

**12/21/18**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

If you do something wrong, get caught, and are punished, there are two possible reasons you could be sad. You could be sad because you are being punished, and punishment is never fun. However, you should be sad simply because you did something wrong.

For example, say your mom tells you not to eat a Christmas cookie before dinner. When she's not looking, you sneak one anyway. But she catches you. She tells you that now don't get to eat any more of those cookies. You could be sad that you are being punished and can't eat cookies. But you should be sad that you disobeyed your mom. She's your mom! She loves you. She made those cookies for you. Moreover, when she tells you to do something like NOT have a cookie before dinner, it's not because she's being mean. It's because she loves you and she wants you to be healthy. Your mom is a wonderful woman. You should feel sad that you disrespected her, not that you're being punished.

That first type of sadness—when we are sad that we got caught and punished—is selfish. It is not healthy. But that second type of sadness—when we are sad that we did something wrong—that is healthy. It's the first part of true repentance. Repentance begins when we are sad that we disobeyed God. God has been so good to us. Moreover, when he tells us to do or not to do something, it is only because he knows that is what's best for us. When we disobey him, we should be sad that we wronged a God who has been nothing but loving to us.

Repentance is complete when the Spirit helps us understand that precisely because God loves us, our sin has been forgiven.

*Tax collectors also came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” [John] told them. Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” [John] replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.” Luke 3:12-14*

So, how do you know if you are sad for the right reasons? In our lesson, John the Baptist told us. If you are sad because you were caught, you will soon commit that sin again. You’re going to try and steal another cookie the moment mom isn’t looking. But if you are sad because you wronged someone who loves you, your mom, or, more importantly, your loving God then you will fight against that sin in the future. You will do all you can to avoid committing that sin ever again.

Friends, when you slip into sin, be sad for the right reason. Not that you got caught. But that you did something offensive to a God who has been nothing but good to you. That’s the first part of repentance. But then be joyful, that because of what Christ did when he came on that first Christmas, your sin has been taken away. That joy, that gratitude you feel, that is what will give you the desire to fight against your sin moving forward.

**Prayer:** *Father, you have been so good to us. That is why it saddens us to disobey you. Thank you for sending Jesus to take our sins away. Thank you for letting us live in the joy of your forgiveness. We ask you to give us strength, so that we might avoid committing those sins in the future. Amen.*

(From the WELS)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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