
Traders Point, how are we doing?

I'm going to say it one more time. I'm sure that we have heard it everywhere, but we are days away from our Christmas services. You guys ready for this? I'm ready for it.

I just want to take a moment at the top here to celebrate all of our teams. I want you to know this week that is about to happen started happening months and months ago with planning and prepping, both from a staff side and a volunteer standpoint to do everything we can, because we know what is at stake.

There will be people who will be here this week that will be their only time to show up and the Gospel will be presented. So we want to remove every barrier, we want to create the warmest environment for them to walk into so that they can hear the life-changing truth about who Jesus is. Can we celebrate all of our teams and staff and volunteers who have been working like crazy?

I also want to take a moment here and honor and celebrate our lead pastor, Aaron Brockett. Once all of the teams have done all the work to set up the moment for the Gospel to be preached—the truth about who Jesus is and His birth to be declared and lives to be changed—we just want to come underneath him. We want to celebrate and honor him right now. So can we put that out there? Show the love that we have for our pastor. Incredible.

One more thing as well. As we quickly approach the end of the year I just want to challenge you with a question and it's this: What could a year-end gift look like for you? See, we move at the speed of your generosity. And know that there are always more opportunities that we say no to than yes.

We have more vision than we have resources for. There are more churches to plant. There are more leaders to develop. There are more vulnerable children and families to come alongside and serve in this next year. We are not done.

So let's finish this year strong so that we can bring hope and help to as many as possible in the year to come. You all with us on that vision?

As far as today goes, we are continuing in our Christmas series, For All the People. And what we've been trying to do over these past few weeks is to make it overly clear that God is for all people.

No matter what you've heard, this was the message that was brought from heaven to earth on that first Christmas. It was true then and it's true now. Let me show you. Luke, chapter 2 says:

"That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news that will bring great joy to...' who? 'all people.'"

This is the message that comes on Christmas. And what we've been doing over the past few weeks is to say, "Okay, if that is true, then what gets in the way of that? What stops us from believing that God is truly for all people?"

So each week we've just been wrestling with some different emotions that stop us from believing that truth. Emotions like fear and shame. And today we're going to address guilt.

But what I want you to see more than anything is that it doesn't matter the emotion. One of the messages that Christmas tells us is that God will meet you right there, no matter where you are.

Don't wait for that emotion to dissipate and then you say, "I'll take a step toward God." No, no, no. God came to meet you right where you are to bring you out of that fear. To bring you out of that shame. To bring you out of that guilt.

Is there anybody here today, in the room, at the campuses, online who God has brought out of fear, out of shame, out of guilt?

What we want to look at today is just that, guilt. For a lot of the time it's going to be the feeling of guilt. And here's what we mean. Guilt comes up as:

A feeling you get when you did something wrong, or when you think you did something wrong.

Right? What you get when you did something wrong, or when you feel like you probably did something wrong. And I know that's a feeling that a lot of us live with every single day. Maybe it's an emotion you brought in here and you sat down with.

Just to get us acquainted with the feeling, let's have a soft step into it, I just want to give you some examples of things in your life that might bring you a little bit of guilt. The first one being this:

A guilty pleasure

This is something that you enjoy but if you knew that other people knew this about you, you would be a little bit uncomfortable. Now, I'm not going to ask you to share it with me or even with the person next to you.

But I'll tell you how big of a man I am. I'm going to tell you mine right now in front of all of you at all of the campuses. You ready for this? My guilty pleasure, I'm going to tell you, I love chick—I wish I could finish that with fil-A.

I wish I could say it's Chick-fil-A. That is what I love. That is my guilty pleasure. All of you would be like, "That's the Lord's chicken. You don't have to be guilty about that."

But it's not that. My guilty pleasure is chick flicks. I love 'em. I used to not be man enough to say that. I used to put it under the banner of, "I like romantic comedies." Until I realized that I don't even need them to be funny. The sadder the better. I love a good tear-jerker. The Notebook come on.

On my first date with my wife we went to see Dear John. And I remember her saying, "I can't believe you're willing to go see Dear John." And I was like, "Girl, anything for you. You just make sure you look at the screen. You don't look over here at me."

