

# Caleb Evans (3)

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Date: 09 December 2018

Preacher: Fr. Caleb Evans

[0:00] Amen. Amen.

So I was talking to my wife about the content of this morning's sermon. She says to me, You know, Advent is a great time to tell people that they're sinners.

I said in response, Every time that I remind people from the pulpit that they're sinners, I am reminding myself that I'm a sinner too. So let's talk about repentance.

There's a word that makes us squirm, right? Talk about something that is way out of fashion, if it ever was in fashion. It's not a popular thing to preach about.

John the Baptist preached about repentance, and look at how successful his ministry was in worldly terms. He ended up literally with his head on a platter. And he ended up with his head on a platter because he was honest about sin, and people, that's all of us, do not like to admit that they are sinners.

[1:40] We don't like to admit something that is true of every single one of us, especially not in the time and the culture that we live in. One of my favorite quotes from G.K. Chesterton, you may have heard me quote this one before.

Chesterton says, Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved.

Now, I happen to think that original sin isn't the only part of Christian theology that can be proved, but I do think that original sin is the part of Christian theology that is the most easily observable. Watch the news. Read history and think about the fact that a perfect utopian human society has never existed, has it?

And if you still doubt that all of us are sinners from the very beginning, it must mean that you have never been around children. As my daughter is walking up the aisle.

[2:47] Seriously, do children ever need to be taught how to sin? They have a knack for it.

I am speaking as the parent of a one-year-old, who you just saw walk up the aisle, but speaking as the parent of a one-year-old who flashes an adorable smile at us when she's doing something she knows she's not supposed to do.

The truth is, not one of us is innocent. Not even cute, little, rotten, smiling babies. And that, my brothers and sisters, is why Jesus came.

That is why John preached repentance and preached that Jesus is coming. That's why week after week, as I preach, I will be preaching about the cross.

I will be preaching about sin and about salvation, instead of preaching about helpful life principles or moralism. Because John preached repentance and preached that the Savior was coming.

[3:57] The message for us this morning is that the Savior has come and that we must repent and believe the gospel. Because he is coming again to judge the living and the dead.

In Matthew 3, we get a snapshot of what the call to repentance that Luke 3 mentioned is talking about, where we read that John the Baptist proclaimed, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

We could simplify that and say that the message here basically is repent because Jesus and the salvation that he brings is near. And the thing is, that message still applies to us today, does it not? The offer of salvation in Christ still extends, and his return as judge and as Lord is coming soon. But what do we mean by this word repentance?

That's what I want us to think about this morning. What does it mean to repent, and why is it important? Now, repentance is one of those words that gets thrown around a bit in Christian circles, but it's a word that we don't really know the meaning of sometimes.

[5:16] We mention it in passing, and we don't really want to dwell on it because it's an awkward thing and it demands something of us, doesn't it? I think it would be helpful to start with a definition.

What is repentance? Now, the definition of repentance given by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the Anglican archbishop who composed and organized the Book of Common Prayer, is this.

Repentance for sins according to the Gospel, is a saving grief about one's sins, because of their offense to God, with hope of obtaining pardon through Christ, and a purpose of amending one's life with Christ's help.

So this morning, I want us to break that down piece by piece. Starting with this. Repentance is a saving grief about one's sins, because of their offense to God.

Now, if we're going to understand repentance, we have to understand how awful sin really is. We read in Romans that the wages of sin is death.

[6:28] That means that sin is so heinous in the eyes of our holy God, that those of us who have committed sin truly deserve to die.

We need to think about our condition. We have sinned against a holy God, and we deserve nothing but His condemnation. All of us. He has created us in love, He has been faithful to us, and we have simply been unfaithful to Him.

As C.S. Lewis put it, fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement. He is a rebel who must lay down his arms.

Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you are sorry, realizing that you have been on the wrong track, and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor.

That is the only way out of our hole. This process of surrender is what Christians call repentance.

Lewis is saying, human beings aren't merely lost, as if we've just stumbled off the path, and are just stumbling around.

[7:46] No, he's saying that in our sinful state, we are in open rebellion against God, who is love and goodness. Sin is not a harmless, not an excusable mistake.

It is a wicked state of open rebellion against God. And here's the hard thing. God created us in love. He sent His only Son to die for us, to bring sinners like ourselves back to Him. So why is that a hard thing? That's good news, after all, is it not?

The hard thing is that God has loved us so much, and so well, and we have sinned against Him so often, and to such an extent.

And so the godly sorrow, the saving grief, that is at the root of true repentance, isn't merely a fear of punishment. It isn't because it's in my self-interest to repent, that I repent.

[8:48] It's because God, who has created me, has loved me so much, has sent His only Son to die for me, so that my sins put Jesus on the cross.

And I realize, that I have been loved so much when I was so unworthy, and I have been so completely ungrateful. And it's a saving grief, because, let me be clear, there is no such thing as salvation without repentance.

And because those who grieve for their sins, and look to Christ and Him crucified, for forgiveness and salvation, will be saved. Which leads to the next piece, of our definition of repentance, that I want us to think about this morning.

