Weekly Study of Sunday's Message
November 15, 2026 ***"Clean Slate: The Journey Towards Renewal" Absolution".***

I Intro.
We're moving through November, and this series pairs with our Advent series which will begin the Sunday after Thanksgiving. We hope you stay close through this season. There's a lot going on at NCC and you'll want to keep up with everything that's happening. Stay connected through our social media to keep up with everything that's going on. This is our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are fully committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family. If there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.
We are on a four week journey towards Advent, observing and practicing the four classic ordinances of many churches that prepare people seeking God to be with God. These are: **Examination. Confession. Absolution. Repentance.** These ordinances invite us to face something…in order to receive something. We're talking about the process, and the work of transformation.
"Clean Slate: The Journey Towards Renewal", will prepare us for Advent. Renewal is an intentional commitment to returning, being restored. Renewal is the process of finding the inner real you, removing all that's not you. I want you to deeply feel, and experience the freedom and Hope, Joy, Peace, Love that comes from practicing each of these ordinances.
This will be important over the next several weeks. Renewal prepares us for the work of Advent seeking: **Hope, Joy, Peace,** and **Love**. Creating a 'meeting place' to abide with God each Sunday. To restore and renew us like we were created to be. By helping us strip away all of the buildup that clings to us as we go through life.
The first week in our service on Examination we did the work of seeing where we were disconnected from God. And it's out of this place we found **HOPE**. Last week we practiced Confession and we felt the **PEACE** that comes from honest, sincere confession. Today we experience the **JOY** that comes from absolution.

III Sunday.
Think back to a time where either you, or someone you know, had to come face to face with something they had done…and they needed to be held accountable for it. It could be a real legal matter and you had to go to court. Or it was something you said or did, that required acknowledgement. *"Ooo…the problem is me"*. An admission or confession. *"I did that"*. When I was in High School, I was in an accident that was deemed my fault. I don't think it was. But I was given the choice of either going to court, paying a sizable fine. Or… go to 'traffic school'. Have you ever been to 'traffic school'? It's awful. But, once I completed the course, (it was 6 consecutive Saturdays), I was given credit for it. And my record was wiped clean. Afterwards it was as if I had never been in that

accident at all. What a feeling of relief. I was no longer under the curse of that ticket. It didn't affect my insurance, and I could feel the weight lifted off of me. If it's something we said or did, then it's working through the healing and restoration process of reconciling that relationship. *"I recognize what I did, and am willing to do what I need to do to restore our relationship"*. And that honest confession, that offering of forgiveness removed the stain of guilt, and began the healing process.
But it's this specific work of acknowledgement, honest confession working towards renewal and restoration, that is THE central truth that has to happen before we can get to today's ordinance. I talked with someone who is trying to rebuild their relationship with a family member. But many of the other family members aren't ready to forgive. And it's because the person responsible for the broken relationship isn't going through this process of examination, confession, to receive absolution.

Absolution is our ordinance we unpack and celebrate today. The real life results of examination and confession…done well…and sincerely. The lifting of the weight. The removal of the curse,and the consequences, of what was done.
Last week we transitioned from Examination to Confession. Examination is doing a thorough internal search to see where you're disconnected from God. Confession is when you say those specific things that created separation, (out loud). Trusting fully in God hearing your confession. And claiming his promise to forgive and cleanse.
Today we transition from Confession to Absolution. After the work of honest, heartfelt confession, there is an acceptance of forgiveness, and the pronouncement of absolution. You are declared forgiven. Clean. The prison door has been opened. You don't have to sit in that insurance office room for 3 hours every Saturday in traffic school to clear your name. The person who was hurt by your actions has accepted your honest confession, and is willing to work towards reconciliation. The official, formal declaration you are no longer seen, or identified, by anything you've done or said. You have been released. You have been 'absolved', made clean, from what you have done. And there is an actual physical and spiritual response to your heartfelt honest work. This ordinance is the movement and work towards JOY. And this JOY is restored. Or at least the beginning of a movement towards JOY.
Is born out of the hard work of confession that leads to actually being set free.

Today's scripture is fairly well known. It will be the foundation for our ordinance of absolution. While we read this passage I want us to frame it with the understanding of absolution being the act of 'setting us free'. So, we have to ask: **What does it mean to be set free?** And our answer to this will fill out our work of understanding and practicing the ordinance of absolution.
Psalm 51:7-12 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice.
Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt.
Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.
Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.
There is a direct pronouncement of joy from this work of absolution. It's requested at the beginning of the passage, then completed at the end of our passage. This is the natural progression of renewal from examination to confession which leads to absolution. That then leads to the fullness of JOY. This is the work of absolution.

