

Sermon by Canon Jim Holbeck at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral,
Sydney on Wednesday 15th February 2006 Reading: Matt:6:12
Topic: "Forgive us our Debts"

Someone once told me that you can only appreciate the good news when you know the bad news.

- When I asked her to explain she said, *Well the bad news is that we are all sinners in the sight of God and on the way to hell." The good news is that God can forgive us so that we can go to heaven.*"
- It was a pretty dramatic way of putting it. But it is true that you only really appreciate the good news when you know how really bad in the bad news.
- The readings tonight are full of good news especially about how we can relate to God.
- In the first reading we see that we need to ask God to forgive us. *Forgive us our debts*
- In the second reading we see that we can be forgiven.

1. WHY WE NEED TO CONFESS OUR SINS TO GOD.

There are those in our world you say *"I am free to do whatever I want to do, whenever I want to do it, and no one has the right to judge me.*

- **But we need to get the big picture about our world and our place in it.** Psalm 24 verse 1 puts it, Ps 24:1 *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.*
- God is the Creator and we are His creatures. We are indebted to Him to live His way as His creatures. But we have all failed to do so.
- So we need to confess our sins to Him or to ask Him to forgive us.
- Here in Mat 6:7, we need to confess our debts to Him and to ask for forgiveness.
- We are indebted to God. He gave us life. He sustains us as we live. We have obligations to Him as our Creator and Sustainer.
- As creatures we were meant to live as the Creator wanted us to live. Eg., as Jesus said about our obligations in life in Mark 12: 30-31, *30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'*
- None of us has given God His rightful place in our lives. We have ignored Him and done or said things which we knew were wrong.
- None of us has been perfect in loving our neighbours as ourselves. We have been selfish to some extent or insensitive and hurt other people.
- There was once a very self-righteous man who was speaking to a Christian friend and telling him how he didn't need God because he was such a good person.
- The Christian friend said, *"Do you know that you have broken the two greatest commandments."*
- He yelled back *I've never committed adultery and I've never murdered anyone.*
- His Christian friend said, *No, you have broken the 2 greatest commandments because you have not for every moment of your life loved God with all your heart, mind soul and strength, nor have you perfectly loved your neighbour as yourself. You have broken God's greatest commandments and you need His forgiveness."*
- It was courageous to say but it was true. You see

We are accountable to Him for everything. Guilty!

- Paul in Romans 3 sums up the whole case against all the different groups in the world and concludes, Rom 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
- It doesn't matter if we call ourselves atheists or agnostics or pagans, or say we have absolutely no interest in religion, we are guilty in God's sight.
- That's the bad news. What's the good news? God did something about it so that we could be forgiven.

Why Jesus came. *Jn 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*

- Jesus came and died so that we might be forgiven and live.
- But it means humbling ourselves to recognise we are sinners in God’s sight and trusting in what Jesus did for on the cross to be forgiven and to pass out of condemnation.

2. THE PROBLEM WITH NOT CONFESSING OUR SINS TO GOD. 32:3-4

No forgiveness or release from guilt. Until we repent of our sins and receive forgiveness in Christ, there is no forgiveness for anything. There is no release from niggling or numbing guilt until we do.

Even when we become believers we need to repent of anything we say or do which is not what God wants and to ask His forgiveness.

The damage it does to us. If we try to hide our guilt it has a powerful effect on our lives. Look at verses 3, 4. *3 For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*

- King David is saying that he went through physical and emotional torture while he tried to hide his sins from God.
- It’s the same when we try to suppress guilt or ignore it. It affects us so there is no real peace.
- But David did come to know release from guilt and peace with God. How did he do it?

3. HOW WE CONFESS OUR SINS TO GOD

Acknowledge, uncover and confess them. 32:5

- We need to **acknowledge** them to God, to tell Him what we have said and done.
- You can’t keep silent about your sin as David tried to do and it tore him apart. There’s tremendous release in getting out before God.
- We need to **uncover** them before God and no longer try to hide them from Him. *“Lord this is what I’ve done and I’m so sorry. Please forgive me.”*
- We need to **confess** them to God. It’s a word used many times in the OT to people confessing their sins and sometimes the sins of the nation as a whole to God as part of the sacrificial system.
- In the NT the word means “to say the same as”. I.e., in confessing our sins we are saying the same thing about our sins that God has said about them in His word.
- It is agreeing with God’s verdict on any thought, word or deed. If God says it is wrong in His word then I agree with His judgment and confess it as sin.

That’s what King David eventually did. He acknowledged his guilt, he uncovered it before God. He confessed it as sin and then came the release he writes about in Ps 32:5

4. THE RESULT OF CONFESSING OUR SINS TO GOD.

The present release. 32:5. *“and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.”* David knows tremendous release as he did what God wanted him to do in confessing his sin before Him.

- Many people have found that to be so. When they confessed their sin and asked forgiveness of God they received almost an immediate physical or emotional release.
- But it can be an ongoing experience.
- In Ps 32:1-2, David is now encouraging others to do the same as he had done in acknowledging his guilt, in uncovering his sin and confessing as sin to God. Look at his declaration at the beginning of the Psalm.

Reflecting on the ongoing release. 32:1-2. *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

Sins are forgiven. They are covered over. They are not held against us ever again.

- Could it be that a large part of your physical or emotional problem stems from guilt. You know you are guilty of something but have never been able to get rid of the guilt.
- The good news is that you can get rid of the guilt and know the freedom of forgiveness by acknowledging it, uncovering it and confessing it to God and by trusting in Jesus who died to take away our sin and our guilt.
- Could it be that you have been made to feel guilty by someone else. That is what perpetrators do. They try to make their victims feel guilty when it wasn't their fault. They do it as a means of having power over them.
- Learn to recognise what is true guilt and what is false guilt.
- If it was your fault to any degree confess it as sin , ask God's forgiveness and walk in freedom.
- If it wasn't your fault, refuse to carry the blame and walk in freedom.
- Tonight can you rejoice with King David and say, *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,*

whose sin is covered.2 Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

If you can't you may need to do as David did, 32:5 *I acknowledge my sin to you, and I do not cover my iniquity; I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,".*

- *Then you will be able to say from the very depths of your being, **and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.***

What do you need to acknowledge and uncover before the Lord?

What do you need to confess to Him?