

WEEKLY DEVOTION – February 2, 2021

**Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church
New Albany, Indiana
“Whiter Than Snow”**

READING: Psalm 51:1-12 – Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Today is Ground Hog Day...Today is Ground Hog Day...Today is Ground Hog Day! (I couldn't resist a little tribute to Bill Murray's movie, "Ground Hog Day" when that day repeats itself over and over and over.) If he sees his shadow, we'll have six more weeks of winter...or something like that. I really don't care. But winter has already brought us a little gift, or at least it was a gift for a northerner like me: we had a beautiful snow last Wednesday!

Coming from Michigan, snow in the winter was a constant for us. We had snow EVERY winter, sometimes less and sometimes more, but we always had snow. Some years it snowed for the first time in early December and stuck around until late March. That made for a long winter. Of course, we knew what to do with snow as well. We hunted rabbits and foxes. We went sledding and tobogganing and snowmobiling. We built igloos and snow caves and had massive snowball fights. We made the most of the snow and the winter weather.

The first nice snow of the year is always so pretty, especially when it hangs on the trees and the shrubbery and turns them from a boring gray to a dazzling white. It covers the ugly brown grass, the muddy patches, and the empty garden spaces and leaves them soft and pure. That is why David uses that

picture to describe the righteousness God in his grace is able to give us when we repent of our sins and he forgives us.

David wrote Psalm 51 after he had been confronted by the prophet Nathan regarding his sins of adultery with Bathsheba, deceit, and the murder of her husband, Uriah. Having been confronted with his sins and having felt the weight of them, he turns to God and asks for forgiveness. He recognizes that only God's grace can repair his spirit and restore his place before God. He uses the imagery of the purity and cleanliness of new fallen snow to convey his desire that the blot and foulness of his sins be covered by the righteousness only God can give.

We see the same sort of imagery in the New Testament when in Revelation 7 the Elder asks John, "These in white robes, who are they?" And the Elder answers his own question by saying, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The imagery is again of something that covers sin, purifies the soul, and allows for God's people to stand before him in holiness without fear.

We seek God's forgiveness through the merits of our Savior Jesus Christ and have his assurance that he has blotted out our iniquities, washed us in our baptisms, and made our souls white as snow. By so doing we are restored to the joy of his salvation and given a willing spirit in tune with God's word and desires. Covered by Jesus' righteousness, we can look forward to standing before the throne of God and singing his praises with his Church eternally. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) I'll be on a little vacation in Michigan this coming weekend. Going to visit with my siblings and do a little ice fishing on Houghton Lake. It's been 48 years since I was out on the ice! I'm looking forward to it, and I'll probably regret it 40 minutes after I get out there! I'll let you know.
- 2) Pastor Woods and I have scheduled another drive in Communion service for Sunday, February 21, at 3:30 PM. Just one session this time, and it's later because Pastor has "GriefShare" class until 3:00.
- 3) We are doing the "Sugarbush Maple Syrup Festival" again this year. We'll be serving take-out food on the weekends of February 27-28 and March 6-7. Sign-ups are open. We'll need your help.

