

Sunday Sermon
The King's Pardon
John 12:12-15; Psalm 32

Have you heard that the King is coming? Even before they see him the road to Jerusalem and the Temple is crowded with thousands, hundreds of thousands, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" They are there to escort him into the city. It was a wonderful patriotic celebration with palms waving, or in our day flags waving, for the long awaited Messiah had come. Jubilantly they shout, "Hosanna – meaning O Lord save now! O Lord, prosper now!" quoting Psalm 118:25. But far from being enamored by their giddy cries, Jesus knew that the same shouts coronating him as king would soon crucify him as a common thief. Their need for deliverance from Rome was not nearly as great as their need for deliverance from their sin. First and foremost, they needed the king's pardon. They needed a savior. The road to the throne would begin at the foot of the cross.

We too, must not only receive Christ as our conquering king, our Lord and master, but also as our pardoning king - the only one who can deliver us from our guilt and sin. Indeed perhaps the greatest thing that our King, our Lord and Savior, has ever done for us is the issuing of the King's pardon from all our sin. We all live under the tyranny of valid guilt. All of us have been sinning since our childhood. And some of those things have been especially cruel, hurtful, damaging, and shameful. We could never count the number of sins we committed in our lifetimes, and we can never understand the depths that our sinful nature will stoop to. We cannot undo the past, or reverse our actions, so without true and permanent pardon we are doomed to forever live behind the bars of a guilty soul. Warren Wiersbe has rightly said, "Guilt is to the conscience what pain is to the body: it tells us something is wrong and must be made right, or things will get worse."

But on this Palm Sunday when we shout Hosanna – O Lord save us now – I want you to know that King Jesus has provided a way to do just that. In Psalm 32 David looks back on his sin with Bathsheba and

the murder of her husband and gives us a record of what it truly means to discover and enjoy fully the deep and liberating forgiveness of the King's pardon.

I. The Priority of the King's Pardon (32:3-4)

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. Selah

When we sin it is essential that immediately come to God asking for his forgiveness, asking for his pardon. It must be our first response, our first priority. But often like David,

1. We keep silent.

We try to hide our sin from others and even try to hide our sin from God. This causes us to be unable to talk about it to those who are closest to us. Consequently, our sinful behavior imprisons us in a tomb of loneliness and silence. Our fellowship with others is barricaded, and our fellowship with God is obstructed. For when we disregard or try to ignore our sin the Lord says he will not hear us (Psalm 66:18). This results in internal grief and external weakness.

2. We have heaviness and anguish of spirit.

We feel drained of energy and strength. It seems like we are wasting away. The burden of unforgiven sin drives us into a vicious endless cycle. Sin creates guilt, guilt creates shame, and shame damages the way we view ourselves and others. After all, some sins create catastrophic consequences in our lives ***But it doesn't have to be this way! Why?

II. The Power of the King's Pardon (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.

An old hymn asks the question, "Would you be free from your burden of sin? There is power in the blood." If you are struggling with a guilty conscience, you are probably wondering if you will ever be happy again,

if you will ever live again. Jesus shouts, "Yes!" The power of the King's pardon can and will bring blessing and joy back into your heart. You will sing again!

1. How deep and wide is that pardon?

No matter what type of offense that you have committed, divine pardon is possible. All of us, without exception, have dark secrets in our past lives. So when you think forgiveness is impossible, you can be sure that it is not. Indeed David describes four different kinds of sins from which you can be delivered. They seem to describe the progression of his own sin. 1) He disobeyed God's laws about sexual purity in committing adultery with another man's wife. (The word here for *transgression* describes that defiant willful disobedience against God.) You boldly step over the line. 2) The intents and fantasies of his heart went wild and he fell far short of the target of a holy life (The word here for *sin* means to "miss the mark" as an archer who shoots an arrow but misses the target.) 3) David's actions in committing adultery with Bathsheba and then killing her husband to cover it up is the ultimate perversion, a vile distortion of what is right. (That is the word *iniquity* here.) 4) The end of the line for David was that he deceived himself, he rationalized his sin away. (And so the word *deceit* is used.) Sound familiar?

But in the words of another song, "but he forgave me all my sin." In the words of still another hymn, "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunge beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains. For David, and for us, in an instant, the entire chain of evil is broken and banished by God's grace when we truly repent.