We have these guilty pleasures. That's a soft one. But what about this?

A guilt trip

Maybe you've got someone in your life, a friend, a family member who takes you on one of these trips every time you see him. It's never a straight out, "I want you to feel guilty for doing this." It's kind of manipulative, "If you really cared. If you really loved me, maybe you would do this. But I'm not going to say anything. I'm just going to put it out there."

And you walk away like, "Okay, I'll do the thing that you want me to do." And you feel guilty. It's not a fun trip. It's not like spring break.

Buyer's remorse

Right? That will produce some guilt. You got yourself all hopped up. You're going to go and make this big purchase you've got no business making. And then you buy it. You're feeling good. You walk out. You sit in the car. And maybe you even buckle it in because you're like, "This is my baby. I'm going to buckle this in." And you start driving home and you're like, "How am I going to explain this to my spouse? I done messed up now." And the guilt begins to rush over you.

But here's the big one:

Sin

Sin produces guilt in our lives. And by sin I mean doing something that hurts a relationship between us and God and between us and other people. We lied. We cheated. We did something we weren't supposed to do. We sinned and now we feel guilt.

What I do want to say is that guilt is actually a rational response to sin. It's not necessarily a bad thing to feel guilt when something happens. The problem comes with how we address our guilt. And that's what we want to focus on today. How do we process guilt in a healthy way?

For a lot of us, we've only seen guilt move one way. And it goes from guilt to shame. And the best way that I can describe this is: guilt says, "I made a mistake." Shame says, "You are a mistake."

A lot of times we fear any conversation about guilt, but what we want to see today is that because of Jesus, there is actually a whole other direction that we can move in. Guilt doesn't have to end in shame, but it can actually move from guilt to joy. That is the power of the Christmas story and what Jesus came to bring.

Maybe you're thinking, "Well, what about the Christmas story and guilt? Is it there? It is on one level, which we're going to hit on at the very end. But I also want us to look at the feeling of guilt in the Christmas story. It's not out there, it's not that direct like, "And then Mary and Joseph felt guilt."

But I think we can read this story like they are real people, they are not fictional characters who live perfectly. No, they are like me, and you, and they have real emotions that would have been running through their bodies.

Just look at a few of these examples and put yourself in there with fresh eyes and to say, "Man, if that was me I think I would have felt some guilt with that one." Take a look at this:

"She gave birth to her firstborn son." This is Mary giving birth to Jesus. "She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them." Luke 2:7 (NLT)

I want you to think about this. She has just given birth to her first son. She's in a place that is not her home. She had to travel from her home for the census. And while she's there there is nowhere she can stay. There was no place that would have been comfortable for her. She's forced to come, and there is no lodging available, and she lays her baby boy down in a manger. That's not a spot for a baby.

Think about that as a parent laying your child down. What would you be thinking? Would there be guilt that you had to lay your baby down in a manger? That you're not laying him down in some nice Egyptian cotton?

And you're wondering, "Is there ever going to be a place for my baby in this world? Am I going to be the thing that keeps my baby from a healthy life?" There might be some guilt. Keep reading, there is one more:

“Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised,” now I just want to pause here on this one. I have three kids, two girls, one boy. And I’m telling you, there is some guilt when it comes to this. I remember holding my baby boy, loving on him, getting to know him a little bit, locking eyes. We’re becoming a thing.

And it’s only short-lived because the doctors come, the nurses grab him, and they roll him away and my man had no idea what was about to happen to him. And there was nothing I could say. There was nothing I could help him with like, “You’re about to get carved up.” There’s some guilt there. But that’s not the real thing that I want to look at. It says:

“... he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived. Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord.

“The law of the Lord says, ‘If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord.’ So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.” Luke 2:21-24 (NLT)

Once again, it’s all right there in the details if we really place ourselves in the story and ask, “What is going on here?” It is true that whenever a firstborn child was a son he must be dedicated to the Lord, and they had to take a sacrifice there.

