

As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins.

To whom is this word spoken? To the woman who has just had an abortion.
 To the teenager who the night before tried drugs for the first time. Or got
 drunk for the twentieth time. ^{To the man who is only here for the wife and the kids.} Who hears this word of God? The man who is
 doing half a job at work, cheating his boss day after day through his laziness.
The parent who doesn't have the energy to listen to her children anymore.
 The retired person who has not only retired from work but who has ~~xxx~~ retired
 from caring what happens to the world or the church. Whose slate is wiped
clean when Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven through me?" ~~xxxxxxx~~
~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~
~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~
 The woman who only a moment before was lifting herself up
 by mentally putting her neighbor down for wearing a dress like that, The man
~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~
 having lustful thoughts about the woman wearing the dress,
 the woman wearing the dress and frankly feeling superior to that woman wearing
 those rags.

As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

This word of forgiveness is like a blanket that gets thrown over the whole mess. The entire forgiveness of all your sins, I say. But are you sorry? Are there any tears in your eyes and in your hearts over what you ~~xxx~~ have done? Is your devotion to your Lord like ~~xx~~ the dew that goes early away? I'll sin, God will take care of it. That's that. After forgiveness has been pronounced has anything been changed? Or are the words that are spoken here like a TV that has been left on ~~x~~ ~~in~~ the background of your life? Yes, this word ~~is~~ the entire forgiveness of all your sins is like a blanket throwg over the whole mess, underneath the mess is still there. Doesn't this trouble you? It troubles me~~x~~. This place is full of sinners.

Often not particularly repentent sinners. Maybe the Kahi Pharisees were right.

Some men brought to Jesus a paralytic paralyzed man: Jesus saw the faith of those who brought him and said to the paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven. There had been no repentence, no sign that he would amend his life, Like a blanket Jesus draped him with forgiveness.

Those standing by called it blaspheme.

A bit later Jesus saw a tax collector and invited him to follow. This man had not promised to stop cheating and stealing. He made no guaranées that he would no longer oppress the poor, or collect ~~fraxthe~~ taxes on behalf of his peoples enemy. Jesus simply called and he followed.

And then at a meal many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples, like coming here to the altar. The ~~Aka~~ Pharisees objected. Now their objection could not have been that these people had sinned, for the Lord had through the prophets made it clear that he was always ready to recieve penitent sinners. Through ~~Jeremiah~~ ~~he~~ ~~had~~ ~~promised~~ ~~that~~ ~~if~~ ~~you~~ ~~truly~~ ~~amend~~ ~~your~~ ~~ways~~ ~~and~~ ~~your~~ ~~doings~~ ~~will~~ ~~I~~ ~~let~~ ~~you~~ ~~eat~~ ~~justice~~ ~~and~~ ~~with~~ ~~another~~ ~~if~~ ~~your~~ But he had also made it clear that empty words of repentence meant nothing, Through Jeremiah he had spoken, "Behold you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, committ adultery, swear falsely, burn insence to BAAL, and go after other gods and then come and stand before me in this house which is called by my name and say, we are delivered, only to go on doing these abominations? Only if you truly amend a your ~~wax~~ ways and your doings will I let you ~~eat~~ dwell in this place." Yes, God would ~~be~~ forgive sinners, but only the truly penitent, those who would turn from their sins.

But here was Jesus having a grand party with sinners and tax collectors who had shown no signs of repentence. Here is Jesus calling by his own name sharing his own body and blood with you and I who continually stumble and sin and disgrace his name. Here is Jesus giving his name and his authority to the words he instructs me to speak, I declare to you the entire forgivness of all

your sins.

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous but sinners.

In Jesus God is doing a new thing. Calling sinners, forgiving sinners. Not our penitence, nor our amending our lives but Jesus death on the cross will be the only condition of that forgiveness. As the old hymn says, *My pain - disease is chronic & fatal - always need physician* could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no respite know, *save not the life of - would not the life of - would not the life of* all for sin could not atone, thou must save and thou alone. Christ died for you and because of him you are covered with the blanket of forgiveness. *→ for what is not desirable - must be forgiven*

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

The Pharisees in every age object to that. For it seems to them that if God is so very gracious, so forgiving, that the world will literally go to hell. By eating with unrepentant taxcollectors and sinners, is Jesus not encouraging them. *→ advice → Don't you must proceed the law - all people if they don't obey it - they're not* By forgiving everyone all their sins, will not that lead to greater lawlessness?

Does believing that Jesus forgives you all your sins lead you to greater sinning, or greater service? Forget about what it might be like for your neighbors, has Jesus been too generous with his forgiveness with you? Have you experienced being washed clean too much, have you experienced the presence of Jesus spirit in you too much? Have you trusted in Jesus righteousness too much?

No, rather I suspect that most of us have not even begun to feel very forgiven. The faith we believe in our minds has only seldom been matched by the joy of knowing that nothing is held against us. We hear the words, I declare unto you the entire forgiveness of all your sins as only words, human words, rather than the word and promise of the almighty God. How we long to know no guilt, no shame, no burden of our sin. *For* How we long what Jesus gives so freely through faith.

For Jesus sake, God forgives you all your sin. That is really good news to tax collectors and sinners. That is the kind of news that could produce a lot of love for Jesus in human hearts.

Today you will be asked to volunteer your time through a program called Love In the Name of Christ. Where there are needs here in Avon Lake and you have a skill that would answer that need, through love in the name of Christ you will be asked to use what God has given you for others. Mostly this will be with people outside of our church.

~~xxxxxxx~~
~~tax collectors and sinners~~

Who am I to help, you ask? You are the one who has been washed clean in Christ. You are one who in yourself is all sickness and sin, but in Christ is all health and righteousness. You are the one whom Jesus has called, as he called Matthew ~~far~~ so long ago.

Who knows, maybe through your Christ working in you, more tax collectors and sinners will be gathered at the table. I certainly hope so.

*now, more will hear the word pronounced - by
his authority I declare to you the entire forgiveness
of all your sins.*

*So that the church of Jesus Christ is not
unlike its Lord, withdrawing from the world & its
troubles, but that we who are under our physician
care may be physicians for others.*