

Growing up, I would often ask my sons if they doctored their hands.

And one of the things in the Funyak home, if you ever come on over, we kind of do a prayer huddle.

A lot of families, they're close, they love each other, they hold hands.

We just didn't know where our boys' hands were, so we just decided to huddle.

But I'd ask them if they doctored their hands because oftentimes they would wash them very much clean.

in a Presbyterian fashion with just a little bit of sprinkling, just a little bit of water.

No, I wanted them to be reminded of those movies of surgeons who have their hands out and they're scrubbing them incredibly aggressively and they're hitting every nook and cranny.

In fact, we never wash our hands like that.

They are washing their hands because they recognize how just even the smallest bit of bacteria or germ can cause incredible difficulty in the patient on whom they're about to operate.

They want to make sure that they are clean before they go into that very intense time of the operating room.

And they recognize that they have to do everything humanly possible to come to that place without bringing any infection, anything that would cause infection or any type of bacteria, any type of germ or even any dirt at all.

They scrub in, they sterilize.

They cleanse everything because you don't bring contamination into a place designed for healing.

That's just the reality of it.

And today, we're going to see that the same is true of worship.

If last week was our called and that we are called to worship, that we've been summoned, well, now as we see who we've been summoned by, the very first step in that process is confession, that you and I are called to confess.

We can stand in God's presence.

If we're going to do that, we must recognize that we need to come

in what He knows about us.

We need to agree with His assessment of where you and I are.

But here's the good news today, that in worship, it's where our shame, our failure, our shortcomings meets God's grace.

So today, let's talk a little bit about what it means to confess.

Now this whole passage begins with some issues that's going on in the life of God's people.

In fact, Isaiah says, in the year that King Uzziah died.

Now, most scholars believe that to be about 740 B.C.

But here's the unique thing about this.

At that point, God's people had experienced a lot of prosperity and material wealth.

In fact, King Uzziah was on the throne for about 52 years.

Towards the end of his reign, he started to get a little bit squirrely.

Maybe it had to do with the leprosy that he contracted.

But in the end, it was a very crazy time.

Politically, they didn't know what was happening.

They knew Assyria was rising in power.

They were worried about maintaining all of the wealth, the success, and the ease that had kind of developed over the last five decades.

And so there was a lot of uncertainty.

Who's in charge?

What's going on?

What's happening?

Isaiah is coming in and doing his normal duty as a priest.

He's coming in.

And as such, he's there to worship.

And what does he see?

Well, it says he sees this amazing vision.

He sees the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.

The train of his robe filled the temple.

Above him stood the seraphim, each having their wings.

They're flying around, and they are shaking the place.

by saying and declaring that God is holy, holy, holy.

Now, I've done the sermon before where I'm trying to help you understand what's happening here.

This is not just a, you know, a praise chorus that repeats seven times, seven words, eleven times, whatever the joke is.

I know for many people, they just are turned off by any type of repetition.

But the reality is, since their creation, these

angelic beings are doing nothing but declaring to one another that God is holy.

And it's not that He's just holy, but He's holy, holy.

And it's not that He's just holy, holy, but He's holy, holy, holy.

And they're saying it, not in some monotonous way like, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.

They are so amazed every time that they think and look upon God in His fullness that they are in shock.

They are in shock and they are amazed that they are crying out so loud that it's shaking.

Holy, holy, holy.

They are amazed at God's holiness, at His fullness.

power and His glory at what He is.

And they have been doing this since they've been created for millennia, and they are still in awe.

That's why eternity is going to be better every single day that we're there, because we're going to experience or see more of this infinite God being revealed to us.

And maybe, it's all the people that say, well, Pastor, when I get to heaven, I've got all these questions to ask.

Yeah, maybe after the first trillion years of you just crying out that God is holy, when you finally see Him in His splendor.

But what we see when it comes to the biblical model, and you see it in Leviticus 9, you see it in Ezra 9 and 10, you see it in the New Testament in Luke 5, and we see it here.

When individuals recognize or see who God truly is, the very first response always is fear.

Not so much fear of God, but rather fear when we recognize that He knows all the stuff that we hope nobody else ever finds out.

that He is aware of all of your shortcoming and failures.

