

An Order of Worship for the Home

October 25, 2020 – Reformation Sunday

Guest Pastor – Rev. Aaron Putnam, Director of LINC Bay Area

This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

Reader 1: Scripture Alone guides our teaching.

Reader 2: By grace alone we are saved.

Reader 1: By faith alone we receive these truths.

Reader 2: In Christ alone we have salvation.

Reader 1: We gather to worship our God,

Reader 2: Who alone is worthy of our praise,

Together: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Romans 3:21-26

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Confession & Absolution

Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered. (From the order of Compline, Lutheran Service Book p.254)

Christian Confessing: I confess to God Almighty, before the whole company of heaven and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault; wherefore I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me, forgive me all my sins, and bring me to everlasting life. Amen.

Christian Responding: The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon, forgiveness, and remission of all your sins.

Together: Amen

John 1:29-34

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' ³¹I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." ³²And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. ³³I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'³⁴ And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son^{of} of God."

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hebrews 9:11-15

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this

creation)¹² he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh,¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

¹⁵ Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Message

A Better Sacrifice

Reformation Sunday is not just a historical celebration or commemoration. It is actually a gracious call from the Lord to be reformed and reshaped everyday by His Gospel message: Saved by Grace alone... through faith alone.... in Christ alone... as revealed in the Scriptures alone...

What is sin?

When most people hear the word "sin", what do they think of? The stuff we do wrong, certain rules we have to keep. When we break those rules it's a sin. That's *part* of what sin is and unfortunately, it's only a small part.

In the book of Hebrews, the author uses one word more than any other book in the Bible. That Word is "conscience." The author talks about our conscience as a little voice inside our head and what we know in our heart.

Our conscience is something we deal with constantly, but something we don't really want others to have access to. We like our privacy and we don't want people to have access to our data. Imagine if someone had access to your conscience, if they knew everything about you, all your data! Everything you think in your head and feel in your heart. That freaks us out. We're worried that people might know the reality about us

In all religions, eastern or western, there is something greater out there, a god, some power or force. There is some disconnect. We haven't lived up to that "greater thing" out there. Our conscience tells us that we have not been good enough, that we have not lived up to what we should be. There's a gap between us and what's better out there.

Sin is the gap between who we are and who we know we should be. It's the issue that our conscience keeps bringing up. It's the thing the little voice in our head keeps bugging us with. Now that's the problem, bigger than just what we do wrong. It's a holistic issue. Our whole life doesn't live up and that leads to death.

So, why is sin such a problem?

What's the major issue with sin in our lives? The major issue is that we try to deal with it ourselves. We know there is something very, very wrong with us. Our conscience tells us so. The little voice won't be quiet. We know there is a problem. "I have to be a better person; I have to live up to some standard; I should be doing these things and I shouldn't be doing those things." Our conscience tells us we fall short. We're sinners and the main problem is that we try to deal with it ourselves.

How do we try and deal with our sin?

1. Some try to explain it away. (this is very common today) "I'm not that bad, way better than "that" guy. We compare ourselves to other's standards but we're ignoring God's standard. We try to deal with sin by minimizing it.
2. Some try deal with their sin by self-medicating. Life is hard and I feel like a failure and just want to numb the pain. You can do that in a lot of different ways, but you are still trying to deal with it yourself.
3. But here's the main way we try and deal with our own sin: Most try to deal with it through "sacrifice." We try to earn approval/forgiveness through our own efforts. We know there is a debt because of sin and we try to pay it back. We try to sacrifice for our own mistakes, but does that work?

Let's consider the Reformer Martin Luther. When He was a monk he was consumed by humanity's sinfulness, especially his own. He knew he deserved God's wrath and it terrified him. Luther's conscience was extremely sensitive and at times hopeless because of the realization of his own sin. As a good monk, he sought to deal with sin through the medieval church's system of penance: You go to confession, you name every one of your sins, and then the priest gives you a list of specific acts for you to do to make satisfaction for those sins.

Well, Luther went at this 100%. He spent hours confessing every single offense he could recall. Then he spent even more hours trying to earn his forgiveness through his own personal sacrifice. Here was the problem. Those prayers, fasting and many other good works brought him no peace, but only more stress.

After years of being a medieval monk extraordinaire, working to fulfill the church's prescribed acts of penance (e.g. indulgences), he couldn't clear his conscience. He couldn't do enough work. He couldn't sacrifice enough.

The book of Hebrews talks about this.

*For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
(Hebrews 9:13-14)*

Christ's blood purifies us from our "dead works." "Works" in Greek is the "good" things we are doing.

Here's the context: the author is writing to very religious people (the Essenes). They followed all the rules and wanted others to do the same. They did the right things, the right customs, and the right washings. They didn't want to be sinners. They wanted to be good people.

The author of Hebrews says all of that stuff, all of your best behavior, all of your sacrifices, are just dead works and you need Christ's blood to save you from them and to clear your conscience. Now that is bizarre! The author is not just saying you need Christ's blood for the things you've done wrong. He is saying you need Christ's blood for all things you've done right, even as you're trying to use those things as sacrifices to God; as ways to pay the debt and be ok; to fix the problem of sin in your life by yourself! You need a better solution. You need a better sacrifice.