So what is God saying to you this morning? He is saying that every single sin whether it is conscious or unconscious, a sin of omission or a sin of commission, he will abundantly pardon. Your sin has been covered because Jesus paid in full the penalty for that sin. And your sin can never be counted against you ever again. You have received the King's pardon!

2. What does God do with our sins?

The Lord laid on him the guilt of our sins (Isaiah 53:6). Christ took away our sins forever (John 1:29). They are removed an immeasurable

distance as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). They are washed and cleansed and in God's sight the stain of sin is gone and we are as white as fresh fallen snow (I John 1:7; Isaiah 1:18). God has trampled them underfoot and thrown them into the depths of the ocean (Micah 7:19). He has cast them behind his back and forgotten them forever, never to think of them again (Isaiah 38:17; Hebrews 10:17). He blots them out and scatters them as the clouds – sweeps them away like the morning mists (Isaiah 43:22, 25). He cancelled, expunged the record that contained the charges against us and destroyed it by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14). Where once we were dressed in putrid filthy rags we are now clothed with spotless garments of righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). We have the abundance of the King's pardon (Isaiah 55:7).

III. The *Process* of the King's Pardon (32:5)

*⁵I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

This pardon is not automatic. It does not come without us doing anything. So how can I find forgiveness? How can I find the way back? It is a process. There are two things that we must do:

1. We must come to God with naked honesty rather than refusing to admit our sin.

David acknowledged that he had lusted after Bathsheba, taken advantage of his royal position as King, committed immorality with her, arranged for the murder of her husband, married the woman with whom he had slept, and then tried to cover up the whole sordid affair.

2. We must confess our sin as defiance of God's will and standards.

God's holiness establishes the moral baseline of the universe. Before our sin has claimed any victims, it has already been an injury to the person of God. We cannot make excuses and make an honest or valid confession. Our society wants us to dismiss the category of sin altogether as if it does not exist. But we can never find healing, we can never find forgiveness if we deny the reality of our sin.

IV. The *Promise of the King's Pardon* (32: 6-11)

⁶ *Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.*

⁷ *You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah*

⁸ *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

⁹ *Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.*

¹⁰ *Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.*

¹¹ *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

So what's so great about God's pardon? David now gives us a number of blessings that are experienced by those who have received the King's pardon:

1. He becomes our hiding place: where we once hid from God, we now hide in God (a partial quote from Harry Ironside).

We now find a safe place in God because he has taken care of the sin problem and has lifted the burden of our guilt. He is our protector in times of trouble – not the one using trouble to discipline us and show us the error of our ways.

2. He is our teacher who is watching over us.

Every day we have the absolute assurance that King Jesus is guiding us along the best pathway for our life. He will safely guide us through the moral minefields of this world.

3. He surrounds us with unfailing love.

He will never deny forgiveness to the truly repentant. He will never stop loving us even when we commit the grossest of sins. Therefore we can be confident in running to him and not away from him.

4. He brings joy where there was once fear, guilt and sadness.

As we have seen, God answers the prayer of the song, "purify my heart." With the heavy burden of guilt removed, we can rejoice in who God is and what he has done and is doing in our lives every moment of every day.

Conclusion

When the king rode along the street to Jerusalem, He had come not as a political deliverer but as a Savior offering the King's pardon. He will reign over the earth someday, but the first thing on the King's agenda was to provide forgiveness to a lost and unforgiving world. To you he offers that same pardon. So what is your responsibility? You may say that your wife has forgiven you, your husband has forgiven you, your mom and dad has forgiven you, your friend has forgiven you, but I cannot forgive myself. But you are not called to forgive yourself. As David Jeremiah says, "Our job is to confess our sin and receive God's forgiveness. His job is to forgive us and cleanse us from our unrighteousness." You are also called to pardon others with the same extravagant grace and forgiveness that God has granted you. In forgiving others who have wronged us we set them free and we also set ourselves free. Why? Because bitterness in our hearts is like a poison that continually eats away at our joy and happiness. When we forgive those whom God has forgiven, it's liberating for them, for us, and for other believers. As Elmer Towns challenges us today, "You choose whether to live in the freedom of forgiveness or in the bitterness of bondage." Why not bask in the glory of God's pardon and forgiveness this Palm Sunday. This very moment the King is extending to you his hand. Why not take it and receive his pardon today.