

The fact that this passage has Jesus describing that the Spirit will not speak on his own, but will bring glory to Jesus, and that all that the Father has belongs to Jesus, is reason for this passage being selected for TRINITY Sunday. But more than a sermon on the metaphysics of God being in Christ and Christ in God; whether we address God as “Father” vs the non-masculine (and also less personal) “Creator”; or debating that the Eastern Orthodox Church believe the Holy Spirit comes from God, while the Western Churches recognized the Holy Spirit coming from God and Jesus... I was at a loss for where to begin. When verses 8 and 9 jumped out, as being among the most clear explanations of SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS and JUDGMENT in the Bible.

AND Last Sunday, someone sent me a note on the Friendship Pad

“Without Sin, there would be no need for Salvation & Jesus!!?” So, here we are.

We have a very intriguing and curious God! Clearly it was within the power of God Almighty to have created everything perfect and without Sin. But in this great epoch that is Human History, we believe that God did not eliminate darkness by creating light, God did not replace water with land; instead God created balance between these; along with leaving space for the unknown. Will these elements of Creation remain in balance, will humanity choose to believe in God, to love one another, to love Creation and Life, OR Not? This week it was announced that the quantity of Carbon Dioxide in the Air is now 50% higher than during the Industrial Revolution; the indiscriminate murder of people; all seem to display that at present we have chosen to not: LOVE ONE ANOTHER, LOVE GOD’S CREATION, or LOVE LIFE.

Before we get to SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS & JUDGMENT, John’s Gospel is different from Matthew Mark, Luke. John saw the “World” opposed to God in Jesus. John never describes the Christian community “hating” the world, because Christians must follow Jesus’ commandment to love; but there is judgment of the world, because the world chooses to ignore God. There is an odd verb in these verses **“ELEGCHO”**, translated as **“to prove the world to be in the wrong”**, which literally either means “to expose” or “to convict.” If convict, the emphasis is on the guilt of the world. If “expose” it is because English, just like the Greek has a double meaning of “bringing to light” as well as “condemnation”. What Jesus describes is that the role of **the Holy Spirit of truth is to bring out into the open the true meaning** of sin, righteousness, judgment and hold the world accountable to those standards.

The Roman Catholic Church differentiates between the Seven Deadly Sins, Mortal Sins and Venial Sins. Pope Gregory the Great in the 6th Century named, and Thomas Aquinas in the 13th Century elaborated that The SEVEN DEADLY SINS are Envy, Gluttony, Greed, Lust, Pride, Sloth and Wrath.

The Roman Catholic Church named 4 MORTAL Sins as willfully, intentionally rejecting CHURCH TEACHING as desecrating your relationships to God through the Church and therefore as cause for ExCommunication. Both the Deadly Sins and Venial Sins, the Catholic Church condemned as unforgivable, whereas VENIAL SINS are forgivable for unintentional acts.

Taking this even a step further, years ago I visited with a Buddhist Monk, who described being unwilling to dry a car, because if that car struck and killed someone or something, he would have been guilty of an unforgivable sin.

In the Presbyterian Church we do not have a Book of Sins, or even identification of Greater or Lesser Sins. Instead, John Calvin undercut identifying particular sins by giving a very simple description of SIN based not on morality but theology. Anything which causes you to feel shame, to hide that part of yourself from the love of God and humanity is SIN. The difficulty with this is what you consider a sin and what I consider a sin, may not be the same. Here, I am not speaking of the LAW which identifies Right and Wrong in our

Social Compact of being a Community together, or of ADDICTIONS that destroy our own life and relationships, but SIN.

Jesus, according to our passage this morning had a simplistic and straight forward identification of SIN:

“The Spirit will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, because people do not believe in me.”

The emphasis is not on the Morality or Immorality of an act, but our relationship with Jesus Christ. If we live in a love relationship with God, then the desire for anything that separates us from God would be rejected; conversely, if we break trust with ourselves, with God, then the whole construct of Creation falls apart.

