

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity, October 3, 2021**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 358, 237:1, 318, 320, 321.

Lessons: Ezekiel 18:4-24, 2 Corinthians 7:8-11, John 8:31-47.

Sermon Text: Ezekiel 18:25-32.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Did you come from a good family of pretty decent people? Weren't your parents and even grandparents pretty good people too? They probably went to church and didn't commit any crimes worthy of capital punishment. So will that get you into heaven? Certainly not. That won't save you and get you into heaven. No one else's faith will save you.

Chapter 18 of Ezekiel, which contains our Old Testament lesson and our sermon text, makes it very clear that no one can be saved by the faith of anyone else. We read: ***"The soul who sins is the one who will die."*** Ezekiel 18:4 (NIV) That is a sad, unfortunate truth. As much as we might want someone else to go to heaven, our faith in Jesus Christ will not save anyone else.

But our faith can show others how important Jesus Christ is to us and show fruits of faith and that can help teach someone else about Jesus Christ and

**REPENTANCE**

- 1. What is true repentance?**
- 2. Why it is necessary?**
- 3. What are the blessings and fruits of repentance?**

What is repentance? Scripture uses that very word more than 100 times. The specific New Testament Greek word translated 'repentance' means a change of heart and mind.

Scripture uses the idea of repentance in both a broad sense and in a narrow sense. Many of you learned and perhaps memorized the definition of repentance in the narrow sense to mean faith in the forgiveness of sins. In a broad sense it includes contrition, plus repentance in the narrow sense, and then bringing forth fruits of contrition and repentance. Do you remember the words you learned about the meaning or significance of your baptism? Your baptism *"means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever."*

Contrition, meaning sincere, heart-felt sorrow over our sins, is included in the broad sense of repentance. Any sorrow we have over our sins must be genuine, a Godly repentance, and not just something for show. Good works, the fruit of repentance, are bound to follow.

***"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."*** 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NIV) A sincere sorrow over my sins means a change of mind and heart. Then the Gospel assures me that for Christ's sake, my sins are forgiven. The Gospel comforts the conscience and delivers from terrors of the punishment that the Law shows us we deserve.

So look at the steps or phases or parts of repentance in the broad sense. First, you are truly sorry for your sins. You have learned about your sins from the Law of God. Second, you have faith in the forgiveness of sins. You have learned about that from the Gospel. Third, then you want to, you strive to, you work to bring forth fruits of contrition and repentance. Those fruits are sanctification. Those fruits show a change in your life which shows the change in your heart and mind.

Last Sunday you heard about sanctification. Sanctification refers to the fruits of contrition and repentance. Reread Romans chapter 12 to review that.

Our Old Testament lesson gives examples of repentance and its opposite – impenitence. You first heard about a person who ***“is a righteous man who does what is just and right. .... [God says] He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign LORD.”*** Ezekiel 18:5, 9 (NIV) Then you heard about his violent son who is extremely wicked and impenitent. God says ***“Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he will surely be put to death and his blood will be on his own head.”*** V. 13. Then the wicked man’s son ***“who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things ....: He keeps [God’s] laws and ... decrees. He will not die for his father’s sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people.”*** 14, 17, 18. ***“The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him. But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.”*** V 20, 21.

Repentance is something that takes place in the heart. It is a change of heart, a change of mind. It is more than just an outward confession in words. Ezekiel describes repentance as the man turning away from all the sins he has committed.

Sorrow over sins is the response and reaction to the Law. Faith in the forgiveness of sins is the response and reaction of the heart to the voice of the Gospel. Without hearing and learning the Law of God, there can be no repentance.

It is only in Christians that we find Godly sorrow. It is really part of their daily sanctification. Their sanctification is not motivated by fear of punishment, but rather by their love of God. They are sorry for having offended God with their sins. Godly sorrow is pleasing to God, draws us closer to him and is a powerful means in suppressing the Old Adam. With David in Psalm 38, we daily admit: ***“I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.”*** Psalm 38:18 (NIV)

Without Godly repentance you cannot receive the forgiveness of sins. Without Godly repentance you cannot enter heaven.

But we must be careful not to make this a work, something we do to earn God’s favor.

Just as our faith cannot save someone else, so no one can blame anyone else for their eternal damnation. That is clear from our Old Testament lesson.

When John the Baptist preached law and repentance and pointed the way to Jesus Christ, he told people: ***“Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.”*** Luke 3:8 (NIV) Like them, we cannot point to our parents or ancestors and think we will be saved because they believed in God. The law shows us our sin and leads us to repentance. Paul is especially clear in Romans: ***“Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”*** Romans 3:20 (NIV)

God’s grace in Christ gives us the reason and the power to fight our sinful flesh. We are eager to turn away from sin and turn toward righteousness. Peter reminds us: ***“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*** 2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

Scripture gives us many examples of how the teaching and preaching of the Word of God leads to Godly repentance. From the history of Pentecost we read ***“When the people heard [Peter’s sermon about Jesus Christ and how they had crucified him] they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.’”*** Acts 2:37-38 (NIV)

In the next chapter of Acts, Peter tells Jews again ***“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing***

*may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus.”* Acts 3:17-20 (NIV)

Later in Acts, Paul tells us: *“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.”* Acts 20:21 (NIV) When Paul reviews his personal history he tells us *“First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.”* Acts 26:20 (NIV)

Paul also gives this stern warning in Romans: *“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?”* Romans 2:4 (NIV)

We recognize that life is a spiritual struggle, because Satan and all his allies are constantly attacking us. It is a struggle for which we need to be constantly on guard and equipped with God's powerful weapons.

The Holy Spirit leads us to repent regularly of our sins and then rejoice in the good news of forgiveness. When Scripture tells us *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,”* Acts 3:19 (NIV) we seek help from God. God offers this help in the letter to the Ephesians: *“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”* Ephesians 6:13-16 (NIV)

We can have confidence in God's Words from John: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* 1 John 1:9 (NIV)

May we daily remember the meaning of our baptism, and through contrition and repentance daily receive the refreshing, holy gift of God, the forgiveness of our sins. Amen.