

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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John 3:16-17



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It happened really early to all of us. And that was that moment when we all first tasted the pain of guilt. We crossed some line, whether it was with our mouth or our heart, our thoughts, our motives, we did something, we broke something that we weren't supposed to touch, we said something that was a lie, we were caught on a lie and suddenly the sky over our conscience began to darken. Our neck began to feel warmer. Our chest began to tighten. We began to feel things like shame and sorrow for the first time. And suddenly we had an urge to do what we had never had the urge to do. And that was to hide. It was the first time we had something to hide. What's interesting is for each one of us is we have lived longer than that first moment. We've all come to realize that that first run in with guilt was not to be our last.

It's true that our guilt can be mistaken because wrongs can be imagined, but we would all truly, if we were honest with ourself, we would admit and acknowledge that there are things that we have done, that we have wrongs that are not imagined. In fact, the Bible tells us that we have a condition called guilt, and this is a reality for each one of us. You see, when we were created in the image of God, he wrote his law upon our heart and his law is that which corresponds to his holiness, to his righteousness, to his kindness and his purity. It was the law to teach us and to show us how to live rightly in his world.

When we sin against God, we sin against his law. And when we sin against the law that was woven and written upon our heart, we cut our heart. And that cut, that feeling is a word that we ascribe to guilt. We all learn over a period of time because we all continue to make mistakes that if you lay low after some of those peaks of shame and guilt, that some of the intensity of the shame seems to diminish for a time but never all of it. There's always a residue of guilt that remains with us for things that we've done in the past, which is why, if I were to ask you to think about two or three of the worst things you can ever remember in your life, your heart can still feel a tinge of shame for what some of us have done 10 and 20 years ago. Guilt is a real thing.

And as a result of this condition, we sometimes can lay low for a season and the intensity goes away, but never all of it, because now there's a condition called guilt. What we find in the Bible and what we find in our own personal lives is that this guilty condition, it affects our relationships with others. First, it affects our relationship with God, as we feel that we're far from him, we feel distant from him, we want to hear from him. And yet, sometimes we don't hear from him. We're convinced, our heart is convinced that God is angry. And we began thinking about living our life in such a way as to avert that anger. But clearly that relationship is fractured, it's broken.

We also, as a result of our guilty condition, it breaks our relationship with one another. We start to look at one another differently. You see, the Bible says we're created in the image of God and God's relational. And as a result of that, we want to have relationships. We want to know each other and be known by each other. And yet now we have a guilty conscience. And as a result of that, we also have something to hide. And so we want to go out there and be transparent with people. And yet we want to hold back because they might know things about me that are really embarrassing. We become afraid that we're going to be found out, and as a result of that, we begin to look at other people as though they might form the potential jury over our life.

Their approval means so much to us. And if, and when their eyes look upon us in such a way that it appears as though it's knocking on the door of our guilty conscience, we say, what do you looking at? It breaks our relationship with people. But our guilty conscience breaks another relationship and that's the relationship with ourselves, our own peace. We look into the mirror and we see somebody that we are now no longer entirely proud of. We're not entirely trusting of our ability to make good decisions in the future because we've made decisions in the past that has brought us guilt. And the question that we have to ask, and the question that we want to ask is, is there any way to live without this cloud of guilt either over our head or within our heart?

Some of you are wondering that right now. Is it possible for me no longer to feel the absolute stain of guilt, the pain of shame over things that I have previously done? And the hope of the Bible and the hope of the gospel and the hope of Christmas is an emphatic yes. And it is Christmas that is the reason for the hope that we can share with you this morning, that you don't have to live with that penetrating guilt any longer. You see, the Bible tells us that when we sin against God long ago, when mankind sinned against him, that God in his unbelievable mercy and grace is that he immediately, almost immediately, he made a promise to us to send a rescuer, a savior who would come and reconcile us back to God, take away our sin and remove our guilt.

