



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

March 19, 2025

Pastor Thad Flitter

Lenten Midweek 3

Passion History: [Luke 22:39-54](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 51 (*Red Hymnal*)

Reading: [Isaiah 6:1-8](#)

Devotion Text: [Psalm 51:8-9](#)

### **LORD, HAVE MERCY** **Reflections on Repentance** **REMOVING OUR GUILT**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father and our Savior Jesus. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

You can imagine that feeling when everyone says that you are wrong, that you are at fault, that you did it, but the fact was you didn't do it. And no matter what you said, no matter how much you tried to convince them otherwise, no matter how adamant you were, they weren't going to listen to you. You can imagine that feeling of that guilt that is sitting on your shoulders; that you didn't do this but it is being placed on you. You can imagine the tension in your back as you think about this situation. Then finally, new evidence comes out or someone confesses to it and you are told you are free to go. You're not guilty. It wasn't your fault. You can imagine this burden being taken off of your shoulders. You can imagine that pressure in your back being released and just disappearing. You can imagine the relief, the joy and the happiness that you would feel.

You can also imagine a situation where you were in the wrong. You did do it. It was your fault. And no matter how much you tried to deny it and tried to say other things, you knew the truth. You had your reasons. You had your excuses and it sounded good at the time, but as you think about it more, you realize how hollow it really sounds. And no matter what you do, no matter what you say, no matter how many times you say it, it doesn't change the fact. You did it. You were wrong. It was your fault. And you hurt them. As you are trying to wrap your mind around that entire situation, and as you are coming to terms with the fact that yes, indeed, you are guilty, you can almost feel like your identity is changing, especially after she confronts you and says, "I don't know you

anymore. The person that I know, the person that I knew and loved, would never have done something like that.” Then you have to admit, she’s not wrong. You feel the weight of guilt. You feel that shame. There is nowhere for you to run and nowhere for you to hide, and you can’t change it.

Now imagine then that you are standing in front of the judge and he is about to read your sentence. This judge knows everything that you have thought, said or done and there is nothing that you can do to hide from him. You know that all the evidence is stacked up against you and that there is absolutely nothing you can do in this situation, except for stand there and take it. And the judge says, “Not guilty. You are free to go. Your life is yours. It’s all taken care of. Nothing is ever going to come back against you.” You can imagine the relief that you would feel in that moment. Maybe you can even imagine yourself doing a double take. “Wait, what did you say? Really? About me? Seriously?” You can imagine being confused as that joy and that happiness fills you up, especially when you look at all that evidence that was supposed to be yours. All the evidence that should have crushed you and condemned you no longer is pointing towards you but instead it’s pointing to your defendant, who took your place. That makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. It’s unthinkable, unreasonable, and yet, your defendant took your place and says, “Yeah, that’s right. You are free. I’ve taken care of it. You’re not guilty. You have a new life today.” And in that moment of time, the relief that you would feel, the weight taken off from your shoulders, you know that in that moment, everything has changed.

That’s what you have in Jesus, my brothers and sisters, in Christ. Having that truth as our own, we can confidently say these words that David writes along with him in [Psalm 51:8-9](#). He writes: <sup>8</sup>**Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.** <sup>9</sup>**Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.** David knew what he had done. He had slept with another man’s wife. He had gotten her pregnant. And now he has to try to fix the situation, or at least he thinks he does. He thought he had it taken care of, only Uriah just had to be that good guy. Why did Uriah have to make it so difficult? It wasn’t like David could actually confess his sin. He would get himself in trouble. He would get Bathsheba in trouble. And they would probably get stoned and killed; at least that’s what should have happened. Then you think about what is going to happen to the country of Israel if he would have confessed. It’s just a whole, hot mess. No, it’s for the greater good that this happen—so he has Uriah killed.