But there were actually two different sacrifices. The one that they were bringing, which was sufficient, two turtledoves or two pigeons, was only an option for the poor. I want you to think about that. Look at where this law comes from in Leviticus. It says:

“If a woman cannot afford to bring a lamb, she must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons.” Leviticus 12:8 (NLT)

Once again, place yourself in the scene, this is a real thing that happened. They are walking to the Temple; they have their baby, and they are holding these two little birds. And they look out, maybe they see some other parents there with the lamb, the full sacrifice.

What are some of the thoughts that could be running through their minds? Is it always going to be like this? Will we ever be able to provide for Him the life that He really needs? I mean, we can’t even provide the full sacrifice. There is some guilt there. Guilt, not what we did wrong but not being enough.

What we want to do today is to show, once again, guilt is not necessarily a bad thing. If it’s addressed in a healthy way it can actually lead, not to shame, but to joy. It’s all in how we navigate our guilt. We can’t be fearful of it. We can’t run from it. We can’t pretend that it doesn’t exist. We have to address it.

And we're going to look at how we do that is by looking at and studying Psalm 32. If you have a Bible you can go ahead and flip there. This is a Psalm of David. And David is a man, an amazing man, a king, but he's also someone who lived a lot of life and had a lot of things to feel guilty about, whether that was through marriage, through parenting, really any facet of his life. He experienced some guilt.

What I want us to see is that he found joy and he found a healthy way to navigate through it. And I want to push us on that because the same thing that was there for David that he found in this Psalm, is the same thing we can all find and walk out of here with. Alright?

Take a look at this. Psalm 32. We're going to read it in its entirety and then we'll break it down line by line. It says:

"Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!" What a picture of life.

"When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me." There are some people here today who feel that heavy hand.

"My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.' And you forgave me! All my guilt is..." say it with me, "gone."

Whew! Do you believe it? Do you believe that God is powerful enough not to deal with just a little bit of your guilt, not 50 percent now and 50 percent later, but all of your guilt? It can be removed as far as the east is from the west.

Is there anybody who has experienced that kind of freedom today? Who can attest to it? "Yes, God has removed it. My sin was a lot, my guilt was heavy, but God removed it."

And what I want us to do is just to say: How? Because David walks us through line by line here of what that looks like. How we can be one of those people who live in honesty. That we can be one of those people who experience not guilt to shame but guilt to joy.

That's the way it started. Right? Did you see that? It says, "What joy for those whose record is cleared of guilt." It's all about how we approach God. The mindset that we have when we are dealing with our guilt. A lot of us, whether we are aware of it or not are motivated by guilt. We just do things to take away the ache. We live on a guilt field trip.

What God is trying to say is, "No, no, no. You don't do things because you're guilted into them. You do things because you are loved." It's okay to feel guilty because you understand that that is not where it ends but it actually ends in joy.

That is what we actually get to experience as followers of Jesus. It doesn't end in guilt but there is actually a way that it can end in joy, but we have to reshape the way we look at it and the way that we approach it. Keep reading here. It says:

"When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long."

I just want to pause here and to highlight this. A lot of times we think we can just take that guilt and just stuff it down. No one has to know about it. It will never come out.

But the truth is that with guilt, it can actually begin to bear physical and emotional tolls on your life. You can feel sick to your stomach. People around you notice. There is no way to hold it in.

Holding it in and pretending like it is going to go away, that your body is somehow going to absorb it, is just not true. We have to find a way to address it, how to hand it over in a healthy way. Take a look at what he says:

"Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt."

We can't run, we can't hide, we can't pretend but God gives us exactly what we need to do with this. We need to confess it. We need to get it out of us.

I want to give you something that will hopefully reshape the way that you view guilt in your life. Here it is. This is going to shape up everything we'll talk about next:

Let guilt be a vehicle that drives us to the grace of God.

I'm going to say it again. Let guilt be a vehicle that drives us to the grace of God. Once again. Guilt is a vehicle not a house. You don't live there. Guilt is a vehicle. It is like an Uber driver coming to pick you up and it's going to take you to the grace of God. You're waving. "Bye." I'm not seeing it again.

God is going to deal with that. How He deals with it depends on what we are open enough to do with it, how we address it. And I think that there are really two big ways, two different tracks that when we experience guilt, we can deal with it in a healthy way depending on why it is coming in. When we experience guilt it does not have to move toward shame.