In the fullness of time, God made good on his promise. And he sent his son, the Christ, into the world. And do you know what his name was? His name was Jesus. And do you know what Jesus means? He saves. He saves. He intends to come, and that's precisely what he did. Jesus came to the Earth and he left no doubt as to the purpose of why he was sent to the Earth. In John chapter 3, verse 16 and 17, we read, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." And then verse 17 says, "For God, he did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world. But in order that the world might be saved through him."

This is his intent. Jesus was not sent to be primarily the expression, the tangible, personal expression of the anger of God, but of the love of God. And he was not sent in order merely to advise us of the peril that we were in and living under the wrath of God. He came to save us from the peril. Not to condemn us, but to save us. And do you know how he would do that? He would live without sin. He would live over three decades on this Earth and never once did he feel what you and I feel all the time? And that is shame. He never felt guilt. He never felt that residue of insecurity that other people were looking at him because he was falling short. He was the only one who ever lived and walked on this Earth who deserved, who merited the kindness and commendation and favor and blessing and reward of God the Father. But do you know what he did?

After over three decades of sinless living, he looked at his disciples in the eyes and said, "We are going to Jerusalem. And when we get to Jerusalem, I am going to be bound, I'm going to be falsely accused, I'm going to be condemned as a criminal, I'm going to be flogged, I'm going to be crowned, but not a crown like you think. And I am going to be crucified for the sins of the world. And then to prove that I am who I said that I am, and that is the Son of God. And on the third day, I'm going to rise from the dead." And do you know what he did? He did just that. He walked to Jerusalem ahead of his disciples, knowing what was awaiting him

in order to take away your guilt and my guilt. That's why he did it.

He was bound, and he was falsely accused, and he was condemned, and he was flogged and crucified. And there on the cross taking the hand of humanity, he took our sin upon himself, taking the hand of God as the Son of God. He took the wrath of God that was directed towards you and towards me. And there, he died for that sin, the perfect sacrifice. And just as he said on the third day, he rose from the dead. The Bible calls this the gospel. Gospel means good news. And some of you may be asking right now, how does a historical event, even if that happened, how does that have bearing in my personal life today? And how does it take away the guilt that I feel every morning?

And the answer to that question comes from Jesus himself. For when he rose from the dead, he looked at humanity and he said, collectively, "You have not lived as you ought. But I have. And if you will place your trust in me, believing that I am the Son of God, believing I live without sin, believing that I died for your sin, and rose from the dead, then all that I deserve will be given to you in my righteousness and all that you deserve and your sin will be placed upon me. I will take away your sin. I will forgive you of your sin. And as a result of that, you do not have to feel the pain of guilt. And I will give you my righteousness." This is what the Bible calls grace, the great exchange, where we do not deserve this favor. We do not deserve to have the blessing of God accounted and credited to our account. And yet that's precisely what happens to people who trust in Jesus Christ.

But one of the most amazing things, and one of the most tragic things that takes place is that guilt has this powerful effect in order to create a darkness that causes our eyes and our heart to not be able to see wonderful things. Which is why there are many Christians, not only in this room, but in this world who are utterly forgiven by God, who are utterly justified by God, who bear the righteous of Christ upon them. And yet their guilt causes them to think that the guilt is the truest thing about them. It's not the truest thing about you. Your guilt may be 100 miles deep, but his grace is 101 miles deep. It always goes deeper than whatever it is that you've done. It's the love of God that never runs out towards you and towards me.

And this blindness, this darkness, that guilt causes to fall over the eyes of man, for those who have never trusted Christ, you can hear very store. You can hear this very account from the scriptures. And it can cause such a darkness to fall over your eyes that you don't even think it's consequential to today or your tomorrow or to the rest of your tomorrows.

