

Week of August 9, 2021: Psalm 51



Discussion Questions Set #1

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions." (Psalm 51:1)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"Against you, 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. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place." (Psalm 51:6-8)

One of the key themes of Psalm 51 is that mercy and forgiveness are sourced in God's unfailing love and His great compassion, meaning that any assumption of deservedness on our part is removed from such a process of forgiveness.

1. What happens if we believe forgiveness to be sourced elsewhere other than in God's love and compassion?
2. In what ways might we see a cultural individualism or self-sufficiency affecting our view of repentance and forgiveness within the church? How does Psalm 51:6-8 help us address any idea of self-sufficiency in a pursuit of forgiveness?
3. We didn't really touch on this in sermon, but how do you see confession and repentance as related? In what way are these two concepts associated within a process of forgiveness?

Discussion Questions Set #2

"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." (Psalm 51:10-12)

1. Repentance can sometimes be envisioned as "sincere regret", a feeling of guilt and remorse. What occurs if repentance is understood as only a feeling and not a feeling accompanied by action?
2. When you think of the phrase "create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me", what images come to mind?
3. In sermon, we discussed the idea that repentance entails a "180 degree turn" away from sin and toward God with a whole lot of white board doodling. Discuss how this idea helps us to better understand repentance and the place of repentance within a process of forgiveness:



4. Why is it important to seriously consider the place of the "me" in the process of forgiveness? Why is removing the "me" from a place of centrality in repentance important to the follower of Jesus?
5. Discuss the repentant and surrendered attitude in which the request of Psalm 51:10-12 results. Why is such an attitude important as we follow Jesus? What does such an attitude help accomplish in us?

Discussion Questions Set #3

"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise." (Psalm 51: 16-17)

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6)
"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13)

1. These verse are interesting because we know that the Old Testament religious system is extensively focussed on sacrifice for the pardon of sin – just check out the book of Leviticus if you don't believe me. How are we to understand Psalm 51:16-17 and these other verses in light of Old Testament sacrificial commandments?
2. Discuss the place of a broken and contrite heart/spirit within an understanding of repentance. What place does it play?