No, it's a vehicle that can take me to two opportunities. When I experience guilt it can take me to the opportunity of repentance, I have an opportunity to repent and go to the grace of God, or I experience guilt and I have an opportunity to grow. And once again, all roads that lead to Jesus end in grace.

So what I want us to do here is to work through each side of that, alright? We're going to start on the left side. We experience guilt. And when we experience guilt I want us to think about why we're experiencing it, it's because we've sinned, we've messed up.

We're separating it from, "I messed up." Not, "I'm a mess up." "I made a mistake." "I'm not a mistake." I'm separating my identity from it.

But I am identifying, "Yeah, I have sinned. I have done something that has hurt the relationship between me and God or the relationship between me and someone else."

We have to identify where it's coming from and then the Bible makes it very clear what we should do next. Look at this. It was in Psalm 32. It says:

"... your hand of discipline was heavy on me."

That hand is there. It is a loving hand. It is bringing discipline but its going to lead you, once again, to the grace of God. It's very similar to what we see in 2 Corinthians. Maybe you're more familiar with this:

"For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance," (that's the key word when it comes to being able to deal with our guilt in a healthy way), "results in spiritual death." 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT)

So if we go back to our chart [in the form of a circle] and we look at it and we say that guilt is at the top and we've identified, "Hey, I've sinned. I'm owning it. I messed up." The next thing that we need to do is to:

Repent [down and to the left side of the chart]

I'm going to turn from what I did and now I'm going to shift 180 and I'm going to move in the opposite direction. That begins the process of repentance, identifying that I have sinned.

And the key to this is in the confession. David mentioned it in Psalm 32. Look at this. It says:

"I said to myself, 'I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.'" Psalm 32:5 (NLT)

I will confess my rebellion to the Lord. I want you to think about this and I want you to write it down, okay? If you are experiencing guilt, you need to know this:

Confession is a guilt killer

Confession is a guilt killer. I'm going to tell you... I think that we even know this on some level, if you think back to that moment when you sinned, the moment when you did something wrong,

the first instinct is for you to say, “I’ve got to get this out of here. I’ve got to tell somebody. I’ve got to do something with it.”

It’s almost like your body knows that there is something, a foreign object, that needs to be released. It needs to get out. That is God’s hand disciplining you to confess it. To confess it to Him and to confess it to others.

But the enemy’s job, and the enemy is the Devil, is that the moment you have that thought, “I have to confess it,” it is immediately met by another voice that says, “Are you sure? Are you sure that that is the best thing that you can do? I mean, let’s be honest. Do you think He’ll really understand where you’re coming from? Do you think He is going to be able to see this the way that you see it?”

“Do you really think you’re going to get forgiveness out of this? Do you know how messed up you are? Do think God wants to hear another one of your mistakes?”

“No. No, no. I’ve got a better idea. Instead of confessing it, why don’t you just take it in. Why don’t you just move it down a little bit below the surface. Why don’t you just pretend like it’s not really a thing.

“No, no. I promise. You keep it there long enough it will probably go away on its own. Just push it just a little bit lower and a little bit lower.”

But God makes it clear that it is not going to go away on its own. It is not going to just absorb into you. If anything, it’s going to grow and become worse. It actually needs to be brought out into the light.

In darkness, guilt grows. In the light, it dissipates. In the light, God can actually bring His healing hand to it and do something with it. Confession is how we do that. We have to be able to take it to God, which is so hard to do.

But I would almost venture to say that that’s the easiest part of this process that we’re going to walk through with repentance. So, welcome.

The next one I would say is that when you are repenting and obviously involved in confessing it to God, it also involves confessing it to others—confessing it to others. And I want to be clear on this side of it too because I think that there are some times that when we sin, we mess up, but there is no one who we can directly take it to, right?

Let me give you an example. Maybe none of you have ever or could ever relate to this. Let’s say that you are driving, and you’ve got a little bit of road rage going. And you’re saying some not so nice things about the car in front of you—not about the car but the person.

Not so nice. I mean, you're saying horrible things about him. You are believing the worst. He is the worst human on the planet and he's in front of you.

