Topic: Deeper Forgiveness (Easter 2, Lectionary B)

Scripture: Psalm 4, Acts 3:12-19, 1 John 3:1-7

Hymns: 325 Here, O My Lord, 203 And Can It Be, vu264 Immortal, Invisible

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Let’s take a moment to pray…

Mighty God, we thank you for your Holy Scriptures. We would be lost without them, they are a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway – and when we stray from them, we stray from You. O God, this is your revelation of who You are, of your directives to your church and your people. We do well to study Your word, and to dig in deep, and truly take in what you are teaching us. Help us today, O God. We want to hear the Holy Spirit. We are trusting, we are praying in the Spirit, and we ask in Jesus name, that your Holy Spirit would illumine these pages – that it fill the words of the preacher and the listener alike, and that we may know that today we have met with the living God. For we pray these things in Jesus name, amen.

I am a millennial. We often get a bad rap these days between all the different generations that are still around - (SLIDE slide for each) Baby Boomers (Boomers) and Generation X think we are lazy, Zoomers think we are whiners, and Gen Alpha is barely out of diapers but I’m sure they’ll have an opinion as well.

As a Millennial, however, it was my generation that ventured into the wild Wild West of computers and programming. We were just becoming teenagers when personal, home computers were taking off and the internet was getting into houses.

We helped pioneer and colonize the home computer scene. (SLIDE) I was there in the days of America Online discs that arrived in the mail, letting you roam the internet for 200 free hours. I was there for the first chain email jokes to spread across the country. I was there for the birth of Yahoo, Netscape, and the all-powerful GOOGLE!

And I was there for the first set of competing computer operating systems. Windows and Mac (SLIDE) eventually arose from those days as the dominant platforms for which computers would operate. They were based on different architecture in terms of programming language…

And so a division began between people who used Windows, and people who used Mac computers. Companies that made software would often have to choose whether they would program their product for one or the other. It was the rare exception to find a program that worked for both Windows and Mac.

The divide between the two burgeoning Tech companies grew larger as Mac computers began getting more programs coded for business and art related work, while Windows became more of the everyday every-person computer. The lesson here is that programs made for one could not be used on the other. Windows and Mac were (SLIDE) incompatible with one another.

This is a great illustration for our Scriptures today… Peter takes this moment in the midst of a miracle to expound the devastating nature of sin. The people gathered see a miracle happen… a lame man gets healed And the people are absolutely FLOORED by this event.

Peter speaks to the lame man, takes him by the hand and a healing takes place. The lame man stands. The people marvel at it… and Peter is confused as to why. Not why the lame man is standing again, no… Peter knows exactly why the lame man is standing again.

Peter is confused as to why people are amazed in the first place. Peter tells the crowd that the power to heal is not of their own, but a power given to them by the Messiah whom they crucified… the Son of God whom they sent to the cross.

It is faith in Jesus, repenting of sin, that this power flows from meaning that this power is available to anyone. The people marvel because they think Peter is somehow special, but Peter is just an ordinary person who has figured out how to access this power.

The roadblock to much miracles isn’t a jealous God guarding such power… rather, as Peter points out, the roadblock is actually sin. When sin is removed, miracles flow. Peter is clear when he says that sin is universal to all people.

But sin is not compatible with our identity as children of God. Much like the computer programming language between Windows and Mac which still exists in many cases today, when we claim our identity as a Child of God sin becomes incompatible with who we are.

What that means for us is that in our new identity we are being transformed in accordance with God’s will rather than our own or any other will - and God makes no room for sin. The writer of 1 John makes this clear for us that I n God there is no sin, only perfection.

John explains to us that sin is not just a violation of moral codes… it’s not just resistance against some ancient text and it’s thoughts on how to live life rather sin is an active rebellion against God’s righteous character.

Since it is rebellion, it disrupts our relationship with God… it becomes a roadblock to miracles. John puts it this way… (SLIDE) “**Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness**”. When we recognize sin in this way, we can start to see the kind of provision that needs to be made for our sins, and the depths of God’s love for us to make this provision.

That provision, of course, is Jesus (SLIDE). The same Jesus Peter talked about in our reading from Acts, who was put to the cross and suffered and then rose again. John affirms for us that those who are born of God strive for a lifestyle of holiness - that they endeavour to mirror God’s character and live justly.

Those born of God do not continue to live in a life of sin because sin is wholly and entirely incompatible with God. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit we are empowered to overcome the bondage of sin and live out our lives in the victory of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:12-14 affirms this for us, “**Therefore, brothers and sisters we have an obligation - but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if you live by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God**”.

That living by the Spirit which is mentioned in Romans is the way out of temptation that Paul writes about to the Corinthian church in his first letter to them. We are equipped by the Spirit of God so that “**No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so you can endure it**” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

When we do start responding to God’s call in our lives to live into His righteousness we bear the fruit of the Spirit that reflects God’s character into the world. We become loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and moderate. (Galatians 5:22-23).

Living by the spirit, recognizing sin is incompatible with our character, we are equipped to then be transformed by the power of the gospel in those nine qualities of the Spirit, drawing others in to experience the love and grace of God. And it all begins with a deeper forgiveness than we can fathom.

It begins when we look at ourselves and realize there is more to life than the daily things we do, there is a deeper love out there than what we fathom, there is a God out there hoping and waiting to connect with each and every human being - His creation.

You, here today… Children of God, who have experienced that forgiveness and that wholeness that comes from faithfully walking with God and His plan for your lives, you embraced that transformational power in your lives.

You are being made new each day, being brought closer and closer to His heart, you are being led in obedience. Continue to heed that call, but also to tell others of that same call. You no longer live in the shadows of guilt, you walk in the light of mercy.

You no longer dwell in the prison of doubts, you are living temples of the indwelling Holy Spirit. You are ambassadors of God’s love in this world… act as such, and watch lives transform around you.

AMEN.