

Gospel lesson

We skip over to the Gospel of John this week, to hear another author's rendition of the part of story we skipped over last week.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-teaching/>;
credit: LUMO

John 6:1-21

(NRSV)

¹ After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias.

² A large crowd kept following him because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick.

³ Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples.

⁴ Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near.

⁵ When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?"

⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,

⁹ "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?"

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place, so they sat down, about five thousand in all.

¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

¹² When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost."

¹³ So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

¹⁵ When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

¹⁶ When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea,

¹⁷ got into a boat, and started across the sea to

Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

¹⁸ The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.

¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified.

²⁰ But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."

²¹ Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "My Hope Is Built">

UMH #368>

Message: Call to Confession



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/worship-with-rejoicing/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Loving Lord who laid down the Law, understands our failings, and offers redemption to us when we repent of breaking it,

As we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,

- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may honestly confess our wrongdoing before
You and find the way You would have us move forward.
Amen.

This week in the “Worship with Rejoicing” series we
have a “Call to Confession”:

“[Are] we overwhelm[ed]...with the weight of our
[human] capacity to sin? [This is] an invitation to
lay our individual and communal sins bare before
God.”

<Interactive Time>



picture from
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What do you have to confess (and how is that a sin)?

<Let them respond>

I need to confess that I have not gone walking up and down the streets in town, knocking on doors to say hello to folks (whose faces I have seen, but do not really know), and offer help or to pray with them.

I have asked you, the congregation to do that, saying that because I do not live in this area it is harder for me to do it. And yet – and here is the real hypocrisy – I have complained of District Superintendents not modeling pastoring well for me

and other United Methodist pastors, regardless of the distance away that they are from us.

So there is an example of a confession. Is admitting to it all that is necessary? <Let them respond>

Confession goes hand-in-hand with repentance. What is involved in that? <Let them respond>

The Holy Spirit asked me to consider this as a need, therefore I should take (stronger) first steps to model this behavior, as the community needs it - and especially so that you cannot use me as an excuse for not doing it either. I apologize for not being better at answering that call and will try to do better with it in the future.

So now I have apologized to (some of) those negatively impacted by my (in)actions and have verbally committed to doing better in the future. Is that all that is necessary? <Let them respond>

So true confession leads to long term changes in the way we live, as we strive to correct where we went off course.

Does anyone wish to confess something more before the congregation now, along with a specific commitment to change? <Let them respond; add to prayer list>

What do people more typically do when they know they have done something wrong? <Let them respond>

Last week we spoke about King David wanting to build a temple, and checking in with God first so that he

would do the right thing. Did he check in with God for any of his actions in the story today?



picture from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3a/King_David_Bathsheba_Bathing.jpg;
painting by James Tissot

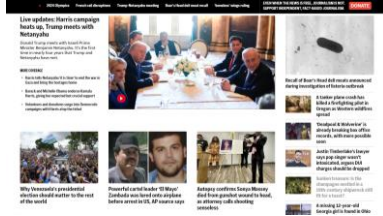
Some would argue that David's sinning began by not going to lead the war in person, but as our *Book of Discipline* states, "We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ,"¹ and I believe God wanted people to live as Jesus did even back in the Old Testament, so I do not think David's not going to battle was sinful. His watching private bathing from a rooftop, coveting his neighbor's wife, disregard for Jewish purification laws, and the chain of his actions to cover up what had happened - I think we can all agree those were sinful.

David's sins were pretty blatant. Unfortunately, often people trapped in sin are not even aware they are living sinfully; they just see it as how life is. The psalmist refers to them as fools, who are turned away from God. That is why, whenever we realize that we have done something sinful, we need to confess our sins before God and seek a better way forward.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians that the Father would strengthen them in their inner beings with the power

¹ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), ¶165.VI.C, p.143.

of the Spirit, that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith, that they would be rooted and grounded in love. If your soul is right before God, if you are listening to the Lord’s direction and living out your faith in love, you will help the people of this world rather than hurt them.



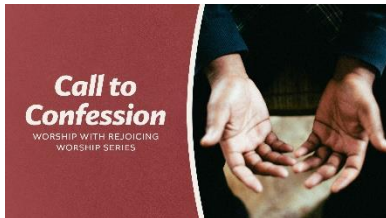
picture screencaptured from <https://apnews.com/> on 7/26/2024

We live in a time of highly publicized turmoil. People deny God, ridicule Jesus, and think “the Force” from Star Wars is more real than the Holy Spirit. People do hurtful things to one another; we see weak morals in and hypocritical judgments by people in positions of influence. Societal structures drive people to chase after idols and look for help in all the wrong (unhealthy) places.

But we cannot be as God created us to be without recognizing our Creator and seeking relationship with our Savior through the Holy Spirit. We need to be connected with our source of life and health.

And God provides for us when we seek ’em. When the crowd gathered around Jesus, He made sure they were fed in abundance. When we set off on our own way, without checking in with God first, we either get lost at sea like the disciples did or go down a trail of sinfulness like David did.

When we repent and confess our sins, God forgives us, teaches us, restores relationships rather than leaving us in a panic about what we have to deal with, and redirects us to grow in the manner we were created to.



picture from
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So this week, I want you to confess your sin.

- † Identifying our need to change is the first step; perhaps look to where relationships are broken, filled with something other than mutually nurturing love.
- † Ask God for help: both for guidance and for the will to make change happen.
- † Open the eyes of your heart to see God coming to you, working on your behalf – it may be in a completely unexpected form.
- † And once you have repented of, confessed, and turned away from your sin, seek the goal of Christian perfection: complete alignment with and faithful loving life in Jesus.

Breathe, pray, and let the Holy Spirit guide you in everything you do. And to begin our consideration of where we may be in sin, let us pray: