

Leviticus 17:11

"Wrongs Made Right"

When Adam and Eve recognized what they had done they felt guilty and hid from God. No one told them to feel guilty. They were not shamed by anyone. After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they knew their wrongs and their wrong doing. They knew eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was wrong and they knew why. Let me ask y'all something, church. Do we know what our wrongs are? (pause) Do we know what wrongs we have committed and against whom? (pause) Do we even give our wrongs a second thought? (pause) I have to tell ya, I have run into a lot of Christians who are willing and almost eager to admit to being a sinner. They admit they are sinners and they stop right there. (pause)

"Hello. I am a sinner. (pause) Wow! It feels good to get that off my chest. Confession really is good for the soul. (pause for deep relaxing breath) Alright. That's done. Time to go back to what I was doing."

I have met too many Christians who think just because they have said the words, "I am a sinner," they think they are done. When pushed about it I hear things like, "Well, I cannot do anything about the fact I am a sinner so why should I worry about it?" "I cannot earn salvation. I cannot make up for my mistakes on my own. The preacher just said so." (pause) Yes. I have said we cannot earn salvation. Yes, this is all true. (pause) But it is only true if salvation is just about following rules. We cannot be good enough. That's true. We cannot be smart or pretty or rich enough to earn salvation. That's true too. We cannot be obedient enough to earn salvation. Why? Because the Law was never about rule following. The Law of Moses was always meant to be about something so much more important. Suffice it to say the idea that because there is nothing I can do there must be nothing I should do is just wrong – on so many levels.

The reason we cannot be pretty enough, smart enough, rich enough, or obedient enough is because the price for our sins has already been paid in full. When Adam and Eve ate from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil they destroyed their relationship with God. What Adam and Eve had done was to cheat on God. (pause) They cheated on God the same way someone might sleep around behind the back of their spouse. And if that's not bad enough we do the same thing every time we sin. Every time we do what we want instead of what God asks – every time we put ourselves first instead of at least checking in with God we do more damage to our relationship with God and we go into further debt in the relationship bank.

Do y'all know what I mean when I talk about the relationship bank? (pause) Relationships are like bank accounts. We have to pay into them. When we first start dating someone we put a lot of time and energy into the relationship. It's kinda like building up credit. If you are like me, you are gonna need that credit. Why? Because I have a tendency to make mistakes, to forget things, and to put my foot in my mouth. (I am sure none of y'all can imagine me putting my foot in my mouth. Pause.) When I do that stuff I make a withdrawal from the relationship bank. For any of us who have ever been cheated on or deliberately mistreated this idea of the relationship bank hits home because we know what it is like to be in an emotionally bankrupt relationship. Now consider Adam and Eve. They cheated on God. They were emotionally bankrupt with the Lord God Almighty. As the first humans Adam and Eve represented all of us. When they went into debt with God so did we and everyone who comes after us. When we sin against God we send the debt even higher. To put it into perspective the U.S. federal budget deficit for fiscal year 2019 is \$985 billion dollars - \$985 billion dollars. If we compared that debt to the relational debt we owe God because of sin the U.S. federal budget deficit for fiscal year 2019 would not come close to being a penny – not a penny. That's how far in the hole we are with God.

Thanks be to God the price has already been paid. Amen? **Amen**. Thanks be to God the price for all of our sins has already been paid! Amen?! **Amen!** Thanks be to God a check was written to cover the cost for all our sin going all

the way back to Adam and Eve and it was written in the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen? **Amen.** By a quick show of hands how many of y'all walk into town hall to pay your water bill? (pause) When I go in to pay the bill for the parsonage they stamp the card for the water bill. The stamp says, "**Paid in Full.**" Praise the Lord, our sins have been paid in full. Amen? **Amen.**

The precedent for our sins being paid in full begins in this passage from Leviticus 17:11. Here in the Old Testament the Biblical Author is talking about wild game being offered at the Tabernacle, or tent of meeting to prevent idolatry, or the worship of foreign "g"ods. However, the spirit of the Law is about something much deeper. In this command God is calling the people to be different or set apart from their neighbors. Do not sacrifice wild game to goat demons of the field; rather, bring your sacrifice to the Lord that you will not suffer blood guilt, and so the Lord will not turn his face against you in anger.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of life" (Lev 17:11).

Many thousands of years later the Son of God, Jesus Christ would make the same sacrifice Abraham was spared from making. Where Abraham was spared from offering Isaac as a sacrifice, God gave God's only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the price for all of our sins. Jesus' blood is the atonement. Jesus' blood is the ink on the check written to pay the price for all of our sins. Jesus pays those debts in full at the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior.

Do you see? (pause) Do you see my sisters and brothers? There is something for us to do. Jesus Christ has already made the ultimate sacrifice by allowing Himself to be mocked, beaten, spat upon, caned, scourged and crucified. Jesus has already poured out the blood of the sacrifice that makes atonement for our sins. Jesus has paid the price for our wrongs. The price is high, and the cost was not easy to pay. (pause) God acted first. Jesus was obedient – even to a traitor's death on the cross. The blood of the Son of God was spilled – all of it – that we may be saved.

Now, here's the thing. As United Methodist we do not believe in once saved – always saved. We understand, Jesus Christ paid the price to give us this wonderful gift of salvation where by all of our sins are paid in full. However, it doesn't end there. (pause) Do y'all remember the story of the woman caught in adultery? (pause) Do you remember what Jesus says to her after all of her accusers have dropped their stones and walked away? Jesus says to her, "**go, and do not sin again**" (John 8:11).

Brothers and sisters, God's prevenient grace gives us the understanding that we have sinned. Through the blood of Christ God's justifying grace washes us clean of the sins we have committed. The gift of salvation is a gift we must **accept, and cherish.** This is not a, "badda bing, badda boom," and we are done to go on and live life however we want. If we are to go and sin no more then we must repent. We must turn back to God, and consider why it is so important to be a set apart people. Our sins have been paid in full. How will we live the rest of our lives? Will we callously go back to our selfish sinful behavior? (pause) Or will we show our gratitude to God, and appreciation for the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross by examining our lives and looking for ways to do no harm? Will we look for ways to do more good? Will we strive to grow in our relationship with God that we might know God in an intimate way? (pause) Sisters and brothers it is not enough to have known God once. We must choose God every day so that the atonement for our sins has its lasting effect throughout the whole of our lives, and the lives of everyone – not a few, but everyone we meet.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.