

Soul Reset: Living in the Light



A colleague and I were talking one day about the differences in what we

can say in the Lord's Prayer. We can say "thy will be done" or "your will be done" and we can say "sin, debts, or trespasses." Did you know that in our hymnal, there are three different versions of the Lord's Prayer? The Ecumenical version says "yours" instead of "thys" and "sins and those who sin against us." The old Methodist one says "thys" and "trespasses and those who trespass against us." And the one from the Evangelical United Brethren who merged with the Methodist Church in 1968 says, "thys" and "debts and our debtors." And I wouldn't say that this is hotly debated, at least in my circle of friends; basically, I think we do our best when we pick one and go with it. But I was talking to this colleague and he says that he'll change it up every once in a while. He'll tell the congregation that, "It's time to pray the Lord's Prayer, and today we're just going to throw it out there to God and say, "forgive us our sins."

For some reason, I just find that so refreshing. I grew up saying trespasses; I have served a church that says trespasses. I have no desire to change what we say and how we do the Lord's prayer, otherwise we would have done it differently today. I don't actually even like the Lord's Prayer with the modern language. My one hang-up is that a "trespass" can seem so foreign to us, like a word we'd have to explain its usage and meaning. It's almost like there's a level of separation from what we're talking about when we say trespasses or even debtors. "Forgive us our sins."



In our scripture today, Jesus just throws it out there and tells his

disciples the truth about what's going to happen on this night. Jesus is about to be betrayed by Judas and abandoned by all the of the disciples. "You will all be deserters because of me tonight." And, of course, all of the disciples – and loudly Peter –

voiced their support. Unfortunately, for all their bravado, Jesus is right, and all of them do fall by the wayside. And for Peter, the loudest of the defenders of himself and the disciples, we get the full story. Jesus says that Peter will deny him three times before morning, and in the second half of our scripture for today, Peter is confronted three different times with people saying, “Here’s another one who was with the Galilean! He’s also one of his disciples. He was with Jesus the Nazarene!” And each time, Peter denied this, each time with increasing anger and frustration. His frustration grew so much so that scripture tells us that he began to curse and swear oaths that he didn’t know who Jesus was.



And that’s when the cock crowed. That’s when it all came flooding back

to Peter. “You’ll become a deserter. You’ll deny me. I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.” And Peter wept. The next thing Peter knew, Jesus was being beaten and killed. Can you imagine the utter shame Peter felt after he heard that rooster crow? I imagine that it must have been pretty difficult for him to carry such shame and self-loathing in those following hours.

This makes me think of the other disciple whose story of denying Jesus and betraying Jesus and how it goes incredibly differently. Judas betrayed Jesus publicly and worse because he got paid until he returned the silver coins he received from the High Priests. The shame was too much for him, and he responded to that shame differently and disastrously.

So the question is: what made the difference? They both denied Christ in some way; they both deserted him in some way. They both fell short of what God intended for them. They both sinned. So why is Peter, despite everything, still seen as the chief of the

disciples and still revered as their leader and we only remember Judas for this and refer to people who betray us invoking his name? The answer is that Peter took his shame and guilt and dealt with it in the community of the other disciples. Peter did what my clergy colleague invited his congregations and “just threw it out there” and confessed his sins. Peter decided that living in the light was better than living in the darkness; Judas was overwhelmed by the darkness. But it didn’t have to be like that. Judas’ story could have ended differently, if only he’d decided to live in the light.



The fact of the matter is that you and I will fall short of what God intends

for us. We will have trespasses, debts, and sins. And we should hopefully feel shame over those things that qualify as sins. In those moments, we have two choices: isolation or confession. We can choose to keep these things in the recesses of darkness or deal with it by ourselves or we can choose to live in the light. To make our confession known either to beloved, trusted friends, or go right to the source: Jesus himself.

When we live in the light, the story can change. Think of the story of Peter. Jesus comes to Peter in one of his Resurrection appearances and says to him, “Do you love me? Feed my sheep.” This is a reminder that somehow in those moments of deep shame, we can still hear Jesus saying, “You’re my child. I still have vision for your life. Feed my sheep.” It’s in those moments on the discipleship journey that with those habitual practices, the spiritual disciplines, we discover their full value. This is because we have the capacity to draw back to memory. We have the capacity to hear the still, small voice of Jesus in our darkest moments. And Peter was never the same. See, confession changes our behavior. That’s what God desires for us; to become more like

Jesus. God offers us forgiveness and mercy. God set us free from the shame we might feel and allows us to live in the light of the of God's grace.



This is the ultimate goal of a soul reset. Over the past six weeks, we've

talked about different practices that help us along the way: finding God's presence in our everyday lives, opening up to a new level of vulnerability before God, setting something aside for a time in order to spend more time with God, taking intentional Sabbath rest seriously, and living a lifestyle of worship. We added confession today. All of these things help us claim the holistic salvation that Jesus has in mind for us; these practices help us look at our whole lives through the lens of Jesus's light: soul, mind, spirit, body, and relationships. And that's bigger than a sermon series and bigger than a Bible study. So even though we're going to pivot away from this in the coming weeks as we move toward Lent, do not forget what God has asked of us and what God has offered to us. When we find ourselves needing a reset, may we have the courage of Peter to stand firm in God's love. And may we continue to live in the light and grace and truth of Jesus our Christ.