

THE DEAREST PLACE ON EARTH (21)

A Repentant Community

A. Introduction

1. The local church is a community of God's people.

2. What kind of community should we be?

When people look at this local church what should they see?

3. They should see a repentant community.

"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." (Martin Luther)

B. What repentance is NOT

1. Repentance is NOT being sorry for sin.

Being remorseful is part of repentance, but it is possible to be sorry for sin and not repent.

"When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself." (Matthew 27:3-5)

"The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her." (Mark 6:26)

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

2. Repentance is NOT promising to stop sinning.

Repentance is more than words – it involves a change of life.

"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)

"What should we do then?" the crowd asked. John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." (Luke 3:10-11)

3. Repentance is NOT being afraid because of your sin.

You can be afraid of your sin but that doesn't mean you have repented.

"As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." (Acts 24:25)

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." (James 2:19)

4. Repentance is NOT merely reforming your life.

Changing your conduct without a change of heart is not repentance.

5. Repentance is NOT giving up some sins.

You might give up some sins because of some benefit to you.

C. What repentance is

1. Thomas Watson in a short treatise on repentance wrote that it is made up of six special ingredients:

Seeing – *"sin must first be seen before it can be wept for"*.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!' (Luke 15:17)

Sorrowing – *"Godly sorrow, however, is chiefly for the trespass against God, so that even if there were no conscience to smite, no devil to accuse, no hell to punish, yet the soul would still be grieved because of the prejudice done to God. Godly sorrow shows itself to be ingenuous because when a Christian knows that he is out of the gun-shot of hell and shall never be damned, yet still he grieves for sinning against that free grace which has pardoned him"*.

"I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin." (Psalm 38:18)

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Confessing – *"A true convert acknowledges his particular sins"*.

"David was conscience-stricken after he had counted the fighting men, and he said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. Now, O LORD, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing." (2 Samuel 24:10)

"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)

Shame – *"When the heart has been made black with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing"*.

"Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their sins. Let them consider the plan, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations." (Ezekiel 43:10-11)

"O my God, I am too ashamed and disgraced to lift up my face to you, my God, because our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens." (Ezra 9:6)

Hatred – *"Christ is never loved till sin be loathed. Heaven is never longed for till sin be loathed"*.

"Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices." (Ezekiel 36:31)

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (Romans 7:15)

Turning – *"A true turning from sin is a divorcing it, so as never to come near it any more... This resolution must be built upon the strength of Christ more than our own"*.

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!' (Ezekiel 14:6)

"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)

2. Repentance *"is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed."*

Repentance is a genuine change of mind that leads to a change of behaviour resulting in a changed life.

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." (Matthew 3:7-8)

Repentance is urgent.

"The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." (Matthew 3:10)

D. Why should we be a repentant community?

1. Because repentance is vital for our salvation.

"Christ has purchased in his blood that repenting sinners shall be saved." (Thomas Watson)

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." When the people heard this, 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. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38)

2. Because we fail to be the community that God wants us to be.

There are times when we are not humbled by God's greatness and majesty.

There are times when we are not amazed by what Christ has done for us.

There are times when we are bored by God's Word.

There are times when we fail to build one another up and encourage one another to keep trusting in Jesus.

There are times when we can't be bothered to pray together.

There are times when we aren't dependent upon God.

There are times when we doubt that God hears and answers our prayers.

There are times when we aren't interested in growing in our knowledge of Christ.

There are times when we aren't moved by the plight of many people in Banstead and around the world who have yet to put their trust in Jesus.

There are times when we are ashamed of the gospel.

There are times when we are too focused on ourselves and forget we are part of a worldwide church and forget that we are called to make disciples of all nations.

There are times when we are lazy or lacklustre in our service.

There are times when we serve for our own glory and not God's.

There are times when we are stingy and lack generosity or are not particularly cheerful when we give.

There are times when we are selfish and refuse to help those in need.

There are times when we don't love one another.

There are times when our actions are divisive rather than uniting.

There are times when we lack patience.

There are times when we are slow to forgive others who wrong us.

There are times when we love the world.

There are times when we are no different in our attitudes and actions from the world.

There are times when we are not ruthless in putting to death sin.

There are times when we are blind to our failings and our need for forgiveness.

There are times when people look at this local church and don't see what Christ is like.

3. Because repentance is the way we progress in becoming the community God wants us to be.

"Martin Luther opened the Reformation by nailing 'The Ninety- Five Theses' to the door of the Wittenberg Cathedral. The very first of the theses was: 'Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ...willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.' On the surface this looks a little bleak! Luther seems to be saying Christians will never be making much progress. But of course that wasn't Luther's point at all. He was saying that repentance is the way we make progress in the Christian life. Indeed, pervasive, all-of-life repentance is the best sign that we are growing deeply and rapidly into the character of Jesus." (Tim Keller)