Now, I'm not saying that you should chase him down, block him in, knock on the window and say, "Hey, glad I caught you. Just want to confess to you that I had some impure thoughts about you back there. Just wanted to follow up. Are we good?" You're going to create more problems.

But I am saying that there is a moment when you feel that sin when we confess it to God that we also need to confess it to others. There is actually power in the confession.

That is one of the things I love so much about the beauty of our church. Look at it in James. It says:

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." James 5:16 (NLT)

There is power in prayer. There is power in confessing sin to someone. We're just getting started here.

I want to apologize to those who grew up in a church that believed that when they messed up that it was theirs to own, and they felt that they couldn't bring it to their church family. They felt they couldn't bring it to leadership. That they would be looked upon as someone who was completely wrong, and they would be sent away. That is not true of this church.

Every single Sunday we have people at the ready, people in every room at the end of service and you can come up and you can share whatever you are going through, whatever struggle, whatever sin.

And I promise you, you will not be met with judgment, you will be met with the help and the hope that can only be found in Jesus. Someone will pray over you, who will bring down the power of God to reshape your life.

Is there anyone here who has experienced that kind of confession, that kind of prayer, that kind of power here at this church? That is something that is available all of the time, every time, at every single campus, alright?

And it only gets harder from here. What I'm going to talk about now is when we've sinned, we've done something to hurt the relationship with someone and it's someone we know. We've repented. We've confessed it to God. Now we need to confess it to the person. Here's what we need to do. We need to:

Ask for forgiveness.

"I did this. I own it. No excuses." At this point there's no reason why you did it, "I did this. I'm guilty. I'm asking for your forgiveness." This is a vulnerable moment. This is a really hard thing to do. I'm not trying to make it sound like it is not.

And I also want to say on top of that, when you do this there is a good chance that it won't be met with forgiveness, at least right then in the moment. Maybe down the road, but right then what you have to be ready for is that you might not receive forgiveness. And that's okay.

What you did in that moment is you gave him the opportunity to forgive you. You gave yourself the opportunity to confess it and to follow through with God's plan on how to deal with the guilt.

But I can tell you, regardless of how he receives it or how he responds, there is still good news on the other side of it. I want you to look back at our graph here. We have guilt. We repent of it. It ends in:

Grace [at the bottom of the chart]

It doesn't end in judgment. It says that God is faithful to forgive us. God is faithful to extend grace. It says that God is greater than our feelings so even when we feel guilty we can trust that grace is for us on the other side.

The forgiveness that we truly need, the forgiveness that without could keep us from God and a relationship with Him—for followers of Jesus is already yours.

God knows you're going to stumble. God know you're going to fall, and you need to hear this today. There is grace that awaits you after the confession. Amen?

That's one side [of the chart]. I've got one more side for you. So that first side we're looking at is guilt to repent. So this is when we've done something wrong. And I think we've all felt that kind of guilt.

But I want to venture to say that there is another side to when we experience guilt. And a lot of times this is when there is an opportunity to:

Grow

Let me explain this. Especially for followers of Jesus, when you first start following Jesus you go from this place of unknowing to knowing a whole lot more, right? Like before you started following Jesus maybe you thought you were pretty great. You didn't really feel any guilt. But you were motivated by love, that God could love you so much, so you started following Jesus.

And then you get into it, and you start looking at God's Word. You start looking at the life that God has called you to, and it's a really big life and it's very different from the life that you've been living and you're like, "Whew, man I feel a little guilty."

It's not necessarily sin, but you're just looking at your life and you're like, "Man, I spend a lot of time watching TV. Hallmark has another chick flick coming. What am I going to do?"

"I spend a lot of time watching sports." You guys didn't buy that. You know you do.

"I spend a lot of time scrolling on social media." It goes to our spiritual disciplines when we start looking at our lives and it's like, "Man, I wish I would just spend more time reading God's Word. I wish I'd be more dedicated to that."

"I wish I would spend more time in prayer." "I wish I would spend more time invested in my group." "I wish I would be more generous with my time and my money."

And we feel a little bit of guilt on that side [the right side of the chart]. "Man, am I ever going to be enough? Am I going to be able to do this?"