Martin Luther knew this. Confronted with the reality that he didn't just commit sins and offenses, but that his entire nature was sinful and corrupt, Luther doesn't attempt to explain away his sin, or self-medicate to numb it, or try to "sacrifice" more to God to pay for the debt. Instead of looking to himself for a solution to his sin he looked to God for the solution.

Lord, **you've** got to make satisfaction for me. **You've** got to create in me a clean heart. **You've** got to deliver me from blood guiltiness. **You** don't want my sacrifice. If you did, I'd give it but "there is nothing I can do to save myself, to clear my own conscience" and Luther was right.

What's the solution to sin?

Here's what the author of Hebrews says: blood, the blood of Jesus. Talk about blood makes us queasy and uncomfortable, but the blood of Jesus is exactly what we need. You and I are messed up and we can't do enough. We can't sacrifice enough to make amends. We can't be a good enough person to change our life around and we can't do enough to make up for the mess that we are.

Therefore, we need a sacrifice that will actually save us. We need someone who isn't in debt to pay the debt for us, which is exactly what Jesus' blood has done. He lived the perfect life we couldn't live, died the death we deserve so that we get the benefits of what he did.

Charles Simeon, English preacher, talked about the Old Testament Day of Atonement practice. When the priest sacrificed for the sins of the people, they would put their hands on the head of the animal and transfer sin of the people onto the animal. The animal was sacrificed (blood was shed) as a substitute. Charles Simeon wrote, "The Jews knew what they did when they transferred their sin to the head of the offering (animal). The thought came into my mind, may I also transfer all my guilt onto another. Has God provided an Offering for me, that I may lay my sins on His head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer. So, I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus."

So, what does this all mean? It means that Jesus is the sacrifice we need to save us from our sin and to purify and clear our conscience. It is not through obedience to God's law. Not through "being a good Christian" (whatever that means). Not through working hard and living right. Not through being nicer than the guy who lives next to me. Not through voting for the right person. Not through anything we can do or say or think or be, but that our sin is removed, and we can enjoy God's life and presence. It is only through Jesus! Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. You can lay your sins on him. It is a done deal on the cross.

But there's something else that Jesus' sacrifice does for us. It not only cleanses and saves us from eternal death. It also changes us in the here and now.

Ernest Gordon was a POW in a World War II Japanese camp in Thailand. He wrote the book *Miracle on the River Kwai*. In the book he tells this true story:

The day's work had ended; the tools were being counted as usual. As the party was about to be dismissed, the Japanese guard shouted that a shovel was missing. [the guard] insisted that someone had stolen it to sell to the Thais. Striding up and down before the men, he ranted and raved, and Screaming in

broken English, he demanded that the guilty one step forward to take his punishment. No one moved; the guard's rage reached new heights of violence.

"All die! All die!" he shrieked.

To show that he meant what he said, he cocked his rifle, put it to his shoulder and looked down the sights, ready to fire at the first man at the end of them. At that moment a soldier from the Argyll regiment stepped forward, stood stiffly to attention, and said calmly, "I did it."

The guard unleashed all his whipped-up hate; he kicked the helpless prisoner and beat him with fists. Still the Argyll stood rigidly to attention, with the blood streaming down his face. His silence goaded the guard to an excess of rage. Seizing his rifle by the barrel, he lifted it high over his head and, with a final howl, brought it down on the skull of the Argyll, who sank limply to the ground and did not move. Although it was perfectly clear that he was dead, the guard continued to beat him and stopped only when exhausted.

The men of the work detail picked up their comrade's body, shouldered their tools and marched back to camp. When the tools were counted again at the guardhouse no shovel was missing.

They were saved by this soldier's blood. And do you feel the power of his blood? Of course you do. Think about this... this soldier was innocent. He knew that if he didn't step forward, they would have all died. He said, "Me for them." But he didn't just save them physically. He changed them. Those other soldiers would never be the same again after that. They would never be able to live their lives as selfishly as otherwise. That soldier shed his innocent blood for the others, and it changed Ernest Gordon for the rest of his life.

As you hear the story today, even though this soldier's blood wasn't shed for you, don't you feel the power of it? Doesn't it move something in your heart and soul? Doesn't it make you want to live in a different way?

But what if the blood was shed for you? Well, it has been. Jesus doesn't demand blood from you. He offers up his for you. Jesus doesn't demand more sacrifice from you.

Instead, he becomes your sacrifice. That's the best news in the world! It shapes you and reforms you today, and every day. Jesus is a better sacrifice for sin.

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.
Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.
Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.
Reader 2: Receive our offerings.
Together: Receive us as your own.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

Reader 1: Scripture Alone guides our teaching.
Reader 2: By grace alone we are saved.
Reader 1: By faith alone we receive these truths.
Reader 2: In Christ alone we have salvation.

Reader 1: We stand together in this faith.
Reader 2: We go from here and we are not alone.
Together: Our God who is Father, Son, and Spirit goes with us. Amen

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

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