

Bad Ink: Repent
Glen - Mar 25, 2018

Series Big Idea: We've heard the stories of people who made a foolish decision to get a tattoo that later in life they regretted. And there are a few stories of folks who got a terrible tattoo because of a mistake made by a tattoo artist. That's what we call "bad ink." We all make wrong or foolish decisions. We put ourselves in a place where we are hurt or abused or allowed others to be hurt. We sin and face the consequences. We sabotaged a relationship. We wasted all our money because of an addiction. We played some role in what ended up in a divorce, abuse, bankruptcy, a broken dream, or the loss of a loved one. We didn't love someone the way we wish we had. And there is the regret and sorrow for the opportunities wasted, risks not taken, words and love never expressed, gifts not given and forgiveness withheld. It is easy to keep reliving the regret. But our God is a God of second chances. He can use the regret to remind us the life we want to leave behind and of his unending grace to lead us out of the bad ink. We are offered a perpetual second chance by a God of infinite grace.

Message Big Idea: Jesus once responded to some news events of his day and brings us to a hard, but freeing spiritual conclusion and reality; No matter who we are or what we've done or what's been done to us, we must repent of our bad choices and responses in order to experience real life now and one that will never end. Jesus knows we all have sinned and we have regrets for what we have done or not done. So the command of Jesus is to repent, which means we turn to go in a new direction while learning from our past sin or misfortune. But the time is now...now is the time to repent and allow God to redeem the bad ink of our lives.

Main Idea: Turn away from the bad ink and move toward grace.

Main Text: Luke 13:1-5

Supporting text: Matthew 4:17

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Glen suggests there are three basic types of "bad ink" in our lives: 1) Regret and shame for what we did. 2) Regret for what we did NOT do. And 3) Hurt we carry and our responses that keep hurting us. Identify, describe and share at least one kind of "bad ink" you struggle with in each category.
2. Jesus calls all to repentance. It was the theme of all he taught. What is repentance? Describe the first time you repented? What do you find you need and want to repent of right now?
3. Glen said that God doesn't remove the bad ink, he redeems it. What do you think that means? How have you experienced that in your life?
4. A key to helping us turn from the "bad ink" toward God and his grace is to focus on this - "It's not what we've done; it's what's been done for us." Take your bad ink and practice this - share what you did or are doing and identify what God has done for you through Jesus.

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Main Idea: Turn away from the bad ink and move toward grace.

Message:

Last week Pastor Joe introduced you to the teaching series we are in - *Bad Ink*. Joe did a great job and if you missed it, it is worth watching online. Joe reminded us that God doesn't want us to live in the regret of bad decisions we made in the past. His main point as he opened this series was this - **Don't live looking backwards, but live in grace today.** Today we are going to look at the key way Jesus says will help us actually live that way.

We are using the idea of bad ink as a metaphor of regret and shame. After Joe's message last week, I heard from several people in our church that have had to live with literal bad ink. One person told me about a name tattoo they had, but later that relationship went bad. They had a tattoo artist figure out a way to morph the name into something else. The point is that bad ink doesn't go away. The question is what can we do about it.

As you've figured out, we aren't really talking about actual tattoo ink. We are talking about things in our lives that can cause us to feel shame. I think there are three basic kinds of bad ink. You and I have and will experience one or all three of these. First, there is this kind of **Bad ink: regret and shame for what we did.** Some of our regret and shame is over things we've done. The fact is that we all sin. Some of us might have lived as angry people. Or maybe we are prone to gossip, judge or we struggle with greed and lust. Maybe we sabotage relationships mostly because of our own selfishness. Some had a porn addiction that ruined a relationship, wasted tons of time and money and ended up leaving us struggling with intimacy. We played some role in what ended up in a divorce. We filed for bankruptcy. We didn't love someone the way we wish we had. And more!

The second kind of **Bad ink: regret for what we did NOT do.** This is the regret and sorrow for the opportunities lost or wasted, risks not taken, words and love never expressed, gifts not given and forgiveness withheld. After last week I had a couple of people share with me that they had let regret and shame keep them from doing what they knew God wanted them to do. And sometimes we let fear keep us from the good God calls us to do.

And then there is a third and very different kind of **Bad ink: hurt we carry that keeps hurting us.** It is the damage done to us by others and our bad response to the bad that was done. We are physically crippled. We are emotionally wounded. We've watched a dream get dashed. Bad things happen to us or we are sinned against. And then we make bad choices in how to respond or fail to respond. We live in offense, anger, unforgiveness, seek revenge, quit trusting, etc. When bad ink happens to us we don't easily get rid of it or move past it.

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But Joe reminded us last week that our God is a God of second chances. Actually, he's also a God of third and fourth chances and more. The fact is that bad ink is a part of our story. Jesus doesn't want us to live in our regret and shame. Jesus came to lead us out of the bad ink life to a new life. Jesus is the Master of taking the bad ink and writing a new story with new ink. But we have to cooperate with him. And he tells us how.