And I would say for a lot of us, when we experience the resistance of growth, we allow it to push us back to guilt. And we just drift back, and we say that's just who we are, we're never going to be able to do that, "I'm messing up. I'm messing up again. I'm messing up again."

But hear this. Remember:

Let guilt be a vehicle that drives us to the grace of God.

And I just want all of us to have this shift this week going into it. What if the way we approached our lives wasn't going into it seeing all of the ways that we weren't enough or we wish we could do more.

Saying in our minds over and over again, "Man, I'm messing up; man, I'm messing up," is one shift away from, "I am a mess-up." And no matter how you slice it, that way is only going to lead back to guilt and feeling sorry for ourselves.

But what if, what if instead of saying, "Man, I'm messing up," we said, "I'm growing up." "I'm growing up. I'm not messing up. I'm not falling back. I'm growing up. And, yeah, there's a little bit of growth pains in this but I am being made into the image of Jesus. The hand of God is on my life to mold me and to shape me. Yeah, it's a little ugly. Yeah, it's a little bit unpretty, but I'm not falling back. I'm falling forward into the grace of God."

Think about this. If we go back, it is guilt [at the top of the chart for both sides], then it is grow [on the right side of the chart], then it is:

Grace [at the bottom of the chart for both sides]

It is grace when we fall short. It is grace when we see where we are, but we can see where God is taking us. It is grace that will be there every single time.

A lot of us, if we grew up in church, maybe we felt the weight of religion where we got pushed to all of the growth, but it lacked the grace. So you felt the weight of trying to do it on your own, the weight of showing up and falling short every single time. You need to know Jesus died to give you something so much better than that.

Grace is for something that you can't do on your own. It is for God to step in—in the gap when you are falling short. You are not asked to do this on your own. You have been empowered by the very Spirit of God to live this thing out. You can lean on Him in this season.

Somebody needs to hear this moving into the Christmas season. You are being made into the image of God and that is a work of God, and it is His grace alone that is making that happen. Amen.

I thought we would get three more amens but we're going to go with one.

I do want to say that I think.... Maybe you're looking at that chart and you need to hear something very specific that maybe you didn't hear in that chart.

And it's this: If you're experiencing guilt in your life because of something that was done to you, you are a victim. That is not your weight to carry. It is not your fault.

God, through His grace and through His love and through His power, I believe that if you confess that, He can take that from you today. That is no longer yours to carry. I pray that you walk out of here much lighter than when you walked in. Know that truth. Believe it. It's not yours to carry.

The other group I want to talk to is a group of people who have lived a lot of life, maybe just like David, and you have some things that you are feeling guilty for, and you even believe that God has forgiven you, but you can't forgive yourself. I just want to say this:

Forgive yourself

Forgive yourself. You are placing unrealistic expectations on yourself looking at your past. Here's the truth I want you to place something on. If you're going to place something, place it on this:

You are not God

You're looking back at your life and you're replaying it every single day like the what ifs—"What if I would have showed up just a little bit more?" or, "What if I would have said this?" or, "What if I would have stopped him then?"

"Maybe the marriage would still be together." "Maybe my kids would be closer to me." "Maybe school would look different." Whatever it is, it is not fair—the truth of the matter is, you did the best that you could and there is grace for everything else.

And God is not done with you. God has a plan for your life. That's why it is so critical that we do not let guilt fester, that we don't let guilt sit there, because it is causing more harm than we could possibly believe.

Here's why it is such a big deal. The biggest of deals. 1 John:

"Dear friends, if we don't feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him." 1 John 3:21-22 (NLT)

You can read it this way, "If we don't feel guilty, we can come to God." And it leads me to believe that if we do feel guilty we won't come to God.

The Devil has spun a web of lies in your life to make you believe that it is your fault, that you could have done better and those lies are keeping you from God.

The truth is you are not God. The truth is that grace has been extended to you. You need to forgive yourself. God has a plan and God came not just to deal with the feeling of guilt, which if He would have done just that alone would have been enough—to remove the feeling of guilt—but God has a bigger plan.

See, the first Christmas wasn't just about removing the feeling of guilt, it was about removing the pronouncement of guilt.

I want you to think about it coming from a judge, "We find you to be guilty. You have broken the law. And now you are under the penalty of it."

