding place; God preserved him from trouble; and God surrounded him with "glad cries of deliverance."

No wonder David shouts and sings out with joy and commends the blessings of a sin-forgiven prayerful life! One who senses the freedom of God's forgiveness and restoration has a burden lifted and a second chance at life. Who doesn't want that?!?! But there's more good news. The psalmist knew that even one who is faithful needs God's ongoing help to live out a renewed life.

A mother dragged her teenage son Matt outside to help her pull weeds one sunny morning, even though he snickered when he caught her talking to her plants.

"Be careful; the weeds are so thick here you could easily uproot a flower," the mother told him. "If you do, stick it back in the ground and tell it you're sorry."

Her son sighed. "Mom," he said, "I just weed the plants. I don't counsel them."

Well, maybe the plants don't need counsel, but we do so that we can stay on the right path to walk with Jesus. David tells us, it is God who will **counsel** us, teach us, and instruct us. God will counsel us about how to be living God's way for our whole life. How else will we find our way? To live without God's empowering instruction will lead again to stubbornness and sin, even by otherwise faithful people.

Psalm 32 takes a turn in verse nine and offers us a bit of wisdom, reminding us that there are consequences when we do not heed God's counsel. We are warned not to be mulish, meaning, we should not be unwise, in need of bit and bridle to be controlled. Or as Eugene Petersen interprets verses nine and ten, "Don't be ornery like a horse or mule that needs bit and bridle to stay on track. God-deifiers are always in trouble; God-affirmers find themselves loved every time they turn around."

The consequences for holding onto our sin is that we will continue to get in trouble with others and with God. But when we earnestly go to God for forgiveness, we will be loved by God as evidenced in the experience of being given a second chance to get things right.

May we reflect on our life before God and each other. God is a grace-full God, through love for us in Jesus Christ. But unless we come humbly before God as sinners, we will experience no divine forgiveness or joyful release. This is reaffirmed many times throughout scripture. In 1 John 1:8-10 we read, "If we claim that we're free of sin, we're only fooling ourselves. A claim like that is wayward nonsense. On the other hand, if we admit our sins—make a clean break from them—He won't let us down; he'll be true to himself. He'll forgive our sins and purge us of all wrongdoing. If we claim that we've never sinned, we out-and-out contradict God—accusing him of being a liar. A claim like that only shows off our ignorance of God."

With God's forgiveness, we can invite others to join us in coming prayerfully and joyfully before God. All of us can be free from the bindings of sin and know the joy of the Lord because God gives us second chances. Amen.