

Forgive Us: A Pure Heart

John 21 (June 6, 2021)



Begin with Prayer

In silence, invite the Holy Spirit to guide you. Pray: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*" (Ps. 139:23-24).

Reconnecting and Debriefing

Take a moment to check in with one another (2 minutes each).

1. *What is a takeaway about confession, repentance and freedom that you've gained from this sermon series?*
2. *If you're able, share about a season in your life when you felt deeply satisfied in God.*

Introduction

Whether we gather in person or online, our goal remains the same: to be a people apprenticed to the life of Jesus. His life and teaching is our example and our source of truth. Remember the commitments we make to each other to foster safety and freedom as we pursue spiritual growth together:

- Whenever possible, please listen to the sermon prior to gathering (Sunday or online).
- While we are meeting (even online), commit to focussing rather than multitasking. Be all here.
- Give every person an equal opportunity to share, even if it takes time to form or finish their thoughts.
- Be respectful and non-judgmental.
- Honour sharing boundaries (only what you have permission to share, no gossip) and guard confidentiality (what we share here stays here).
- Don't try to fix, problem-solve or rescue; keep pointing one another to the truths of the gospel for our lives.

Listening to God's Word

So far, much of our series has focused on the need to turn away from sin. But we must guard against what Dallas Willard called "the gospel of sin management." The gospel is not meant to preoccupy us with avoiding sin. Rather, in the gospel God gives us the power to *reorder our loves* so that sin is no longer alluring to us in comparison to Christ.

John 18 records Peter's three-times denial of his association with Jesus. It was a devastating betrayal of all Peter's promises to Jesus. Under pressure, he loved his security and reputation more than he loved Jesus. But John 21 records Jesus' amazing post-resurrection reinstatement of his faithless friend. The story reveals how Jesus invites us to overcome sin and walk in freedom.

Small Group Discussion

Read John 21. Then discuss together:

- ***What is your first thought when you read through this/these passage(s)?***
- *Why do you think the disciples returned to their former vocation?*
- *What do you think Jesus wanted to communicate through these two echoes of previous events: a miraculous catch of fish (see Luke 5), and a gathering around a fire (see John 18:15-18, 25-27)?*
- *What might you expect a vindicated religious leader like Jesus to require of Peter in order for him to be restored to friendship or leadership?*
- *What does Jesus actually do? What is he inviting Peter to re-affirm in his own heart?*

- What does this teach us about finding freedom from sin?
- How is "reordering our loves" different from "sin management"?
- What does Peter's restoration "in love" mean for his future?
- What does your restoration and the reordering of your loves mean for your future?
- **Read Matthew 5:8 and James 4:8.** Søren Kierkegaard famously wrote, "Purity of heart is to will one thing." What are some ways that we could cultivate a "pure heart that is deeply satisfied in God's character and will for us?"

Returning to God's Enough-Ness

In the beginning (Genesis 1-3), God gave us more than enough of what we needed: **purpose** (1:26-28), **place** (1:29-31, 2:9), a **path** (2:16-17), **partnership** (2:18-25), and **prayer** (3:8-9). Tragically, we have been convinced that all of this is *not enough* (3:1-5). But our search for more than God leads to less, not more (3:7, 14-19). The purpose of the gospel is to reconcile all things in Christ (Colossians 1:20) and to restore our confidence in the sufficiency, the "enough-ness" of God.

- **Read Psalm 73:25-26.** What longing does this Scripture, and the others we've read, awaken in you?
- **How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond to or act on what we have discussed?**

Series Practice: Taste and See

Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him." Our best defence against the temptation to sin is a deep delight and satisfaction in God – God's character, God's revelation, God's Word, and what God says about us. These practices invite you to reorder your loves according to what God tells us in Scripture.

- **Entry Level Practice:** Each day in the coming week, choose a verse below. Read it 3-5 times, and prayerfully ask: *What does this tell me about God? How have I seen God be this to me? What does this tell me about who I am? Where do I need to change my thinking to match what God has told me?* Respond to God's Word in prayer.

Psalm 18:2; 23:1-3; 32:7; 33:20; 16:7; 139:13; John 14:6; John 6:35; Ephesians 2:14; Hebrews 12:2

- **Foundational Practice:** In your daily time of prayer and Bible reading (morning and/or evening), prayerfully ask: *What is God telling me about himself? How have I seen God be this to me? What does this tell me about who I am? Where do I need to change my thinking to match what God has told me? How does this speak to the particular sin(s) I am struggling to overcome right now?* Respond to God's Word in prayer.
- **Stretch Practice:** Identify an aspect of God's character that you are struggling to believe. Using online Bible study tools, take time to prayerfully research the ways the Bible explains or depicts this aspect of God's character. Seek out a book or articles that might help you find an answer to your question(s), or consult with a Christian mentor. Find worship or prayer resources that give you language and music to express your delight and trust in this aspect of God's character. Ask God to awaken faith and deepen trust in Him.

Caring for One Another

- **Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?**

Using **Psalm 73:25-26** as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.