And when you see God fully for who He is, your questions and your concerns about what worship is going to be change dramatically.

Because when you see God as He truly and fully is, the response is, I am lost.

I am undone.

I always find it a little bit humorous of these pastors that all get to see God all the time.

They're always seeing God.

And I always want to hear what their response is when they see God.

You know, in their mind, they see God and they kind of give each other a spiritual high five because they're such good buddies.

I don't see anywhere in the Bible where anyone who sees God doesn't immediately feel like their atoms and molecules are falling apart.

It's the response that they all... That's why fear not.

In fact, probably the better way to translate what the angels say when they say fear not is, please stop screaming.

Please stop screaming.

That's really what they're saying.

And they're just seeing an angelic being.

Those who have any sense of seeing God, and thank God, the idea is that when he does show himself, he always does so in a theophany, it seems, a burning bush or in a voice or in a whisper.

Because the full presence of God, what Isaiah sees here, gets them to the point where he says, I am undone.

like my muscles and my sinews and tendons are falling apart.

I'm melting in the presence of this being.

So our call to worship, when we are summoned by God, it happens very quickly in our service, where we move to a time of confession.

Because when we hear God's call, when we sing of His greatness, when we declare as we did today that He is holy, holy, holy,

The very next thing in real worship is confession, is recognizing that we are not what we want to be.

We are not what we should be.

That when it comes to what God requests and desires of us, we fall short.

You see...

It's simple.

God's presence reveals His glory and our guilt.

Without confession and cleansing, we cannot enjoy His fellowship or receive His Word rightly.

And it's not about, hear me, it's not about earning access, like we have to confess so that we then are then welcomed in.

No, it's the reality of knowing what we are, and yet God still calls us to meet with Him.

The fact that for many, you didn't spend at all this week thinking about your actions as they apply to what's best for the kingdom of God.

In most cases, you've been getting kids ready for school that starts this week.

You're maybe yourself getting ready for school, or you're getting geared up in the fall at work and what you need to do.

That most of our lives we spend living without thinking about God, but when we see God,

And when we're called to see Him corporately is together, when we gather for worship.

The first thing that we do is confess.

It's about acknowledging reality.

Before we can rejoice in His promises, I think we need to agree that His verdict, what He has declared about us, is correct, that we are sinners.

that we are undone.

You see, worship, what it should do, exposes us to the truth.

That's what Isaiah says in verse, "'And I said, woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.'"

I mean, we recognize that when Isaiah sees God's holiness, he doesn't sing louder, he doesn't raise his hands higher, he doesn't sway, but rather he falls apart.

Because when we see God for who He really is, we can no longer pretend about who we really are.

I mean, think about that.

When we see God for who He really is, we can no longer pretend about

about who we think we are.

It's great when we can compare ourselves to others.

I do it all the time.

And I can feel good about myself because I did this when they didn't do that, or I didn't do that when they did it.

There's a sense when we can look around and we can all see, wow, compared to others, we're pretty good.

But as we were talking today in our Sunday school class that Pastor Dennis was leading, the idea is our sin is actually a condition.

Our behavior is really our condition being lived out.

It's the result of this condition that we have.

And for us to come together weekly and regularly to be drawn into the presence of God and then to do serious self-reflection, to come and be exposed to the truth that all the things that we say we believe we don't always live by.

And all the things that we know that we should do, we don't always do.

And the things that we don't want to do, we end up doing.

The Apostle Paul addresses this.

It's a sense where we need to recognize who we are in light of who God is.

So the question then comes is, why should we confess?

In fact, it's interesting, the book of James in chapter 5, James encourages us to actually confess our sins to one another.

Try that out today.

Well, wait a second.

We all chuckle, myself, and you're all thinking, oh, no way I'm going to do that.

Well, that's a command in Scripture.

That's an indicative.

That's telling us that we are called to confess our sins to one another.

Now, of course, we know the old proverb that confession is good for the soul.

It's been around since the 17th century.

But the reality is there is scientific proof that in speaking aloud our failures and our shortcomings, particularly those who we have failed and been short with, is probably one of the healthiest things that we can do for ourselves.

This is secular, non-religious scientists saying confession is truly good for the soul.

something that God made us aware of in His Word thousands of years ago.