It’s amazing how our sinful nature is, that when we try to cover up our sins we tend to do even crazier things. I’m sure at the time King David thought he had done a pretty good job at covering that all up. Maybe there were some people who did the math and know Bathsheba and how the birth was going. They did the math and figured out that some things weren’t adding up properly, but you know what? Who is going to confront the king of Israel? David, yes, he probably had his reasons, and really good ones that he had in his mind, too. And yet, how many nights did it take before those excuses started

ringing pretty hollow. How many sleepless nights did he endure having those arguments with himself about this situation? What were his thoughts telling him when he was alone to think? After a while we see and we can read in other Psalms how the guilt and the shame just weighed heavily upon him and how it crushed him as he realized and was thinking about what he had done. Murderer, cheater, traitor, terrible king, awful friend—were those some things that he heard?

Then one day we are told Nathan comes in and he confronts David. He does the hard, difficult thing. He confronts David and says, "You are the man. You are the cheater. You are the one who stole. You are the murderer. You condemn yourself, David." And in that moment of time, what else was David supposed to do? What good would it be to try and hide it and cover it even more? After that last pressure and after that last blast of shame and guilt, David confesses his sin and says, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Those are some of the hardest words for us to actually say, aren't they? I want to say that I mean more than just in the service when we confess our sin at the beginning and sometimes perhaps we just let it roll off our tongues. I mean to really think about what we have done. Granted for our sinful nature, that's the last thing that it wants to do, to admit that you're wrong. We'll only admit that we're wrong if that means that we've been caught and there's nothing else that we can do about it. We'll admit that we're wrong and fine with it as much as we can be if that means that less of a punishment for me if I can get by with it. We'll be more willing to admit if we're wrong as long as maybe someone else will get in trouble. Notice how it's all focused on "me?"

Our sinful nature does not want us to confess our sin. And Satan works extra hard to convince you and me that it's in our best interest to add excuses, try and hide it, blame it on someone else, bury it somewhere, just don't confess your sin. It's far worse if you did. And how often do we listen? Or instead, we tell ourselves what we want to hear, it's that "You're okay. I understand." We want to hear "At least you're not like him" or "At least you didn't do something like her." We want to hear "Don't worry. It was just a mistake. You did it once and everything else will be okay. You're a good person in general." We want to hear that he or she is going to get over it. But that's not how we operate.

Your friend who you trusted dearly, your friend who had done all these wonderful, great things for you in the past, this friend who has always been there for you betrays your trust. It hurts you. There is severe damage that happens to your relationship. Yes, it was only one time. But you know as well as I do that just that one time is enough. That relationship has been ruined in a way. And to just think *well, you'll just get over it and it will be okay. They are just a good person most of the time. It was just one mistake. Yeah, right! That's obscene to think that we should just let that happen and roll over and just accept it for what it is. No!* That relationship has been hurt. It has been

damaged. And yet, when it comes to my personal sin, my very real sin, we tend to think that it should be viewed and treated differently when I've done something wrong. When it's been done against me, that's a different story, but when I've done it, come on now. We want to believe that we can just bury it in the closet and hopefully we'll just forget about that sin and what we have done. We'll bury it in the closet and we'll forget about it, like that old coat that you never wear again. Instead of looking at what we have done, we want them to look at what he's done, look at what she's posted, look how they have acted. Instead of seeing what I have done, look instead at all these other good things that I have done in the past. We don't want them to hear about "this" that I have done wrong and how I have sinned. Instead we want them to hear the promises that I'll make to do better next time. We want them to hear our reasons that we did it and maybe it won't look as bad. But you know as well as I do, all that stuff hasn't done anything about the guilt that you have done this sin and that you have done something wrong. And whenever we try to clean up that stain of sin by ourselves, we just smudge it around and make it worse.

The fact is that yes, our sins have done serious damage, not just to ourselves but to the people around us, and especially those who are closest to us. Imagine that she heard what you really thought about her. It would maybe crush her. Imagine that he heard what you said under your breath or what you said in the other room. It could break his heart. Imagine that you're secret sins that you hope and pray that no one ever finds out ends up being posted up here on the screens with your name right next to it. It would crush you. Who could stand?