The work of renewal, restoration from examination to confession to absolution is the result of very specific work. It requires our stepping into this process in active engagement. You're going to need to go back and refer to this passage, as I walk through the specific action words we find in the ordinance of absolution. The work of restoration and renewal.

Let's look at all the active words.
Purify- declared clean from the consequences of sin. Restoring access. It's the filtering of the impurities out of the drinking water we get from our lake. This action leads to health. Remember our bodies stores our choices. And purification removes the harmful effects of poor choices.
Wash- removes the film, can I say "ick", left behind by the sin. It's that shower after a hard day. There is that fresh, and new clean feeling afterwards. That often feels better than before you got dirty.
Give me back- I once had joy. I messed it up. And now I am seeking to feel that joy again. I didn't respect what I had, I didn't appreciate it, and I'm desiring it again. Not only is joy returned. But the desire to live in a way that continually produces joy is back.
Remove- to return to original condition. I accidentally got blood on a couch in our house. So, I've been dousing it in hydrogen peroxide to get the stain out. I want it to be like it was before.
Create- this is to bring order out of chaos. Just like the story of creation in Genesis. I want us to hold onto the image of God hovering over the chaotic mess, waiting to breathe life and order into our life.
Renew- to return to your first love. This is the letter to the church at Ephesus in Revelation. I want to love like I did before. This is just the drift away, and complacency we talked about with examination.
Don't banish, don't take- our relationship is important and essential. I realize it now. I have done a couple of remarriage ceremonies where the couple had gotten married years before, divorced, and then wanted to get remarried. They realized their part in the separation, and promised again to do the work to make this relationship healthy.
Restore- this is the core of this series. I've drifted, gotten off course, am lost, just wandering. And I want to get back to the beginning. I want to return to the path I originally chose.

All of these paint a picture of the real, deep soul, work of examination and confession that will lead to absolution. You've taken care of the ticket. You've made the honest move to acknowledge, admit, and amend your actions or words. People close to you have accepted your confession, and commit to working towards absolution with you. Just know God does this cleansing, purifying act of absolution instantly. However, it often takes a while for us to see, feel, and receive it in our everyday relationships. But it's still there. All these words are the work of being forgiven, cleansed, absolved completely of what we confessed last week. And if you weren't here to do the work of confession. You've got some work to do. You may want to do some of that work today.
The final line of this passage: ***"Make me willing to obey you"*** is how we're going to finish our series next week.

IV Challenge.
A huge essential part of our relationships with others in our life is doing this work of examination and confession. Absolution is not the same as reconciliation or restoration. You can be absolved of your sins, and still have to do some serious, intentional, difficult work of rebuilding those relationships. But with God. (Don't we love that!) After examination and confession, that's done honestly and sincerely, absolution is instant and unconditional. This is what makes God…God.

Absolution comes with a promise too. God wants us to be a part of his work. And our work of examination and confession that leads to absolution from God, comes with God's desire to empower us to be a part of his work. Read the promise Jesus made to Peter, his disciple, when Peter confessed he was convinced that Jesus was; *"The Messiah, the son of the living God."* In this work of restoring and renewing your relationship with God, and being cleansed there is this empowerment that we receive from God. Read this framed with context and a spiritual kingdom understanding.
Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven."
These keys are NOT the keys of power and control. It's not the boss is leaving, and you can do whatever you want. You'll be right back at the beginning needing examination and confession. This is what we're given when we can do the work of renewal and restoration that scrapes off all the world, and strips us down to just being a child of God. The keys of the Kingdom of Heaven is in being a confessional church, receiving absolution, (forgiveness and cleansing from God), we are now empowered to live fully into this work of building the kingdom. But before we can be absolved, receive the pronouncement of forgiveness, receive the keys. We have to align our hearts again.

It's here that we sang a song and then began the meditation that led into us leaving.
Meditation. Reread and review the action words from Psalm 51. Think on these active works of absolution. **Purify- Wash- Give me back- Remove- Create- Renew- Don't banish- Don't take- Restore.** Say them to yourself, hold them close, and then let the Spirit just wash over you.
Now hear this declared over you.
"Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins."

It was at this place that our receiving the gift of absolution was symbolized with us returning to the stage, picking up a stone of sin we confessed over last week, carrying it out of the sanctuary, placing it in a basket, and receiving trickling of water over our hand as a sign of being cleansed. You don't have to do this yourself. But know that simply working the ordinances of examination and confession with God leads to absolution. You are declared clean. And it's in this place you experience the JOY that comes from knowing you've been forgiven by God. Live fully into that pronouncement.
Next week we'll finish with the work of repentance. We hope you join us.