That was all of us. We have all sinned. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. None is righteous, no not one. All of us—guilty. So how do the guilty become innocent? It is only by the grace of God. It is the grace of God that lays before us.

This is how God managed to do this. Knowing that we couldn't live up to His perfect law, that we would fall short, He sent His only Son. Jesus would place Himself under the law for a season. And He would live the perfect life that we could never possibly live.

At 30 years old, He began His public ministry, and He began teaching and healing and sharing about the kingdom of God that it is at hand and that is available to everyone.

He was innocent in every way. He never broke one law. But yet, He was still arrested, falsely accused, brought in front of Pilate. They wanted this man crucified. Innocent. Even Pilate thought so. You remember this? Look at this. It says:

“Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, ‘I find no guilt in this man.’” Luke 23:4 (NASB)

He didn’t do anything wrong. He was innocent all the way to the very end. But the crowd wasn’t satisfied by that. They still kept chanting, “Crucify Him.” And so they did. Our Savior was taken and nailed to a cross where He was murdered.

I want you to think about this. From that cross He was taken down and He was placed in a tomb. It wasn’t even His. It was a borrowed tomb, from a borrowed manger that He was laid in at birth to a borrowed tomb that He was given, from strips of cloth that He was wrapped in as a baby to being wrapped in cloths and laid into a tomb.

Think about this. The lamb that His family couldn’t afford at His birth, He would become the sacrificial lamb that this world couldn’t afford but desperately needed. God would pay the cost because only He could.

But our God did not remain dead. Three days later Jesus’ body began to move. He began to breathe proving that He has power over shame over fear over death over sin over all of it.

And what did He extend as He walked out of that grave? He extended grace. And now it is by faith that we are saved through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. That is the only way we move from guilty to innocent.

That is the only thing, placing your faith in Him, that will truly dig out guilt at its roots, which can truly meet your guilt. It’s the only thing that can cover it, and that is the blood of Jesus and it’s available for you today.

What I want us to do is, we’re going to pray. But it’s going to be more of a time of confession. A time for us to confess to God, to ready our hearts, to confess to others, to repent, and to walk out of here leaving our guilt in this room, walking out of here lighter, walking out of here in the freedom—listen to this—walking out of here with the joy that this season represents.

The only way we get to that is if we get to a close relationship with Jesus. And to do that, we must rid ourselves of the guilt, to use it as a vehicle over and over again to get us to the grace of God.

Would you pray with me?

God, we thank You so much for today. God, we thank You for a way, a way to process, a way to address, a way to deal with our guilt in a healthy way.

God, I pray that the days of us going from guilt to shame are done. I pray that we would move from guilt to joy and it is only in Your name, Jesus, that something that wild is even possible. So, God, right now, we acknowledge our faith in You and in You alone.

God, I pray for the people here today who have never placed their faith in You; but they believe right now that You can deal with their guilt. I pray that they confess to You their faith, that they see you as Lord and Savior. That you will sanctify them. That You will lead them to opportunities to grow.

God, we pray for repentant hearts. God, I pray that forgiveness will be quick to come off of our lips. I pray that we would be the kind of people who would live honest lives that have nothing to hide because we already know how You are going to respond.

So, God. I just want to create a moment of silence right now for the confessions to come to You. For the sin to be released through confession of, "God, I don't want to hold on to this anymore." Just hand it over to God in this moment. Confess your sin. Confess your guilt.

God, we thank You that all roads that lead to You are paved with grace, whether we are repenting or we are growing, we know that we are going to come to You and we know what awaits us. It's grace to turn us around. It's grace to grow us into Your image.

And, God, I pray that there are people today who are going to be walking into Your kingdom acknowledging Your kingdom for the very first time. God, I pray that they walk in with their heads held high approaching You with bold confidence. Coming to You as sons and daughters freed of any guilt that was holding them down.

And, God, I pray that we stand in Your kingdom acknowledging You as the King above it all. You reign, King Jesus. God, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess you are King.

We're not waiting until that day comes. We're going to willingly stand up. We're going to willingly shout. We're going to willingly lean into You and Your grace and acknowledge You as the King that You are, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is in Your name we pray. Amen.