



Worship Service Theme: Repentance
First Sunday of Lent

Helpful Elements:
Purple table covering (Lenten Season)

Welcome: Welcome! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today is the first Sunday of Lent, the season leading up to Easter, a time of reflecting on our humanity and God's glory. We use a purple tablecloth during Lent as the traditional color of repentance and pardon. Today we'll be looking at the theme of **repentance**.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Just As I Am

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

First Reading: Psalm 51:1-4, 9-12

¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight. ...

⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me

Oh, How I love Jesus

Second reading: 1 John 1:7-9

⁷ [If] we walk in the light, as [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Softly and Tenderly

Interactive Homily: Let's think a bit about repentance as we enter the season of Lent, a time of confession and humility before God.

- When you *confess* something, what are you doing? For example:
 - "I must confess that I don't like lima beans." → Telling the truth, being honest.
 - "I confess I don't really like that movie you really love." → Bringing something out into the open, not hiding.
 - "I confess that I took something that didn't belong to me." → Admitting a wrong and feeling sorry about it.
- What is happening in your heart when you genuinely feel sorry about something you've done? What feelings make you *want* to say, "I'm sorry"?
 - Sorrow, guilt, shame for the harm done. (The dictionary defines repentance as "sincere regret or remorse.")
 - No excuses or rationalizing or blaming; taking responsibility.
 - A desire to right the wrong, to change, to turn around, to stop doing the bad thing.
- The Ten Commandments¹ list wrongdoings that we might consider "the biggies": Thou shalt not murder, commit adultery, steal, lie. But let's think more day to day: What kinds of wrongdoing are everyday occurrences? In what simple ways do we harm others and ourselves?
 - How do we do harm with our mouths?
 - Harsh, unpleasant words.²

¹ Exodus 20:1-17

² Eph. 4:29: Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

- How do we do harm with our minds?
 - Bad attitudes, such as pride³, worry⁴, impatience, and grumbling.⁵
- How do we do harm with our actions?
 - Slightings and demeaning actions, injustice, anything that doesn't treat others the way we would want to be treated.⁶
- How do we do harm in our souls?
 - Ignoring God.⁷
- How often will God forgive us of our wrongdoing – what the Bible calls sin?
 - Every time! *Reread*: “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9).
 - In Christ, God's forgiveness is complete and forever.⁸
- And yet we continue to sin, don't we? We all continue to make mistakes every day. (In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray “forgive us our trespasses” right alongside “give us this day our daily bread.”)
- So what can we do about our ongoing, daily acts and attitudes of sin, things like dishonesty, complaining, misplaced anger, and impatience?
 - Trust in the grace of God to point out a wrong. (God can and does use the conscience!) God's grace will lead you to sorrow, confession, and turning away from wrongdoing.
 - Confess. Be honest with God about anything unworthy. Ask God to help you defeat it by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- How do you feel after you've admitted and apologized for something you're really sorry you did?
 - Relief; peace; calm; unburdened by guilt and shame.
 - Gladness in God! When we repent and receive God's forgiveness in Christ, we are free from the burden of guilt and restored in the joy of the Lord.

³ Proverbs 16:18-19: Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.

⁴ Phil. 4:6: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁵ Phil. 2:14: Do all things without grumbling or complaining.

⁶ Matt. 22:39: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

⁷ Matt. 22:37: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

⁸ Acts 10:45: Everyone who believes in [Christ] receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

- As King David wrote after he confessed his sin, “Restore to me *the joy of your salvation* and uphold me with a willing spirit” (Psalm 51:12). God promises to forgive, to restore joy, and to uphold us as we continue to trust in God day by day.

As we start the Lenten season, let us draw near to God in honesty about our sins and with confidence in God’s forgiveness and freedom.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

He’s Got the Whole World

Nothing But the Blood of Jesus

Third Reading: Quotes on Confession and Repentance

Confession of errors is like a broom which sweeps away the dirt and leaves the surface brighter and clearer. I feel stronger for confession. – Indian civil rights activist Mahatma Gandhi

Confession ... is God’s own gift for restoring communion with God. Confession is a doorway out of misery, the prodigal’s path home, a river that looks black as death but lifts us onto brighter shores. – American teacher and pastor Scott Hubbard

Nothing erases the past. There is repentance, there is atonement, and there is forgiveness. That is all, but that is enough. –American science fiction writer Ted Chaing

Sincere, soul-felt repentance is a gift. It is ... a way to change regrets and sins into gains like humility, empathy, and wisdom. Repentance will not fix everything that was broken, but it will mend your relationship with God, and that is of eternal importance. –American writer Richelle Goodrich

I have a confession to make: I truly love country music. – Irish fantasy novelist Sarah Rees Brennan

Hymns:

Amazing Grace

Jesus Paid It All

Fourth Reading: A Lighthearted Story About Confession ☺

One Sunday a man came to confession. “Bless me Father, for I have sinned,” said the man. “It’s been two weeks since my last confession.”

“Go on, my son,” replied the priest.

“Last week, I stole some lumber. That’s it,” said the man.

“Well, my son, say three Hail Marys and an Our Father, and resolve to sin no more,” said the priest.

“Thanks Father, I’ll do that,” replied the man.

After a week, the same man returned to the confessional. “Hello, Father. I stole some more lumber,” he said.

“I thought we went over this, my son,” said the priest. “Say five Hail Marys and three Our Fathers. I don’t want to hear about you stealing lumber again!”

“Thanks, Father,” the man said sheepishly. “I’ll try my best.”

However, the man returned the following Sunday with the same confession—stealing more lumber. In exasperation, the priest said, “My son, this is becoming ridiculous! You must say five rosaries. And if you return, I’m going to have to insist you make a novena.” [A novena is a devotional prayer, done over nine days.] You do know how to make a novena, don’t you?”

“Well ... er ... no, Father,” said the man. “But if you can get the plans, I know where we can get some lumber.”

Hymns:

To God Be the Glory

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

[sing more or fewer songs to fill out the time]

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30

Extra material:

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” (Psalm 32:5)

If we believe [confession sets us free], then we will quickly heed the hand of God that bends us to our knees. We will name our sins, starkly and thoughtfully and without excuse. We will receive God’s forgiveness, believing him to be as good as he says and as kind as he promises. And we will be glad in him, the God who condemned our sin at the cross and now delights to cast it from us as far as east from west. –American teacher and pastor Scott Hubbard

When we deal seriously with our sin, God will deal gently with us. – British theologian and preacher Charles Spurgeon