A while back, Pastor Diane had a sermon about crosses, in which she described looking through the Morrison Cross behind me. We are blessed with these spectacular windows of the panorama all around us, and we could easily be distracted by something in any one. Like a dog suddenly seeing SQUIRREL! But if we focus through that keyhole of the Cross we look with “Baptized Eyes” at the world. Not that you cannot see the whole world, simply that in order to see other views, you have to change your vantage point, because we can only see through the cross. **“SIN IS PEOPLE WHO LIVE AS IF THEY DO NOT BELIEVE.”**

“IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE I AM GOING TO THE FATHER, WHERE YOU CAN SEE ME NO LONGER.”

Righteousness is not about what I think is right, or an alternative right, or perfection. RIGHTEOUSNESS refers to being Right with God, to be One with God. In this regard, “righteousness” can be a synonym for “vindication.”

The Gospel of John has this beautiful interpretation of the sequence of events. That since before the beginning, the Christ and God were One. The intriguing part being that Judaism emphasized “The Lord our God is One” while describing at differing places God as The Savior liberating Israel, and The Spirit brooding over the face of the water. SO when the New Testament describes the Christ and the Holy Spirit, the issue is not whether God is one or three, or how God could be both, but whether Jesus was committing Blasphemy by claiming to be God. In the time of the Roman Empire, having tried Patriarchs and Prophets, Kings, Dispersal to the far corners of the earth and Exile, Christ took off Divinity to become mortal, experiencing everything we do in life as Savior for us, even experiencing Death, but not being limited by Death. Then, at the Ascension, returning to be one with God in Heaven. The evidence that Jesus is no longer seen by the disciples is seen as demonstrating that Jesus is fully vindicated, to return to the right side of God.

“CONCERNING JUDGMENT BECAUSE THE RULER OF THIS WORLD IS JUDGED.” According to the Gospel of John, what happens in Jesus’ Crucifixion and Resurrection is not only raising Jesus from Death to life, GOD overcoming the Power of Death, but also GOD overcoming the Evil of this World that has dominated Creation. God is victorious over the embodiment of all that is opposed to God.

In Salvation, God in Jesus Christ defeated Sin with a Capital S. The question for us is whether we can overcome the sins of our lives, with small “s”s, all the hidden stuff that shames us, by believing and trusting in him. In this way, nothing is beyond forgiveness, nothing is beyond the power of God in Christ’s love.

I cannot go so far as the person who wrote: “Without Sin, There is no reason for Salvation and Jesus”, because even if there had been no Sin, I still believe in our need for the love of God in Jesus Christ. My real question surrounds those two exclamation points and question mark...

I reported the story three years ago, before COVID, when I first came, that after those wanting to be Ministers: graduated from College and 3 years of Seminary, passed a series of 4 hour written Exams, and have a congregation wanting us to serve as their Pastor, we have to be examined by the Presbytery.

I stood before the Presbytery of Detroit for over an over of questions, when one gentleman rose to ask: "Sir, if there were an Island somewhere that had never known the name of Jesus, never known what sins they committed in this world, and a Typhoon killed everyone, would they be admitted to Heaven?" And I replied: "First, I am thankful that God is God, so it is not up to me to decide who is saved and who is not. Second, I believe in a God who so loved the world as to give us his only begotten Son. And being All Knowing, I trust God knew what we would do, and still forgave us, as well as using this to conquer death. I have to believe that that loving God could find a way to forgive and love, even what I cannot." I was immediately escorted out of the room, and for a long time I could hear arguing through the doors of the Church. When the doors were opened, the Presbytery spontaneously began singing the Doxology. As I sat down, I asked the pastor next to me, if I answered correctly? He said: "We do not know, you caused the Presbytery to debate this, and they decided that while they could not agree on Sin and Judgment, they agreed on our need for a loving God."