

1st in Lent, Year A, 2-10-08, 2nd Baptist Church, Lincoln, NE; Robert C. Molby, Interim Pastor

Whatever Happened to Sin?

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7: The First Sin and Its Punishment

Psalms 32: The Joy of Forgiveness

Romans 5:12-19: Adam and Christ

Matthew 4:1-11: The Temptation of Jesus

Sermon on Sin

- How many of you have heard a sermon on sin?
- What can you remember about the last sermon you heard on sin?
- Do you know what sin is?

Ash Wednesday and the Imposition of Ashes

- Weather prohibited having an Ash Wednesday; next Wednesday?
- Ashes to remind us of feeling sorrow for our sins
- "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return"

Scriptures:

- Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 tell of the first sin and its punishment
- Romans 5:12-19 has Paul comparing Adam and Christ
- Matthew 4:1-11 is the story of the temptation of Christ
- There is a lot in the Bible about sin but, when you think about how much we talk about sin today—which is very little—whatever happened to sin?

What is sin?

- Sin has various meanings even within the same country. In the South it is not a sin for a Christian to smoke a cigar but in some communities it is a sin to go swimming in a pool where males and females swim at the same time. In the North it is OK to go swimming in a pool, gender is not an

issue but you better not be caught smoking a cigar. (My experience of seeing a Baptist Preacher smoking)

- In college a sociology professor who had been a missionary spoke of traveling from Washington state to Florida and from Maine to Southern California, noting in many areas the different attitudes as to what constituted a sin, came to define sin, as far as sociology is concerned, as "that which I grow too older any longer to enjoy."
- Other countries have different attitudes about sin. In Eastern countries it is a sin for a woman to go out with her face and head exposed. She has to wear a covering over her whole body regardless of how hot it is. This is usually in Muslim countries. Neither can she go out by herself but only with other women or with a male relative. She cannot talk to another male without her husband present or his permission.
- This lack of freedom for women was true in Jesus' day as well. In the NT it was sin for a woman during her menstrual period to be out in public nor could she touch anything or anyone for it would make them unclean also. She could be stoned to death for violating the purity laws.
- But what is the sin the Bible is talking about? It is doing that which is displeasing to God. It is breaking the commandments God has given us. It is lying to God as well as to your fellowman. It is not keeping promises you make to God. It is being unfaithful, disloyal to God. It is in breaking relationship with God.
- Our God is a God of relationships. He created mankind so he could have a relationship.

What sin is not?

- It is not in being tempted. It is when you yield to the temptation that you commit the sin. The word for temptation in the case of Jesus being tempted in the Greek means "tested." Jesus was tested as to how he would use his power whether for God or for himself and Satan. He passed the test with flying colors. He would not use his special powers as the Son of God for himself and thus for

Satan but he would use it for God and for others. Jesus would not do anything to break his special relationship with God.

- In the Garden of Eden Eve was tested, and so was Adam. Both failed the test and thus both sinned. Both broke their relationship with God. They hid from God and God had to go searching for them. Every time we break our relationship with God He goes hunting for us so that we might be found and our relationship restored.

So, what is your sin?

- Do you have any sin? Do you never do anything wrong? In Romans 3:23 Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, "...All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Paul says that everyone is a sinner, none is righteous. Listen to these words of Paul: "There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one." (3:11-12) whether we will admit it or not we are sinners.
- Sin is not only doing something that is wrong but it is also in failing to do that which is right and good. Paul wrote: "To him who knows to do right and does it not it is sin." You can sin by commission and you can sin by omission. (My own experience of not giving a woman a ride when I learned to drive.) It's a catch 22, you can sin by doing something and you can sin by not doing something. You have to know God and what is right in order to do the right thing.

So what can we do about sin in our lives?

- First of all, realize that we are sinners; that's just a fact of life; we all are sinners.
- Second, realize that there is nothing we can do. In ourselves there is no power great enough to get rid of sin. We may have great will power and great resolve but there is nothing in our human ability to do things that can get rid of sin. If we could we would be saved by works. Sin is that

mark of Satan that condemns us to death. Paul writes in another place, "The wages of sin is death."

- Third, there is one who can cleanse us of sin and that is God through Jesus Christ. It is the Christian faith and belief that if we confess our sin to God through Christ we are forgiven and made whole. I John 1:9 tell us that "if we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Have we done that?
- And we don't do it once; we discover that we are not perfect. Even with our sin forgiven we find ourselves doing something again, and again. We keep trying and we keep failing, or at least I do, and I have to go to Jesus in prayer and ask him to forgive me again and help me to do better. I find that I am helped to overcome my failures, but then I am tested in new and different ways. And I fail these new tests and need to ask forgiveness again. And God is faithful, and just, and he does forgive. Jesus was tested in different ways and on more than one occasion.
- My biggest disappointment after becoming a Christian was to discover that I still was not living the kind of life I knew God wanted me to live.
- It's a matter of grace. When we commit some crime and are brought before the courts there is a matter of judgment. We are fined or jailed or both. We pay for our crime, our wrongdoing. But in our relationship to God Jesus has paid the fine. We are free! It doesn't cost us for Jesus has paid the fine for us; He went to the Cross and was executed in our stead! And then, wonder of wonders, he rose again and ascended into heaven to intercede for us forever

So, whatever happened to sin?

- Well, in Christ Jesus you get rid of it! Our human nature is such that we must keep on getting rid of it.
- Do we have broken relationships with one another, with God? Are we going to do anything about it? God is searching for us to do something about it. He has already done his part through Jesus, his son. So, in regards to sin, the ball is in our court, so to speak. What will we do? We

confess it to God, and then we restore relationships with those we have wronged.