It's not just that we have sinned against each other. No, as David wrote earlier on in [Psalm 51](#): Against you, Lord, I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Remember how we react when other people have sinned against us. How should the Holy, Just God react when we have sinned against Him in thought, word and action? We have no business coming into His presence. This sin condemns us and we rightfully deserve eternal punishment in hell. Understand God's perfect demands. Understand the expectation that He has for you and for me and how far we fall short of them. This sin, it is real and it condemns. An eternal suffering in hell is what you and I deserve. Yes, that crushes us. My goodness, it should.

Even with all that knowledge, and even when David recognizes all of that as truth, this is what he prays and this is his request to God, and this is our prayer, too. Again, David says, ***<sup>8</sup>Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. <sup>9</sup>Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.*** David would not be able to come to this knowledge on his own any easier than you and I can admit our sins and have Godly repentance as God calls for on our own. This has to come from outside of you. This cannot come from within us. The only hope that you and I have is approaching that judge, recognizing that the only hope that we have with Him is that He does not treat us as our sins deserve. We cannot make Him turn His face from us.

We cannot convince Him to wipe away our sins. We're not going to be able to turn from our sins on our own. God works to turn us from them. He repents us. He speaks the truth so that it hurts, so that it kills you so that you might be raised to new life with Him. So He crushes us under that Law. He kills us.

Then what does He show you? That He has hidden his face from your sins and He has blotted out all your iniquity. He doesn't just ignore what we have done. How could He, He is the perfect God. He doesn't just sweep it under the rug to erase it. Something has to be done, and that's what He does. He gives you Jesus—Jesus, who became sin for us, so that instead of turning His face from you, He forsakes His own Son on that cross, who became sin for us. Yes, He is the defendant in that court room who stands in your place. All the evidence that was hiding away in our closets has been pulled out and God has placed it all onto His Son on that cross, where He suffers, where He is pierced, where He is crushed, for your sins and mine. And by the blood of Jesus, God's Son, He has washed you clean of every sin. Though you were red as scarlet, you have been made white as wool. By Jesus' blood, He has washed you. He has bleached you so that you are clean. He presents you before God. He brings you into God's presence and shows you what He has made you—blameless, by His death on the cross, without stain, without wrinkle, all those sins, all that guilt has been taken away from you. You have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. This is what Jesus has done for you.

We pray, make me hear sounds of joy and happiness. So hear it. Your sins are forgiven. By the blood of Jesus, you have peace with God. With joy and happiness, hear the good news. Your sins are forgiven. Nothing can separate you from God's love. It's not like tomorrow He is going to change His mind. No, He has forgiven you and He loves you. Hear the good news. Your sins are forgiven. Eternal life is already yours today. It was sealed to you there, in the waters of baptism. You are forgiven. You have new life in Jesus' name. You were killed in those waters of baptism and you were raised with Jesus from the dead and you were given a new life with Him so that sin no longer controls you and Satan has no power over you. You are sons and daughters of the King.

So we can go to God's home in every confidence. We don't go to God with our fingers crossed, hoping that we caught God on a good day. No, this is what He promises to give you—grace, mercy, forgiveness. And we know that He will because that's what God does. He does not lie. He keeps His promises. He kept His promise to send one who would crush Satan's head and destroy his work, and He did it with Jesus. He promised that after suffering and dying, his Holy One would not see decay but would be shown the light of life and triumph from the grave, and He does. Jesus' lives, the tomb is empty on Easter morning. He promises that He will be with you always and that He will cause all things to work together for your good; that includes the evil and the wicked—even that God uses to work out for your good, to bring you ultimately to be with Him. And that's what He does. And that's what He will do.

Therefore, rejoice, brothers and sisters in Christ. Instead of excusing or trying to hide the sin, confess it. Take that sin. Lay it at the foot of the cross and see Jesus' blood pour out and wash you clean of every sin. Your guilt has been taken away. Instead of pointing and blaming, look to the cross and see Jesus, who declares "It is finished." He has taken care of it. Instead of turning back to that sin or holding onto that sin, leave it behind. That's not you any longer. That's not your identity. No, you are a child of God and you have new life in Jesus' name. Therefore, rejoice. The Lord hides His face from your sins. He blots out all of your iniquities. Therefore, rejoice. Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in one true faith until life everlasting.*