We actually hear it in his very first words as he started his three year public ministry. The first words recorded of Jesus after his baptism and temptation in the wilderness were these words found in Matthew 4:17. **Matthew 4:17 - Repent!** *From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."* This is a summary of all that Jesus taught. It was his purpose. This was his core message. Folks, don't miss this. This IS what all the teachings of Jesus are to lead us to - all of us. Jesus was and is calling us to repent. The kingdom of heaven is God's influence and God wants to transform our bad ink. God, in Jesus, has come to write a new story with new ink. Only God can do that. But our part or response is to repent. So what does repent mean?

In the Old Testament, the word repent means to turn. Mostly it means to turn from wrong doing back to God. In the New Testament the word is *metanoia* and it means to change our mind. To repent means to change our mind about who we serve - ourselves or God. It means to change our mind about who we'll follow - the world or God. It means to turn from trying to fix our bad ink ourselves to allowing God to write a new story with his ink. So with both the Old Testament and New Testament, repentance means to change our mind about the direction we are going and turn our lives around and follow Jesus and the way of Jesus. To repent means a complete change in terms of what we believe, who we trust, and how we live.

In other words, to repent means that we truly are sorry for our bad ink or response to our bad ink. To repent means we will not let our bad ink define us. We won't let what we did or what others did to us rob us of the life God wants for us. When we repent, we see the foolishness of our bad decisions and responses. To repent means we are ready to move past the bad ink and make the necessary changes to allow God to change us.

The bad ink never leaves, at least not completely. But here's the crux of this. We either focus on the bad ink of the past and give it power by living in the shame of it. Or, we repent and move past it and allow it be motivation for the life we never want to return to. Okay, I just said a mouthful. Let's unpack this and take a deeper dive into this thing called repentance.

As I was preparing for this message months ago, I was studying what Jesus taught on repentance. I came across a story in the life of Jesus. I have never heard anyone teach or preach on it. I don't ever remember teaching it. It's in the middle of Luke's Gospel where Jesus is giving very clear warnings and encouragements about what it means to truly follow him and what it means to repent.

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Let's read it in Luke 13:1-5 (pg. 712 - NIV) ***1 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."***

Some people who were talking to Jesus had an assumption. Our assumptions are often wrong! The assumption was that some Galileans who were killed by Pilate must have been really bad people. After all, bad people get what they deserve. Bad ink is for bad people! That's why they were killed. That wouldn't happen to good people. We often believe this assumption - if something bad happens, it must be my fault. Too often people who are abused think they must have been bad and deserved what they got. Even followers of Jesus think God is punishing them when bad things happen. This is a false spiritual belief - a lie from hell itself.

In verse 2 Jesus said - *"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no!"* Then Jesus brings up another news event of that day. He says a tower fell in Jerusalem and killed eighteen people. Did they deserve that? Was God punishing them? Were they worse than those not killed in the accident? Jesus says "No!" In these cases, they didn't die because of their personal sin, but rather we live in a fallen sinful messed up world. Accidents happen in a world that is damaged by our collective sin over generations. Bad things happen to all of us.

But here's the conclusion that I think Jesus is making. Bad ink is everywhere. Sometimes we sin and it messes us up in so many ways. Sometimes we are sinned against (like the Galileans in the story). Sometimes bad things happen and then we are tempted to sin in response. We live in a sinful world where we sin or are sinned against. All of us have messed up, missed the mark and gotten off track. There's a lot of bad ink in our lives.

So Jesus says that there is only one solution to all the bad ink. He says it twice for emphasis. The only thing we can do and must do while we are still alive is to repent. He said: **But unless you repent, you too will all perish.** It wasn't just those people Jesus was talking to 2000 years ago that needed to repent. You and I need to repent. The discussion was about some people who died. But we'll all perish in the life beyond death if we don't repent.

Here's what it means to repent - **Turn away from the bad ink and move toward grace.** To repent is to admit that we sinned: our bad ink. Or we were sinned against or bad things happened and we reacted in sin to bad ink done to us. But it doesn't stop there. To repent means I refuse to live in the bad ink. **Repent - refuse to live in the**

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bad ink. To repent also means we make an intentional decision to change our focus and direction. We turn to God. Or we return to God. We live in his grace and mercy. We embrace the new and better way of Jesus. And we have to do this over and over.

When we repent, it doesn't mean we are perfect and never make a mistake again. It means to recognize when we are out of step with God and make the necessary changes to get back in step. That is faith. That's the journey of faith. That's what it means to repent - to make the change Jesus wants us to make and start moving in the right direction. Let me summarize what it means to repent - **Repent - admit the bad ink and make a change to move in the right direction.**

Here's how it works when we repent, God doesn't remove all the bad ink tattooed in our lives. Yes, I said that correctly. He fully forgives us, but the ink doesn't automatically disappear. Think of it like a bad tattoo. It might fade or we might ask a tattoo artist to try to re-ink it into something else, or even remove it by methods that leave a scar - but there's always something left that can remind us of the bad ink. It just doesn't disappear.