Hiding our failures, our sins, refusing to disclose our guilt not only burdens our spirit, it burdens our health.

In fact, there's a term for it.

It's called self-concealment, and it's linked to some of the highest anxiety, depression, loneliness, and even physical pain.

But confession

Therapeutic.

Confession brings healing.

Now, why should we confess?

Because God calls us to confess.

Does not confessing somehow make it that our sins are not forgiven?

I get that a lot.

That's why many of the Roman Catholic faith believe that if you ended your life, you go automatically to hell because you didn't have time to confess your sin.

And because you didn't confess your sin, you're then condemned for it.

I know a lot of you kind of have that out there.

You kind of have a little bit of that.

Like, if I don't confess my sin, let me tell you, when you receive Christ, all of your sin, past, present, and future, has been paid for.

The penalty of that sin, the condemnation that comes with that sin is no more.

In fact, there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

We believe that.

Now, granted, I'm going to, you know, people ask me, hey, what are you preaching on this Sunday?

I'm like, sin, and that I'm against it.

I am against it.

You should be against it.

Not because we somehow feel that we have to be completely obedient and do everything right so that God loves us or makes us His children.

No, we already are God's children.

But rather, it allows us to have that relationship that comes from
in which there is no guilt or sin or harm.

Think about if you're married, your own marriage.

I mean, just because you guys have an argument doesn't mean you're no longer married.

But let me tell you, those of you who are married know it's much better when there is no hard feelings, when there isn't something between the two of you, but rather when the relationship is whole.

And likewise, when we confess, when we come to worship, when we then are even declared completely free and forgiven, which we give you that assurance of pardon, the truth that what you have confessed, the fact that your relationship with God is intact and that you

are loved more than you could ever ask or imagine, and that your sin is no longer remembered.

In fact, God says He throws it into the sea of forgetfulness.

He sovereignly chooses to no longer hold us condemned for our sin, nor does He use it in His interaction with us.

He doesn't say, oh, I remember yesterday when you did that thing.

I can't follow through on what I was going to do because you messed up.

No, we are fully and completely forgiven.

forgiven.

So, we confess our sins.

God knows all of it.

It's for us to recognize and acknowledge and agree with Him, His understanding of who we are.

We're saying, you know what?

I'm undone.

I'm lost.

Not only am I full of unclean things, but I'm amongst people of unclean things.

But worship, when we come with the idea of confessing our sins, knowing He's faithful and just, He forgives us and cleanses us.

We're cleansed by His grace.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar, and he touched my mouth and said, behold, this has touched your lips.

Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.

Now think about this.

Isaiah doesn't cleanse himself.

We see nothing in this passage that Isaiah does something, all right?

There's no penance.

There's no work that he has to add to it.

And not only that, it's kind of bizarre, this action that's going is this seraphim flies over and with tongs takes a coal from the altar, which is where the sacrifice would have been taken place, where that would have been burnt as...

atonement for their sin, and it then is touched to his lips.

He doesn't even have to hold it at all.

It doesn't say that it grossly burns him.

He's not like, ow, that's hot.

No, this coal touches him, and he's then told, you're completely, fully, absolutely absolved and forgiven of your sin.

And he didn't do a thing.

And friends, that's the hardest part of this passage.

is for us to recognize that, because God has forgiven you of things that you have not forgiven yourself of, that you are holding a record of wrongs that God does not hold.

You think you need to do something in order to prove that you truly are repentant.

You think you should earn this somehow, and you know what?

Next time, Lord, I'm going to try harder next time, and I'm not going to do it.

Isaiah does absolutely nothing except believe

what the angel, the messenger said.

I'm no seraphim.

I don't have a bunch of wings.

I definitely don't have the blessing of being right in the presence of God and being overwhelmed by that holiness.

But I am a messenger.

That if you are truly in Christ and you have received him,

and are resting upon Him, meaning that you self describe and identify that Christ's death upon the cross is the death penalty that you deserved.

That your life and your actions are such that they deserve death.

That's hard for some of us.

We don't think we're all that bad.

But when we recognize and acknowledge

that it is Christ and His work and not ours.

Then I want to remind you to believe what Christ says, that if anyone is in Him, they're a new creation.

The old has gone, the new has come.

As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed your sin from you.

