

Living Lent | Friday, February 16

Marcia Cochran

Squirmy Psalm

Today's Reading: Psalm 51:1-10

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:1-10

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

This is a psalm that is usually read at the beginning of the season of Lent, often on Ash Wednesday. It's what I call a "squirmy psalm" – one of those psalms that hits close to home and makes me uncomfortable. In fact, it ought to make everybody squirm unless you think you are absolutely sinless!

Many scholars believe that it was written by King David who wrote this after the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and his

murder of her husband, Uriah. Nathan's job was basically to keep David honest. The confrontation was about David's need to take a look in the mirror and look at himself and his life and actions honestly.

David has hit rock bottom and out of a broken spirit, he confesses and accepts his responsibility for his sins. The phrase, "bones that you have crushed", refers to how his sin has already brought consequences – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In fact, his whole being feels broken.

David was truly sorry for his sins

and he knew that his actions had hurt many people. He desperately needed God's mercy, to be forgiven. He petitions God to remove his guilt and renew him inwardly. And he receives that mercy, forgiveness, and love from God. David has been cleansed.

Lent is a season of penitence and preparation. It's a good time for all of us to look honestly in the mirror and examine our lives and souls.

Do you feel that you could never come close to God because you have done something terrible? There's no doubt that all sin hurts us and others, but ultimately it offends God because sin in any form is a rebellion against God.

What should give us great comfort is that knowing no sin is too great to be forgiven by God! Like David, though, when we are feeling that crushing weight of sin and guilt that feels like broken bones, we can run to God and cry out to Him in repentance. And we can do so in complete confidence, knowing that our loving, merciful God will forgive us and cleanse us from within. Then our hearts and spirits are clear for new thoughts and desires.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ:

With a rich history that dates back to the mid-1950s, after Jekyll Island had been purchased by the state of Georgia. The island was opened to the public and people began to attend services at Faith Chapel. Marcia Cochran is the Head Pastor of Jekyll United Methodist Church on Jekyll Island on Georgia's southern coast.