

In the name of Jesus, who shows us great love by thoroughly removing our sins.

In these 11:00 midweek Lenten sermons this year we've been attempting to describe the dimensions of God's love.

- That is to say, we've been considering specific ways that God shows us that His love for us, in Christ, is enormous.

Last week we talked about how the forgiveness of sins is the greatest gift we could receive, and how God displays His rich love by bringing it to us in so many ways.

- This week we will take a fast and flying tour of the many ways that the Bible describes what God does with our sins.
- Last week, He forgives our sins; this week how He gets rid of them.
- And when we're done, I hope you will again be encouraged and assured and grateful for just how abounding God is in love, just how rich He is in mercy.

The different ways God gets rid of our sins, deals with our sins, what can we compare it to?

- There once was a man whose backyard was being churned up and ruined by moles.
- Their raised tunnels were everywhere and their little raised piles of dirt dotted the yard.

And so he went to war. He was determined to rid the yard of moles.

- He placed rodent poison in their tunnels.
- He set up menacing looking traps with a trip lever and sharp metal spikes.
- He tried flooding them out of their tunnels with a water hose and then whacking them, when they emerged, with a shovel.
- He tried gassing them out of their tunnels by hooking up a hose to the exhaust pipe of his car.

He even read somewhere that Juicy Fruit gum would kill moles, so he put some of that down there.

- He was determined to kill or banish those moles, so determined that he went about it about in every way conceivable.

Kind of like our God, in His great love for us, gets rid of the guilt of our sin, in just about every conceivable way.....as we'll talk about in a moment.

- For the record, God is more successful with our sin than this man is in his crusade against the moles.
- And for the record, the Juicy Fruit gum doesn't do much of anything.

But our need to be rid of our sin before God.....it really can't be compared to the nuisance of some burrowing rodents in a backyard.

- To what can we compare it?
- The frantic need to be rid of a cancer growing inside of us? That's closer.
- The need to do something about a huge asteroid rushing straight toward the earth on its way to obliterate us? Yeah, that's closer.
- But finally, there is nothing that can really compare with the need to have our sin and our guilt before God dealt with and removed.
- And there is also nothing that we can compare with the joy and freedom and blessing and hope that comes when, through Jesus Christ, God does just that.....
- Grants us full pardon and forgiveness.

Our sermon text today is our Old Testament Scripture reading read to you a few minutes ago from the Book of Micah, chapter 7.

- The Book of Micah is not all sunshine and roses.
- God sent the prophet Micah to rebuke His people for their injustices and their unbelief.
- The rich were oppressing the poor.
- The political rulers and the religious leaders had become corrupt and greedy.

The people had turned aside to false gods and false hopes.

- Micah warned God's people that terrible judgment was coming and coming it did.
- During Micah's lifetime, the northern kingdom of Israel was wiped out by foreign invaders, and the southern kingdom of Judah nearly was also.

Yet interspersed between Micah's strong warnings and threats are repeated announcements of hope.

- I had mentioned this message is all about the many ways God gets rid of our sins.
- From our Old Testament reading we are given 2 of the ways God gets rid of our sin.

Here is the first one described to us.

- Micah says God will grasp hold of our sins, and throw them to the ground; and He will tread them down under His feet.
- He will take their enormous sins, and He will trample them into nothingness under His enormous God-sized feet.
- Micah says, "He will tread our iniquities under foot.

And isn't that very good news?

- God has trounced and trampled upon and danced upon and stomped into nothing, every shred of your sin and guilt.

I mentioned 2 ways Micah gave to us. Micah isn't done yet. We've only talked so far of the first one.

- Micah gives to us another totally different and equally wonderful description of what God does with our sin in Christ.

Micah says God has taken your sin from you, and He has cast it, thrown it way out into the ocean.....

- So that our sins have sunk down into the depths, never to be mentioned or heard of or noticed again.
- Never to bother you again, never to separate you again from your God and from His enormous love.
- More wonderful words of comfort, hope, and strength.

And our passage from Micah is just a taste, just an appetizer of the rich feast of ways that the Bible describes for us and assures us that God has thoroughly dealt with our sins.

- Isaiah tells us that Christ has borne them. Jesus has carried them.
- They were too heavy for us, and so God has lifted them off us, and placed them on Christ.

Jesus is the sacrificial lamb.

- Jesus is like the Old Testament scapegoat.
- Once a year the high priest would confess his sins and the sins of the whole people of God while laying his hands on the head of the goat.....
- And the goat would then be sent off into the wilderness, carrying with him, far, far away, the sins of the people.
- It was a picture of the way that God would deal with our sins, of how God now has dealt with our sins, in Jesus.

The apostle Paul gives us more insight with what he says in the Book of Colossians.

- He says God has taken our sins, and He has nailed them to the cross.