I've cast it in the sea of forgetfulness.

I remember it no more.

This should amaze us, one, because none of us can do it to anyone else who offends us.

We're so quick to hold that grudge, to withhold forgiveness, to maybe say, oh, I forgive, but I'm not going to forget.

And I think because of our actions and how we are not those who forgive well, we believe that correlates with how God treats us.

And that's not the case.

God completely, fully, absolutely has absolved you of all your sin.

He sees you as He sees Jesus.

He sees you as He sees Jesus.

Jesus.

And it's nothing that we do.

It's what God has done, what our Father has done for us through His Son, Jesus, who willingly took our place, who was that burning coal.

And when we understand what it is to receive this type of grace, so undeserving, so different than the grace that we don't extend to so many others,

It should move us to mission.

It should move us to live more intensely for the things of God, that we should desire to see His kingdom come and His will be done.

Isaiah sees this unbelievable experience and vision of who God is.

It shakes him to his very core.

He hears from God, you are absolved.

You are forgiven.

There is no condemnation.

And then God asks, who can I send to get this message out?

And Isaiah's response, and I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send?

and who will go for us?

Then I said, here I am, send me.

Confession doesn't end in guilt, it ends in mission.

We are called to confess not so that we leave feeling dirty, but rather that you leave feeling completely free and clean.

And as such, then knowing and recognizing this forgiveness,

compels us to share the message of the gospel, because it isn't something that we have done.

It's definitely not something that we deserve.

Think of John Newton, who wrote Amazing Grace.

Well, prior to that, he was a slave trader.

And after coming to faith in Christ, he was overwhelmed by the grace that had forgiven his wretched past.

He didn't stop at receiving forgiveness.

Now he spent the rest of his life serving as a pastor, writing hymns like Amazing Grace and advocating against the slave trade.

His forgiveness became the fuel for his mission.

How does your forgiveness, that you're fully, completely, absolutely, that if you go to God and say, God, remember yesterday when I talked to you about that thing?

And God figuratively says, no, I don't.

I don't remember it.

I see you as my son.

I see you as I see my only begotten son.

I see you as I see Jesus.

When we confess our sins, he's faithful.

He's just.

He forgives us, cleanses us, absolves us, and says, don't worry about it.

I've taken care of it.

Now, granted, He wants us to be against sin, as I said earlier, because there are consequences.

Yes, there might not be condemnation.

If you rob a bank, you can be forgiven of that.

But more than likely, you're going to spend some time in jail.

That's the consequence.

God isn't telling us to avoid this because somehow He doesn't want to forgive us, or He's incapable of forgiving, or somehow we have a limit of His grace.

No, He wants to prevent us from experiencing the consequences of
of these things that He knows will harm us.

That if we don't have our thought life in control, or our actions, or our temper, or the words that we speak, we're in real danger of harming ourselves and others.

And we should be more intense about saying, no, I want to be that that reflects God.

that shows to the world what it looks like to be forgiven.

And I want to share that with others.

Our forgiveness

should become the fuel for our mission.

As I said, yes, the Old Testament, I jumped into it a little bit.

At the cross, Jesus became our altar, which, by the way, we don't have an altar in our church.

People are like, say, come to the altar.

There is no altar.

We're not making a sacrifice.

Churches that believe that every time you celebrate the Lord's Supper that there is a sacrifice that is occurring, they have an altar.

We're not sacrificing anything.

We bring a sacrifice of praise,

but we're not sacrificing anything.

Here we are remembering.

Here we are communing.

Here we are engaging with the one who became and is that burning coal who gave himself up to the point of death so that we could be touched by him fully and completely forgiven.

So your takeaway, come honest.

When we give you that time to confess your sins privately, it's not time to check your email or look around.

It really is time for you to say, I am lost and I am undone.

And if you don't think that you're lost and undone, then you haven't seen God.

And that's why we call you into His presence.

Come honest, come dirty, come and be clean.

Confession in worship isn't a ritual.

It's an invitation to receive grace.

God who called you to worship is also the Savior who cleanses you in it.

So confess your sins, receive that absolution, and rise being sent out by Him because worship is

where your shame meets God's grace.

And you leave here unashamed, cleansed, and renewed.

You're called to confess.