

SERMON – PASTOR GREG GRAHAM

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PSALM 51. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When was the last time you felt so guilty that all you wanted to do was to hide? When was the last time you felt so ashamed that you wished the ground would open up and swallow you? What did you do? Let us pray.

The eighth son of a farmer called Jesse was a nobody- but not in the sight of God. So often in the Bible we hear of so called 'nobodies' being blessed by God in wonderful ways. This eighth son of Jesse defeated Goliath the giant, became king of Israel, defeated many enemies and had wives and concubines. Of course we are talking about King David. A nobody that God blessed with so much. But it was not enough. David wanted more- especially when he saw a beautiful woman bathing on a neighboring roof. Even after he found out she was married, he wanted her and so she was brought into his presence. Most of you know the story well- David committed adultery with Bathsheba, she got pregnant- David tried to get Bathsheba's husband- Uriah the Hittite to think he was the father but in the end David had him killed. Bathsheba was brought into David's palace and a son was born. This man who had been so blessed by God turned his back on God and lied, committed adultery and murder. No shame for him. No guilt for him. He was king and could do whatever he liked. Until Nathan the Prophet came to him. Nathan told a little story and David announced the judgment: *As surely as the LORD lives, this man who did this deserves to die... Then Nathan said to David, "You are the many!"*

What did David do? He wrote and prayed Psalm 51:

*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.*

The adulterer, the murderer, the sinner cried out to God for mercy. He had turned away from God but now he turned toward God. And begged for mercy. David did not promise to do anything because he knew he could not atone for his sins- towards Uriah, towards Bathsheba and certainly not towards God. His sin was so grievous there was nothing he could do except to ask the gracious and compassionate God to have mercy upon him. And only God could wash away all his sins and only God could cleanse him from guilt and shame. As for David so also for us. When God shows us our sins all we can do is to cry out for mercy.

*I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.* One of the saddest realities of many people is that they do not recognize their sins- they have no guilt and they have no shame. So they do not seek help, they do not repent and so they continue in their merry ways- all the way to hell. But for those who know God, those who have been baptized, those in whom the Spirit of God dwells- we suffer until we return in repentance and faith to God. And always remember that when we sin against each other- we are sinning against God.

*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.* David continues his prayer asking that God will change his heart and mind and send the very Spirit of Jesus back into his mind, body and soul. He prays that God will never leave him nor forsake him and that God would restore the joy that David once had. Have you felt that joy when your best friend and you are reconciled? have you felt that wonderful joy when you and your husband/wife have made up? Have you ever experience that joy when you have been reconciled with one of your estranged children? Have you ever felt that joy when you know that God has forgiven you? Have you ever experienced a profound joy as you received the very body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament? This can all be ours as we repent and believe the good news.

And now the response of David: *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.* Who best to challenge and comfort other sinners than one who himself has been forgiven and restored?

David's story is our story- we have been declared the holy and beloved children of God and God has blessed us in so many ways. To be sure HE has also tested us and He has allowed Satan to tempt us- but God has always used these things to discipline us, to change us and to conform us to His Son Jesus Christ.

And the last word is from Romans 8: *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* Because the Eternal Son of God has borne our condemnation- he sufferers so that we might live- forever in the house of God.

Actually I have one more word! From our Gospel reading: *Sir, they said (to Philip) we would like to see Jesus.* Amen.