And I guess to that we could add that God has buried our sins in the tomb of Christ.....

- And that when Jesus rose victorious, our sins did not rise with Him, but remained buried in the tomb forever.

Psalm 103 gives us another way sin is removed.

- It says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far does God remove our transgressions from us.”

As far as the east is from the west!

- If you go to Google Maps and check the distance between St Louis and Kansas City, it is 248 miles.
- If you check the distance between Pittsburgh and Portland it’s 2,571 miles.
- But if you ask Google how far the east is from the west....well, it can’t answer that for you.
- In fact, if you Google it, it will just take you to discussions of this Psalm verse.

Children of God, through the saving work of Jesus Christ, God has removed your sins far, far, far, from you.

- As far as the east is from the west.

The Bible also gives us a wonderful picture of our sins being covered up, clothed over.

- Galatians chapter 3 verse 27 says that we sinners have been clothed with Christ, so that your sinful garments have been covered over, and can no longer be seen.
- Isaiah chapter 61 verse 10 says that God has decked sinners in a robe of righteousness
- Jesus’ death for you is an atoning sacrifice, and the Biblical term “atonement” also has the sense of “covering over.”

The Bible also talks of how God has washed us clean.

- He has made your life clean before Him, your heart is pure in His eyes, and your praises are acceptable to Him.
- Acts chapter 22 verse 16 says that God has washed away your sins.
- Zephaniah chapter 3 verse 9 says that God promises that in the day of the Messiah, He will change the speech of the people to a purified speech.
- Ephesians chapter 5 verses 25 to 27 says that Christ has sanctified and cleansed the church by the washing of water with the word, so that the church may be presented to Him in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that the church might be holy and without blemish.
- And that is how God will see you in the great judgment.

In other passages the Bible says that God, in mercy, will refine His people.

- Like gold or other precious metals that are corrupted with impurities.

- God’s forgiveness is like a fire which burns away all that is worthless and foul—our sins—and leaves something golden and precious to God in its place.

The Scripture says that God “blots out” our sins.

- In His great mercy, many Bible passages say that God assures us that for Jesus’ sake He has taken a pen in hand and lots of ink and He has just blotted out all record, all mention of our sins from His books.
- Do you remember our responsive reading of Psalm 51 earlier?
- In verse one, I said, “according to Your steadfast love”.....and you continued on, in confidence with King David, “according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.”

And God not only blots out your sins in his books, God blots out your sins in His divine mind.

- Jeremiah foretells with joy the day when God, having sent the Messiah, will forgive the people’s iniquity and will remember their sins no more. Jeremiah chapter 31 verse 34.
- God who sees all and knows all, who searches the depths of your heart, who knows the ancient past and who knows already the things to come.....
- Our all-knowing God, for Jesus’ sake and in enormous love and mercy, has chosen to FORGET your sins.

That’s another way the Bible talks about how God forgives, and its one of the best.

- He truly forgives and forgets!
- Because of Jesus, God will never mention your sins again, because He has already forgotten them.

And finally, the Bible says that God speaks your sins away.

- Because of Jesus’ saving work for you, God looks at you and declares, “You are righteous, you are without sin.”
- And if God says, “You are righteous and innocent”.....then you are righteous and innocent and without sin in His sight.
- With His mighty word, He speaks your sins away.

The Holy God.....and your great offense and sin.

- What will happen when one encounters the other?

Don’t picture God simply sitting perfectly still as a judge on his bench, whom you must stand trembling before in the judgment.....as He sits and looks on and perhaps does you the favor of not damming you.

- The Bible paints for us a much different picture.
- Our God abounds in love and mercy.
- God doesn't sit still at all, but is actively at work for your good.

He has energetically dealt with your sins in Jesus Christ.

- And if God has borne your sins.....and carried them off.
- And nailed them to the cross....and buried them in Christ's tomb.
- And trampled them underfoot, and hurled them into the ocean.
- And removed them from you as far as the east is from the west.
- And covered them over, and clothed them with righteousness.....
- And washed them away, and purified and refined them.....
- And blotted them out from his book and forgotten them from His mind.....
- And declared them gone.....

Then you can be very, very sure, dear friends, that your sins are gone.

- Your sins that separated you from your God, which stood between you and your God.....
- And between you and joy in God's presence forever.....THEY ARE GONE.

And what remains between you and God is the enormous love, in Christ Jesus, forever.

- Amen.

(Please remain seated) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Similar to last week we will now sing, and continue to learn the beautiful hymn that speaks so well to God's love and is the basis for our Lenten theme, "O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High. It can be found on page number 544 in your hymnal.

We now continue with our prayers as read responsively on page 265 in your hymnal. Our prayer response as printed in your bulletin will be, "Lord have mercy." (MOVE TO ALTAR)