

Daily Update Wednesday February 17th

Reading Ps 51

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
- ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
- ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
- ¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
- ¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Saviour,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- ¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- ¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

Hello everyone. Today is Ash Wednesday. It is a day in which we remind ourselves of sin. Our sin. Sin for which Jesus came and died, because God loves us. Sin deserving judgment and separation from God, that Jesus dealt with on the cross.

If that feels harsh, is it because none of us likes their sin being pointed out. We like to believe we are mostly okay. We do it ourselves too. A little indulgence here, a bent truth, a white lie there, but we're not that bad. Who is? We see it everyday, we see people evade and excuse sin and manipulate truth to suit their story. Why does it matter? It matters because Jesus said, 'only God alone is good' (Mark 10:18). It matters because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23).

David wrote this psalm after Nathan challenged him after his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, her husband, (2 Sam Chapters 11 & 12). These were a really big deal and even though we might not have done such awful things, nobody likes to be called out for our wrongs.

David must have collapsed inside when the nature and consequences of his sin were brought to him. Our instinct might be to deny, defend, deflect, but David's response is different. His psalm is the honest outpouring of what he realises about himself and about God. We can look at a couple of those, because they are as true for us as they were for David.

He pleads to God. In his realisation of what he has done, he turns to God. He sees God's character is to be merciful, so he asks. It is one thing to know something about God, but another to pursue it. He asks then that God blot out his transgressions, wash away his iniquity and cleanse him from his sin. Three different layers of chaos! His record of defying God's commands, the following sins that taint and the inner desires that were not Godward.

But he also sees that God is willing to deal with sin. Fully. Whiter than snow.. I can't think of anything that is actually whiter than snow.. But God doesn't deal in half measures. He cleanses us fully. He does this so that having been made clean, we might worship with a renewed spirit.

I've attached a short prayer that you might like to reflect on. But perhaps it would be good to spend some time reading the whole Psalm 51. Read each verse slowly, pray it through, let its truths and its comforts shape you.

I wonder how we might deny, defend or deflect from God's truth about what we are really like? Do I take his word seriously, or stick to the comfortable bits? Remember the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?

I wonder if we realise that God's forgiveness and cleansing is meant to be to the full. What can you bring to him today that he can wash you of, what inner mess it is there that he can bring into his light and cleanse you of.

We confess to you, Lord ...

all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy and impatience of our lives.

Lord, have mercy.

Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people.

Lord, have mercy.

Our anger at our own frustration and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.

Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts

and our dishonesty in daily life and work.

Lord, have mercy.

Our negligence in prayer and worship

and our failure to commend the faith that is in us.

Lord, have mercy.

Silence for reflection.

Closing Prayer

We have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

In your mercy

forgive what we have been,

help us to amend what we are,

and direct what we shall be;

that we may do justly,

love mercy,

and walk humbly with you, our God.

Amen.