The Apostle Paul wrote most of the books of our New Testament and was one of the great leaders that started the church. But before he began to follow Jesus he was filled with hate and committed murder. He didn't forget that. That fact didn't disappear for him. In fact one time he wrote that he was more of a sinner than anyone he knew. But Paul repented and God took that part of Paul and transformed it. God moved him from one who killed to be one who brought life to people. When we repent here's what we do - **Turn away from the bad ink and move toward grace.** And this brings us to the profound power of repentance. When we repent and re-focus on God here's what happens. **God doesn't remove the bad ink, he redeems it.** That's what he did for Paul and all of us who follow Jesus. The bad ink reminds us of how much we need the grace of God. The bad ink reminds us of the place we don't want to go back to. But more importantly, the bad ink often becomes the very thing God will use to allow us to help and serve others. It is our story, as bad as it might have been, that helps us share God's grace with others. It motivates us to act and respond with love and good toward others.

Now there are two tricky ideas about repentance that the Devil puts into our heads. Many of you know Jesus and think that you only have to repent once. Many think that repentance happens on that day when you decided to quit living for yourself and decide to follow Jesus. Yes, that is THE moment of repentance. It is THE turning point. It is the time when you turned around and start following Jesus.

But it is not the only time you repent. You see, even after we repent for the first time and start following Jesus, there are many many times we get off track and need to repent. You and I give into temptation. We lose focus and get distracted. We experience doubt about God and the Bible. We hit hard times and let fear take control. And all of us at some point will experience a slow drift from passionate commitment to Jesus and get off

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track, at least for a season. In these times we also need to repent. These are times of repentance that are not about finding salvation because we are already loved and forgiven by Jesus. But they are times when we repent of what got us off track in order to get back on track with God.

Here's the second trick of the Devil. You believe in God, love Jesus, were baptized and come to church. But you never actually repented! You might have made the self evaluation that were never really a bad person who did horrible things. So you think. Maybe you grew up in the church and always knew and loved God. But remember, we are all sinners. Before God sin is sin. Missing the mark is missing the mark. All of us, at some point, have to make a decision to make a change or repent. If we think we are good enough for God and have it all together then that alone is a clue that we need to take ourselves off the throne of our lives. It is never easy to dethrone self. And then we invite Jesus to lead us. Repentance means that Jesus is our focus and he is in full control. That will result in a radical transformation. Some of us are living as Christians, but have never really repented and allowed Jesus to be the full Lord of our lives. It is never too late to repent. In fact, right now may be the very time to repent. And you may actually need to be baptized for the right reason - a promise that Jesus will be Lord over all your life.

And some of us here have never ever repented. Maybe you never repented meaning you haven't yet changed your mind and heart and turned to God. Jesus is urging you to repent or you risk perishing. If you've never repented, don't leave here today without talking to someone about that. We have prayer partners down front and folks in Starting Point after our service who would love to talk to you about that. If you are not walking toward God, you are walking away. So stop and turn and start going toward him. So if you do or have recently repented and decided to start following Jesus, next Sunday, Easter Sunday, we are going to have an opportunity to be baptized. In baptism, you make the promise to follow Jesus from that moment forward. Right now, **Turn away from the bad ink and move toward grace.**

Verbal Server cue. In communion today we are going to do this a bit differently. When the tray is passed, take and hold the cup and bread as WE ARE GOING TO TAKE IT TOGETHER when I instruct you to do so.

It is in communion that I want to give you the opportunity to repent. Turn from your sin. Decide to stop the sin that is ruining you. Move past the guilt and shame of past sin. Move past the power you've given to the sin done to you. When we repent we start a fresh, we start new with God and move in a new direction with Jesus. Jesus totally forgives our sin. For him, the ink IS gone. He does not count it against us. But he does more than that. Jesus forgives us and moves us past the bad ink and uses the bad ink to help us write a new and better story.

Communion reminds us of Jesus who died to give us a new beginning. It was this week in history that was Jesus' final week. People call today Palm Sunday. It was when he

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entered Jerusalem for the last time and was headed to the cross. It was during this last week that Jesus asked us to remember him in communion. It was on the cross that he did it all for us. His death, his sacrifice, forgave all our sins. Here's what we remember right now - **It's not what we've done; it's what's been done for us.**

It was on the night right before Jesus was arrested when he was with his disciples and he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it up and passed it. He said: "This is my body which is for you; do this in remembrance of me. And we remember: **It's not what we've done; it's what's been done for us.** Partake of the bread representing the body of Christ.

Then Jesus took the cup and said; "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this in remembrance of me." The blood of Jesus was shed for the forgiveness of our sin and offers us a relationship with God. And we remember: **It's not what we've done; it's what's been done for us.** Drink the cup representing the blood of Christ.

Offering: We are grateful for what Jesus has done for us. It is out of that gratitude that we give now. After our time for giving, we are going to close with a song that celebrates and reminds us the source of our new life as we move past our bad ink.

Song: O Come to the Altar