

How to Repent

Looks diff in church today; diff feel, compared to few days ago. Last Sunday, joyful celebration of Jesus' transfig: mountain, gleaming in brightness; glimpse of glory; peak into heaven. In church, altar white, joyful choir songs; celebration. But looks diff in church today; diff feel: bare altar, cross & crown, black; somber music, solemn ambiance; feels different. Why? Supposed to be sad, drab day? Supposed to pretend like Jesus never rose take sins away? What AW about? No! Jesus is alive; fills us with joy every day, no matter what season. Also, no matter what season, repent of sins every day. And just as during Easter special emphasis on res, so also during Lent special emphasis on repentance. Today, AW, beginning of Lent; so today, feels different because special emphasis on repentance. Pharisee & tax collector – only one penitent, only one went home justified. How can we be like him? If Lent is about repentance, how do we truly repent? What mean to repent? How? I think Is 59 shows us how, teaches steps of how to repent. Walk through lesson with me.

Accept the accusation. Starts with God making accusation; listen for “you/your.” **Vs. 1-3.** Through prophet, God: “You are guilty! You, not anyone else, you.” How react? What if someone accuses? Deny (wrong guy) or defensive (how dare judge). What if God, God's Word, fellow Christian sharing God's Word, says that? Deny? Get defensive? Or accept accusation? Accepting accusation is first step to repentance, because if we don't, we ignore huge barrier between us and God. **Vs. 2a.** Separation, barrier, Berlin Wall between us and God that we built with our sins. Wall can never be torn down if we never give God's law a hearing and personalize in heart. Hear God speaking to you: **vs. 3.** To you, and me! If we refuse to accept that accusation from God, called impenitence (opposite of repenting).

Listen how God describes impenitence: **vs. 9b-10a.** Language about darkness, shadows, feeling wall, stumbling, falling down – blindness. Not repenting = living in blindness. Jesus, light of world – shine light of Gospel, so we can live in light. 1 Jn 1, **“God is light; in him there is now darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth” (1:5-6).** Means: call our self Christian, yet refuse to repent, then really blind to light of world. So when God's law accuses you of sin, or fellow Christian or pastor talk to you about sin you've committed, don't deny or get defensive. Take it to heart, personalize message, begin process of repentance by accepting accusation. Step 1.

Acknowledge your iniquities. **Vs. 12.** Step 2. More than, “Caught me; got me; I did it.” Really confession and apology. Coming to God: “You're right; I'm wrong. I'm sorry.” College friend. Now take God, loved you from eternity, sent Son to redeem, bind you to himself. You think having fun, joking. But really hurt God; looks more like **vs. 13.** When God approaches you, what do you do? Acknowledge iniquities; confess and apologize; “right, wrong, sorry.” Mean what you say, think about words, *“I confess that I am by nature...For this I deserve your punishment, both now and in eternity.”* I've done wrong; deserve hell. That's what you do when you repent. Don't make excuses or shift blame or hide anything. Lay all before Jesus. Pinning sins to cross. Captures spirit of **vs. 12.** Step 2.

Fear the name of the Lord. From **vs. 19.** From W to E, fear and revere; not afraid but respect, trust, believe. Here's why respect, trust, believe: **vs. 15b-16b.** Saw you couldn't save yourself; took matters into his own hands (or arms – **vs. 16b; 1).** When in trouble because of sins, God stretched out mighty arm, went to war for us! Military language: **vs. 17-18.** Describes God as divine warrior who put on armor of God, went to battle to save us. Jesus Christ came into world on military campaign to wage war against Satan: this Sunday temptation; on cross; really, every day. Jesus is this divine warrior; Isaiah paints pretty angry picture of Jesus, **“repaying wrath, retribution, vengeance.”** Realize: not at you, but at enemy. Jesus came to battle Satan; conquered Satan. Went to battle, won the war. So in Lent, as we repent, also see

Jesus as divine warrior who defeated devil and won victory to forgive sins. Why, **vs. 19b**. Why 3rd step in repentance. To fear means to believe that this Jesus, divine warrior, has won battle; we're on his side.

Last verse: **vs. 20**. God wants us to repent. How? 3 steps. Make repentance part of daily life, especially in Lent. Why it looks/feels different here: season of repentance. By repenting and trusting, this truly prepares us to sing Alleluia again and celebrate with joy res of Jesus on Easter. Lent prepares us for Easter. So repent! May God bless you this Lenten season.

Isaiah 59:1-3, 9-13, 15b-20 (NIV 2011)

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. ²But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. ³For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken falsely, and your tongue mutters wicked things.

⁹So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. ¹⁰Like the blind we grope along the wall, feeling our way like people without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead.

¹¹We all growl like bears; we moan mournfully like doves. We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away.

¹²For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: ¹³rebellion and treachery against the LORD, turning our backs on our God, inciting revolt and oppression, uttering lies our hearts have conceived.

^{15b}The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. ¹⁶He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. ¹⁷He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak. ¹⁸According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due. ¹⁹From the west, people will fear the name of the LORD, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the LORD drives along.

²⁰“The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,” declares the LORD.