True repentance includes hope of obtaining pardon through Christ. Now, first of all, I want us to remember that our only hope of pardon for our sins is through Christ.

As we read in Acts, the name of Jesus is the only name given under heaven by which we must be saved. And why is that? As we've already discussed, the wages of sin is death, and we have sinned.

[10:10] But the good news is that God gave His only Son for us. The penalty for sin is death, and Jesus has taken that penalty for everyone who puts their trust in Him.

So when we repent, when we turn from our sin to God, we are admitting that our only hope is not in anything that we have done.

It's not even in our intentions to do better. No, our only hope is in what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, that our sins are taken away in Him.

We can be sure that when we trust in Christ, in faith and repentance, our sins are washed away. It's not a mere hypothetical possibility that our sins are forgiven.

It is a certain hope. As the Scriptures tell us, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The Scriptures tell us if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and

to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[11:16] Now, unsurprisingly, these themes pop up in our liturgy and in the Book of Common Prayer, don't they?

If you've noticed, the Prayer of Humble Access has a notable place in our Eucharistic liturgy. Now, for decades, in some places, Anglicans didn't use it in worship because some people were complaining that it seemed too much like groveling.

But in a few minutes, we are going to pray, we do not presume to come to this your table, O merciful Lord, trusting on our own righteousness, but in your abundant and great mercies.

We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table, but you are the same Lord whose character is always to have mercy. I have to speak for me personally.

When I pray that way, I don't feel like I'm groveling. To me, it feels like the relief of admitting the honest truth of who I really am and taking joy in the fact that there is mercy for people like me in Jesus Christ.

[12:32] It is not groveling, it's relief, and it's joy. Because we remember the good news that Jesus Christ saved sinners. It's been rightly said that there is more mercy in Jesus than there is sin in us.

No matter how badly we have sinned, we can repent and find God's mercy in Christ. Now to the final point about repentance I want us to consider this morning.

It is with the purpose of amending our lives with Christ's help. Our salvation in Jesus has been rightly described as the double cure.

That is, we are saved from the guilt of sin or we are justified as we might put it. Our sins are forgiven. We are made right with God through faith in Christ.

But that isn't all. In Jesus, we are also set free from sin's power over us. meaning that we are sanctified and made holy when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[13:40] And it's a package deal. You don't get one without the other. That doesn't mean that any of us are sinless.

That doesn't mean that we never make mistakes. That doesn't mean that any one of us is perfect. And it certainly doesn't mean that we don't constantly need God's forgiveness in Christ.

It certainly doesn't mean that we can think that we are holy now and we can look down on others. What it means is really quite simple. And it's this.

It means that knowing Jesus changes us. It means that we are willing to give up whatever it is in our lives that is opposed to God's holy will.

doesn't mean that we'll never struggle with those things again. But it does mean that sin isn't something that we intend to pursue and build our lives on anymore.

[14:42] It means that we belong to Jesus that He calls the shots and that we intend to obey Him and when we stumble that we repent and return to Him.

To put it bluntly Jesus does not intend simply to be our get out of hell free card. He doesn't set us free from the guilt of our sins so that we can then continue to wallow in sin without any intention to turn from it and to obey God.

We still fail. We still fall short. Every one of us. There is forgiveness for us in Christ. But we need to ask ourselves honestly, do I have sorrow over my sin?

Do I have godly grief? Do I desire to live a life that is holy in God's sight? And do I hate my sin? And if the answer to those questions is no, then we need to ask ourselves honestly.

Do I really have true and saving faith in Jesus Christ? Because faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin and one does not exist without the other.

[16:01] So what are we supposed to do with all this? Well, if we've never repented of our sin and turned to God for salvation in Jesus, there is no time like the present.

And if we have done that, we need to remember that repentance is a lifelong thing for the Christian, not something you just do once. Martin Luther once said that the life of a Christian is a life of repentance.

As long as we still sin, the need to turn from sin to Christ is still a part of our lives. I want to close with this quote from Archbishop Peter Jensen, whom some of you here know, who said this, coming home is what repentance looks like.

Repentance is at the heart of spiritual renewal. It is the prodigal's return. It is coming home. We have all strayed from God's will expressed in His Word.

We hear the hammer blows of the Word of God. Our conscience convicts us of our sin. We know that we have offended. We return to the one whom we have offended, giving up our sin, not pleading our supposed virtues, but seeking only His mercy and making no claims upon Him. [17 : 25] We speak only in the name of the Lord Jesus. We place ourselves once more under His authority. We hear His blessed Word of forgiveness, peace, and assurance.

Here's what I want each of us to hear this morning. We have strayed from God's will. We have sinned.

Let's return to Jesus and give up our sin in the knowledge that the blood of Jesus shed for us is the only grounds for our forgiveness but is the certain grounds for our forgiveness.

And let's seek, by God's grace, to live according to His will from now on, knowing that there is forgiveness and peace and new life for us in Jesus Christ.

in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.