One of the most tragic things that takes place, it takes place every time the gospel is mentioned. I don't know if you know this. There's only three ways that you can respond to what I've just said. I know there's a bunch of us, but every one of us are going to fall into three buckets today. Some of us are going to be angry with what I just said. You're invited to a Christmas concert and some dude with gray hair is talking about sin. That's a bummer. You're mad at it. You say, I'm not guilty. You are guilty. You don't like me saying that. We get angry. Some people today in this room right now are angry because I've said that Jesus Christ is the only provision

from Heaven given in order to bring us to Heaven.

And some of us have put two and two together and we recognize that if this man Jesus Christ rose from the dead, then he has all authority. And if I trust him, then he has authority in order to tell me I can't do what I want to do, that my plans are going to change. And for some of us that makes us angry. Others of us, we don't get angry, we just check our phone. We're apathetic. We've spent the last 15 minutes texting people. You're thinking about the football game. You're thinking about lunch. And you do not see in any way how this has any bearing on the rest of your life.

But then there's another response. And it's the response that many of us in the room have. And that is that we believe, and that belief, it propels obedience, it propels worship, it propels faith, that we want to honor him with our life. Romans chapter 10 verse 9 says that, "If you confess with your mouth, that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart, that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." And so my question to you today is this. It's not, are you guilty? My question today is do you admit you're guilty? Do you acknowledge that you cannot save yourself? Do you acknowledge that you live under a cloud of shame that you cannot deliver yourself from? Do you acknowledge today and believe that Jesus Christ is who he is, the Son of God who came to the Earth? He died for your sin and mine and he rose from the dead. Would you confess him as Lord of your life? The Bible says if you do, you'll be saved. Do you believe?

Well, I want to give you an opportunity right now to express that. You see, one thing he says is to confess that he is Lord. What that means is to confess, it means we use words. We talk. And one of the ways we do that is we talk to him. I know anytime somebody does something like this, people get nervous. He's going to have me stand, he's going to have me raise my hand. I'm not. I want to invite you to pray. But some of you, you may not know what to say. So I want to help you do that. So if you would, would you bow your head? And first, let me just ask those of you who know Christ and who believe, and who celebrate this day and celebrate your guilt has been taken away, why don't you take this time and just thank Christ for what he did.

And for those of you who do not know yet if Christ is who he is, you hear this, and yet you doubt, why don't you pray, even if you don't even know if he's there? Just say, God, if this is true, if it's true, I want to believe if it's true. So would you show me? Would you open my eyes? And for those of you, if you were ready to receive Christ, you could say a prayer to him with something like this. Father in Heaven, I believe. I admit that I'm a sinner. I admit that I feel guilt, I admit that I've done things that have caused me to feel guilt and I can't get rid of it. I believe that that guilt is against you. I also believe that you sent your son to this Earth, not to condemn me, but to save me. I believe that Christ lived without sin. I believe that he died for my sin. And I believe that he rose from the dead. And I confess him as Lord of my life.

Would you forgive me and save me? And would you give me your righteousness? Would you take away my guilt? Would you help me to believe the truest things about me? That I'm a forgiven person. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. As a church, we know that every time this happens, people trust Christ, and we want to

celebrate with you, but we need your help to do so. So if you happen to be in the room, I want to ask you see that there's a little card in the seat back in front of you. And if you trust in Christ, would you have the courage to fill that a card out at the very bottom? There's a box that says I just trusted Christ. We want to be able to contact you in order to provide you not only encouragement, but even a resource to say now, what next? What do I do? How do I grow in knowing who Jesus is and how to follow him with my life?

If you're in the room or perhaps you're at home and you trusted Christ, you could also send a text PBC1, and you can send it to 313131. We'll do the same thing. We would love the opportunity to be able to follow up and to encourage you.

One last thing that we want to do as a church family is we want to respond in a way that is appropriate to what we have heard. You've heard a lot this morning and now it's time for us to respond. And when you consider the fact that Jesus Christ came and did what he did, he came to this wilderness in order to save us. It's only fitting for us to admire him, and to worship him and to sing to him. So would you stand with us and let's sing two songs together.



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