

**WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, June 18, 2024**  
**Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN**

**“Maximum Forgiveness”**

**READING:** 1 John 1:8-2:2 – If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

The other morning I was watching some sports on ESPN when they went to a commercial break. The third ad was for a company that makes and sells high-end golf clubs. One of their pitches caught my ear. It was for a new driver with a great big club head on it. The announcer breathlessly hawked its virtues and one was prominent: that club head would give the golfer “maximum forgiveness”. Now he meant that with the wide head and the weighted heel, you could make a straight drive even if you didn’t quite hit the ball square as you swung through it. To the serious golfer that equates to better, straighter drives and better scores. To the Christian with a tuned ear it means something quite different.

I have lately had discussions with several people who carry a terrible burden around with them. They worry a lot about their sins and their Christian shortcomings. They fear that their sins are so grievous and so plentiful that God will not forgive them, and they will fall short of heaven. They related to me past sins, some from years ago. They have tried hard to make amends for their sins. They have tried hard not to commit more sins. They were filled with contrition, and they were almost sick with the sorrow they felt over their faults. They loathed themselves to some degree because they kept failing to be “good Christians.”

Oh, folks! How ready we are to fall back into the world’s religion! That religion is “Works Righteousness”! Every religious system save for Biblical Christianity follows the same pattern: a sense of moral failure, a desire to make things right, real effort at doing good works in payment, and a constant fear of failure and falling short. You must earn it. You must pick yourself up and get right with the gods. You, you, you! And that is precisely the problem and the terrible dilemma people find themselves in. YOU can’t make it work!

And by the way a second trap lies there as well: self-righteousness. This is a feeling that I am doing pretty good at being good. Maybe not perfect, but certainly a lot better than most of the people I see around me. I’ve got this figured out. I go to Temple or the Mosque or the Church; I make the right offerings and sacrifices; I study Torah or the Koran or the Bible, and I try to be good to people. Surely Allah or Buddha or God can see my goodness.

Either way, when a person depends on their own efforts to earn forgiveness or salvation, the results will be ineffective. The folks I talked to were weighed down with guilt, exhausted by their constant self-examination, and fearful of God and his wrath. Others will never talk to me about their sins because they don’t really think they’ve done all that many. They feel they’re doing all right.

The only good path to tread is the path that walks in Jesus’ way. St. John in our text lays it out in straightforward fashion. “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Then again, “If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” Anyone who needs and desires “Maximum Forgiveness” does not depend upon their own

efforts – positive or negative. We will never find the truth there inside ourselves. No, the ONLY place to look is to the perfect Son of God who gave himself for ALL our sins there on that cross. When he said, “It is finished!” – he meant it. “Maximum forgiveness” was bought for us by the blood and judgment of Jesus.

To those troubled children of God I could only speak the Gospel and point them to Jesus. There is no other rest for the weary. I assured them that Jesus had taken every and all of their sins with him to the Cross. Now their only comfort should be in God’s grace announced in book after book of the Scriptures. Faith in Jesus brings “Maximum forgiveness” for all who believe. But don’t take my word for it. Take His. Amen.

**PRAYER:**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

1) VBS! VBS! VBS! Yes, it’s almost here! Sunday, June 23-Wednesday, June 26. Spread the word to any family you know with young children. This is for them! Pastor Woods can use you help if you are able. He’ll be there every Tuesday and Wednesday evening until it’s here.

2) FRANKENMUTH BUS TRIP – September 29-October 2. Registration is now open. Find information and forms in “News & Tidbits”, online, and in the Narthex. 53 seats available.