

The First Sunday in Lent ~ Sunday, February 22, 2026

“The Heart God Desires ~ A Broken & Contrite Heart”

Psalm 51 // 2 Samuel 12:1-15 // Luke 18:9-14

“I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and alms-giving; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word.” (Ash Wednesday liturgy, BCP 2019)

The weeks leading up to Holy Week and Easter have been understood not as a time of spiritual _____, but as a time of _____.

“Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.” (Joel 2:12-13)

During the forty days of Lent we’re invited to stop, to step out of the noise and busyness of everyday life, and to look _____—to listen more attentively, and to examine in our _____, what often goes unexamined. In doing this, we’re reminded that faith isn’t just about outward actions, but about inward _____. It’s not just about what we do, but who we are becoming.

This series isn’t a checklist for self-improvement, but an invitation to _____.

Before there can be renewal, there must be _____; before there can be resurrection, there must be _____.

The heart God desires isn’t impressive, it’s _____. It isn’t flawless, it’s _____; not proud, but broken.

Lent isn’t about improving ourselves for God; it’s about allowing God to _____ our hearts. It isn’t about fixing ourselves, it’s about asking God to _____ in us a clean heart.

Lesson #1. _____.
It’s important to understand that David’s fall didn’t happen in a _____, nor did it begin with Bathsheba. It began earlier, and more _____.

“In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.” (2 Samuel 11:1)

David’s example shows that sin rarely explodes out of nowhere. It drifts,

_____, whispers, and once it’s taken root, it prefers _____.

The sin that should’ve shattered him was _____ into the routine of everyday life. What had once been shocking settled into the background of his reign. This shows us that sin, when unconfessed, has a remarkable ability to _____ itself.

“But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent Nathan to David.” (2 Samuel 12:1)

This sentence alone is _____. God doesn’t send Nathan to destroy David, He sends Nathan to _____ him.

The most dangerous thing about David’s sin wasn’t simply that he committed it. It was that he’d grown _____ carrying it; he’d learned to live with what should’ve _____ him.

We all have a remarkable ability to _____ ourselves—I know I do. To rename our sins, to _____ what God calls serious, and to compare ourselves upward.

Regardless of how it happens, confrontation is always _____, but it’s _____.

“I have sinned against the Lord.” (2 Samuel 12:13)

This is the beginning of a broken and contrite heart, the moment when defensiveness is _____, and we stop _____ with God.

Where have I grown comfortable with what should trouble me?

Where have I numbed myself?

Where have I explained away what Scripture calls sin?

“...for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.” (Hebrews 12:6)

A broken and contrite heart begins when we stop protecting ourselves and allow the _____ in. And that light, though uncomfortable at first, isn’t condemnation for those who belong to Christ. It’s _____—invitation to truth, freedom, and return because

Lesson #2. _____.

After he’s confronted with the truth about himself, David collapses inwardly. The _____ he’d held for so long failed all at once.

God's forgiveness wouldn't erase the damage, and the _____ of David's actions would be devastating.

If 2 Samuel 12 is the _____, Psalm 51 is the _____. And what strikes me immediately is the absence of _____.

"Have mercy on me, O God...Against you, you only, have I sinned...Create in me a clean heart." (Psalm 51:1ff)

David doesn't appeal to justice, but to God's _____-to His mercy.

This is always the first move of repentance, and it only comes when explanations and excuses run out. There's a _____ to true repentance; it names reality without _____ it.

"For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it...The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:16-17)

God isn't looking for religious _____ to offset moral _____. Nor is He impressed by outward activity offered in place of inward _____.

A broken heart isn't self-hatred or wallowing in _____; it's truth in the presence of mercy, and the surrender of _____. Nor is it primarily about _____. Regret focuses on _____, repentance focuses on the _____.

God doesn't despise this kind of heart. He doesn't recoil from it. He doesn't shame it. He doesn't crush it further. He _____ it.

"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)

This is why Lent is such a gift. It gives us space to stop _____. In our ordinary routines, we can _____ into subtle, spiritual image management

What's underneath? Where has pride taken root?

Where has resentment hardened?

Where has compromise grown comfortable?

David doesn't promise better _____ or says, "I will fix my heart." He asks for a new heart—he says, "create in me," because he knows transformation is all _____ work.

Lesson #3. _____.

"...to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt." (Luke 18:9)

The Pharisee stands _____ and prays about himself in verse 11: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men..."

He then goes on to list his spiritual _____, to measure himself upward, and to reassure himself of his _____ standing.

Meanwhile, the tax collector stands at a _____. He won't even lift his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beats his breast and says in verse 13, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

It's the tax collector who goes home _____, not the impressive one. Not the articulate one. Not the one with religious credentials, but the _____ one.

Psalm 51 isn't the prayer of a Pharisee; it's the prayer of a man standing at a distance, beating his breast, and pleading for _____. The difference between David's restoration and the Pharisee's rejection isn't the size of their sin; it's the _____ of their heart. One protects his _____, the other confesses his _____.

When confronted, do you become a Pharisee or a tax collector?

Do you have a heart that performs or a heart that pleads?

When Scripture exposes something uncomfortable, do you: Explain it? Soften it? Compare yourself to someone worse?

Or do you whisper, "Lord, that's me. Be merciful."

"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:14)

God doesn't justify the _____; He justifies the _____.

David was restored to fellowship with God because he didn't cling to _____. The Pharisee left the temple _____ because he couldn't see his need.

Lent isn't about convincing ourselves that we're terrible people; it's about telling the truth about where we need _____. And mercy is _____-if we come like the tax collector, if we pray like David, if we surrender like the humbled king



Mercy isn't God pretending sin doesn't _____. Mercy is God refusing to let sin have the _____ word.