

February 28, 2024
Lent Midweek 2
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Psalm 41:4

I HAVE SINNED.

(adapted from: “Be Gracious to Me” Resources for Lent and Easter Preaching and Worship, © 2023 Concordia Publishing House)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

King David’s words in Psalm 41 not only apply to David, but they also apply to you and me as well. In the Psalm, David is writing from his sickbed, overwhelmed with illness and the consequences of his sin. His enemies are taunting him, wanting to take his throne and his life. His friends have abandoned him because they believe that his sickness is God’s punishment for his sin.

As I said last week, in God’s hidden wisdom, He allows suffering in David’s life just as He does in yours – so that you cast off all your false idols, cling to the promises He has made you, and trust in Him alone. David doesn’t whine and complain about his condition or situation. He calls upon the Lord in prayer, recognizing his own sinfulness and trusts in God’s grace and mercy to forgive him of his sin, save him from his enemies, and completely restore his health.

A point I’ve been reiterating in our midweek series is that – because all Holy Scripture bears witness about Jesus, in one way or another, all of God’s Psalms speak about Christ Jesus and His work of salvation on your behalf. (cf: Luke 24:44) And because the Psalms are about Jesus, they’re also about you. When you were baptized, you were united with Christ and grafted into the true Vine. You abide in Him and He in you. (cf: John 15:4–5) You’re joined together by God in a permanent and eternal baptismal connection. (cf: Romans 6:5; Galatians 2:20, 3:27–28)

Knowing that the Psalms speak about Christ Jesus, there’re times when you’ll think they are saying strange, improper, and seemingly *untrue* things about Him. When that happens, we must set human reason aside and allow the Scriptures to interpret Scripture, so we’re not confused or misled into false belief. In verse 4 of Psalm 41 King David prayed:

“As for me, I said, ‘O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!’” (Psalm 41:4)

Yes, David is sinful. Yes, you and I are sinful. But if the Psalms are also speaking about Jesus, what does this mean when David writes: ***“O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!?”*** Because the statement sounds strange. Scripture teaches that even though our Great High Priest Christ Jesus was tempted in every respect as we are, yet He was and still is, without sin. (cf: Hebrews 4:15) How can David write ***“... for I have sinned against you”*** if Jesus is without sin?

The sinful human reason still wants to jump in and solve the tension... explain that to remain sinless, Jesus had to be different in some way. Human wisdom says, Jesus couldn't have been like us in every... single... way. And some in Early Christian Church struggled with the question and tried to explain away the fact that Jesus has two natures: fully God and at the same time, fully man.

Some said that Jesus' physical body was an illusion or a phantom. (Docetism) Others argued that Jesus was a merely a man who was tested by God and after passing the test was given supernatural powers and adopted by God as His son. (Adoptionism) Still others believed that Jesus didn't have a human mind or soul, but only a human body with a completely divine mind. (Apollinarianism) But these heresies are not based on God's Word but on human reason. That's why we maintain that God Word is authoritative, the only rule and norm according to which all doctrine and teachings must be evaluated and judged. (FC Ep, intro, 1) So what does Scripture teach us about the human nature of Jesus? It teaches:

- He was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man... in the flesh and bone of man. (cf: Luke 1:35; John 1:14)
- Scripture says that the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and was obedient to His earthly parents. (cf: Luke 2:40, 51)
- It records Jesus experiencing a full range of human emotion: weeping at the grave of Lazarus (cf: John 11:35); getting angry at the moneychangers in the temple (cf: John 2:15); and being **"sorrowful, even to death"** while in the Garden of Gethsemane. (cf: Matthew 26:38)
- Scripture records Jesus experiencing every sort of physical pain during His passive obedience: being flogged, His crown of thorns, nailed to the cross where He would hang in anguish, laboring to take a breath for 6 hours, thirsting, and finally bowing His head and giving up His spirit. (John 19:1–30)

So, don't let human thinking deceive and mislead you. Jesus of Nazareth, born of the Virgin Mary, truly made Himself exactly like us in every way, including sin. Allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, we know that Christ Jesus truly had, and still has, absolutely no sin of His own. Scripture says:

"... in him there is no sin." (1 John 3:5)

St. Peter says:

"He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

And again Isaiah says:

"... he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth." (Isaiah 53:9)

So, Jesus indeed had no sin of His own. There was no sin **"in"** Him – but that doesn't mean that there was no sin **"on"** Him. The prophet Isaiah says:

"... the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

John the Baptist made a faithful and true confession when He saw Jesus coming toward him and said:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Christ Jesus takes upon Himself the sins of the world, shouldering them, suffering for them, and carrying them away. As I said last week,

“For [y]our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [you] might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

On the cross:

“[Jesus] has borne [y]our griefs and carried [y]our sorrows... [He was] ... stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.” (Isaiah 53:4)

In his Lectures on Galatians, Martin Luther writes:

When the merciful Father saw that we were being oppressed through the Law, that we were being held under a curse, and that we could not be liberated from it by anything, He sent His Son into the world, heaped all the sins of all men upon Him, and said to Him: “Be Peter the denier; Paul the persecutor, blasphemer, and assaulter; David the adulterer; the sinner who ate the apple in Paradise; the thief on the cross. In short, be the person of all men, the one who has committed the sins of all men. And see to it that You pay and make satisfaction for them. (LW 26, 280)

And that’s what happened when He stood before Pontious Pilate. There He was accused and sentenced to death as a sinner. Christ Jesus’ personal carrying of all our guilt is the reason why the sinless Jesus could say in Psalm 41:

“... I have sinned...” (Psalm 41:4)

Yet, it is David’s prayer. It is your prayer. As David prayed you also pray:

“O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!” (Psalm 41:4)

And as the Lord God did for David, so He does for you. He hears your prayer and listens to your plea for grace. Your heavenly Father has laid all your sin upon Jesus, right next to David’s sin... right next to my mine. It’s your blessed exchange in Baptism: your sins became His and His perfection became yours. Your weakness became His and His strength became yours. Your death became His and His life became yours.

Luther continues in his Galatians commentary saying:

“Now the Law comes and says: ‘I find Him a sinner, who takes upon Himself the sins of all men. I do not see any other sins than those in Him. Therefore let Him die on the cross!’ And so it attacks Him and kills Him. By this deed the whole world is purged and exiated [released] from all sins, and thus it is set free from death and from every evil.” (LW 26, 280)

Christ Jesus was obedient to the Father to the point of death, even death on a cross. (cf: Philippians 2:8)

“He himself bore [y]our sins in his body on the tree, that [you] might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

Today your crucified, dead, buried, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus remains fully God, which at the same time, fully man with flesh and blood, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

“God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.