

Third Sunday After Pentecost

June 21, 2009

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Psalm 51:1-9

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts ; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.”

I looked around my house the other day for cleaning supplies and I did not have to look very long. In about a minute this is what I found - my wife's favorite *Germ X*, hand soap, shampoo, some tide detergent, and a scrub brush I suppose for the tough to get out dirt. This is just a small sample of what we had available. We had cleaning wipes and bar soap and all purpose cleaners, and all purpose cleaners with bleach. Things around to wash and cleanse both us and our things were definitely not in short supply.

After seeing & taking a quick inventory of all these things, I have come to this conclusion - we must get very, very dirty. We must mess things up a lot, get stinky and smelly often, find grit and mud and filth everywhere, and sometimes even pick up those real hard to get out stains. That's why we have all these things to wash us and cleanse us. That's why we look for cleaning products that can remove even the toughest of stains.

Dear friends, this morning in our psalm we are reminded of our need to be cleansed and washed daily. We are pointed to something that stains us which not even the best cleaning product could remove. We are reminded of our filth and how we have messed ourselves up. We are pointed to our stinky, dirty, deadly sin. But we are also graciously reminded of the only One who can make us clean. We are pointed to the One who washes us thoroughly from head to toe. Let our prayer and cry today and everyday be in line with the words of this psalm as we say: ***“Cleanse Me, O Lord.” “I am in need of washing.” “Only You Lord can make me clean.”***

What would make someone realize that they are dirty? I'm not talking about actual dirt and mud, but being dirty from sin. What would make someone wake up to the fact that they need to be washed from their sins? Who needs to be cleansed from sin and guilt?

Let me tell you a story about a man. There was a man whom God had blessed tremendously. This man was blessed with a great job, and family, and popularity, and wealth. He had it all. Yet, when it was time to go to work one day this man decided to just skip and stay home. During this idle time he saw a very beautiful woman and he had an affair with this married woman. She became pregnant and so this man attempted a cover up. This woman's husband actually worked for this man and was away on business. So he called the husband home in an attempt to get him to sleep with his wife so he would think the baby was his. When this didn't work this man thought he had no

more options so he plotted to have this woman's husband murdered. He did it. Then after a period of mourning this man took in the dead man's wife as his own. To the eyes of many he appeared to be a hero taking in his employee's widow and her expecting child.

What names might you use to describe such a man - an adulterer, a murderer, a liar, a hypocrite, a scam artist? You might also call him King David and the author of this psalm. He committed those sins. While he might have gotten away with it in the eyes of many, the thing David did displeased the Lord to say the least. While he might have looked good to others, David knew his sin and guilt. He knew that he was a rotten, smelly, filthy, dirty sinner to the core. In his own words David told Nathan what he deserved: **"As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay.... four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."** (2 Samuel 12) David confessed that he had sinned against the Lord. The law showed David exactly who he was - a sinner, and exactly what he deserved - punishment and death eternal. The heading of this psalm tells us David wrote these words after the prophet Nathan came and pointed out his sin with Bathsheba. David saw his great need to be cleansed.

I pray we do too. We have crossed the line, failed to measure up, and missed the mark of God's perfection. If we honestly search our own sinful hearts what names might we use to describe ourselves? Like David we could rightly be called liars, and adulterers, and murderers, and hypocrites. Like David our sins hurt other people, but we too must admit that every single one of our sins is against God. Like David we have to admit that we are rotten to the core. We have been since birth, from the time our mother's conceived us. Look into God's law. Read through the commandments and we will see our sin always before us. We will see our sin and guilt. We will see what we deserve. When we do I pray we cry and pray with David: **"Cleanse, Me O Lord. I am in need of washing."**

So what is next after we see our great need to be cleansed and washed? There is no cleaning product on the market than can remove a single sin or get rid of sin's filthy stain. Nothing man can do or invent can clean him from his guilt. So where can a dirty sinner go? Go back once again to David. Remember the response the Lord gave through Nathan immediately after David said: **"I have sinned against the LORD?"** Nathan replied, **"The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."**

There was nothing at all David could do or offer to make himself clean. But the Lord made David clean! He washed his sins away. He removed his guilt forever. That's why David's psalm here is filled with words like **"mercy....compassion....unfailing love."** That's why David turns to the Lord alone and says: **"Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin....Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity."** David knew the Lord. He knew the Lord's grace. He knew the Lord's promise of a Savior. David knew that the Lord alone could make him clean.

So David asked the Lord to cleanse him with hyssop. How would the Lord make David clean? Hyssop was a plant whose dried branches were used as sprinkling brushes. These branches were dipped in blood or water for certain Old Testament ceremonial cleansings. Hyssop was dipped in the blood of the Passover lamb to apply to the doorframes. Do you see what David was asking? Do we see how the Lord alone can

make us clean? We have been sprinkled in the blood of the Lamb. ***“The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1).*** The Lord clothes us in the perfect life Jesus lived for us. That’s why we appear whiter than snow. All our sins are blotted away because Jesus paid their awful price. God took our filth, and dirt, and smell, and rot – God took our sin and laid it all on His Son. On the cross Jesus suffered what you and I and every sinner deserves - punishment, separation from God, and death.

But in His suffering and dying Jesus provided the only way for a sinner to be made clean. In His resurrection Jesus provides the only victory a sinner can find over the devil and the grave. Now, like David, we are able to turn each day to the Lord’s unfailing love. His mercy never fails. In His compassion the Lord blots out our sins and washes us clean. He takes us who were crushed and fills us with the joy and gladness of forgiveness. Jesus washes and cleanses you and me from head to toe. As Paul writes: ***‘Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her with water and the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless’ (Ephesians 5).***

Cleaning supplies may be in abundance, but there is only One who can remove sin. There is only one Savior. May we turn to Him and His unfailing love each day! Like David, may we pray: *“Cleanse me, O Lord”* knowing our great need to be washed and recognizing that only our gracious Lord can make us clean! And may these beautiful words become our words: ***“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts ; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.” (NIV) Amen.***