

HOMILY, CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR
HOLY MONDAY
APRIL 15, 2019
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We have all heard about sin. It's bad. It's breaking the rules or behaving badly. If we want to soften it up, we talk about missing the mark or going astray. And goodness knows, all that is true. But it doesn't really get at the heart of the matter.

What is this thing that seems to follow us like a sticky shadow we can't quite shake? What is this thing that darkens and breaks our hearts and each other's? We don't intend to sin. It's not (usually) a conscious choice. But it is there nonetheless.

Perhaps, we think, the Devil makes us sin. Maybe there is some evil force outside ourselves deceiving us into hurting one another, lying or cheating or taking advantage. A malign being who wants us to do evil. This is a convenient and comforting explanation, but it doesn't serve to make us any less sinful.

And again, it doesn't seem to really answer the question of what sin is and why we seem to get so stuck in it. And it doesn't answer the question of why sin is so painful.

So let me suggest another approach. Our problem is that we settle for so much less than what we could have. God holds out joy and freedom and the richest of lives. We are offered a world of truth and delight. We are offered beauty and unconditional love. These are not for the elite or the super-smart or the in crowd. They are for all of us all the time.

Sin is our tragic failure to claim all that abundance. We settle for what we think we deserve, or what we believe we can have. We settle for soothing our egos instead of hearing God's infinite love for us. We settle for human power instead of being filled with the

power of the Holy Spirit. We settle for not rocking the boat instead of claiming God's power to calm the sea. We settle for making a living instead of living a life.

No wonder we cannot love others the way we wish we could, when we don't allow God's overwhelming love for us to fill our souls. If we don't claim the love that is being offered to us, we won't have it to give to others or ourselves.

So the proper response to sin is not to beat ourselves up, to feel guilty or ashamed. The proper response is to stop, open our eyes to God, allow ourselves to be aware of the gifts of love and life being offered, and then to surrender ourselves to those gifts. When we allow the love of God to soak into our souls, those fears about what we don't have, those resentments about what we should have had, all of those sources of sin melt away.

We don't have to settle for what we can get. We are the beloved children of God and all that God has to offer can be ours. And so the best response to sin is to say,

Thanks be to God.

Amen