

# The St. John's Pulpit

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## **WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO SIN**

Zephaniah 3:14-20

The Third Sunday of Advent, December 16, 2018  
by Senior Minister, Rev. Dennis W. Foust, PhD



A young man paying off college debt, needed a small loan to buy a used car. He walked into a bank to apply for \$5,000. He was concerned when the manager took the loan application to the back office and was gone for a long time. Eventually, she appeared and asked him to sign the loan agreement. When the young man signed, bells started ringing, employees sang 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' and balloons dropped from the ceiling. The manager ripped up the loan agreement and explained this \$5,000 loan included the one billionth dollar loaned by the bank; the young man would never have to repay this loan. The young man said with a big smile, "I meant to apply for \$500,000."

In Jesus, God reveals to you a Savior who forgives the debt of your sin.  
Ask for all the forgiveness you really need.

The Psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Menninger, began his book entitled, '*Whatever Became of Sin?*' with a story from the streets of Chicago. A stern-faced plainly-dressed man would slowly raise his hand to point at passersby and then say, "GUILTY." Some passersby stared at the man, others looked away while others frowned, smiled or gestured. One passerby looked at the man and asked, "How did you know?"

In our society, we value therapy and counseling; and we should. We decry the criminality, public moral and ethical failures of others; and we should.

Yet, we must not neglect dealing with our own sin.

Jesus spoke of noticing specks in the lives of others while failing to notice beams in ourselves.

We argue our way out of bad choices, excuse our words of immaturity and explain away our actions of revenge. We placate our regrets and pacify our failures as short-comings suggesting they should merely be understood as normal.

We dare not lower the bar of expectation below God's will.

Beloved, I remind you that the primary oppressor of your life for you to confront is NOT any political party or politician, terrorist group, or liberal or fundamentalist movement.

The primary oppressor in your life is your own sin and its companions – guilt and shame.

You know that to suggest you do not sin is a lie.

God's salvation works in you as you work on your relationship with The Living God.

This includes confessing your sin to God and seeking forgiveness from and reconciliation with those you injure.

When you fail to confess your sin or seek reconciliation, you allow your guilt and shame to oppress you by holding you inside a spiritual prison; robbing you of the joy of your salvation. It is not God's will for you that you live inside a spiritual prison of guilt and shame. God desires for you to embrace God's joy of salvation; it is the key to your prison.

The prophet Zephaniah calls you to sing with joy for the Lord is in your midst to overcome your most powerful oppressor.

God has come to you to take away your sin, your shame and all judgements against you.

In Jesus, God has entered our world to stay.

As you allow Jesus to be born into and mature in your life, he nurtures the joy of your salvation.

The psychiatrist, Carl Jung, said he never worked with a patient who sought a genuine spiritual relationship with God through humility and authenticity who continued to be controlled by anxiety.

In other words, when you nurture your relationship with the God who has come to be with you in Jesus, when you regularly confess your sin to God, claim God's forgiveness and seek to be reconciled to those you injure, you are being made whole – you are experiencing the joy of your salvation."

Beloved, on this Sunday of Joy, I proclaim good news to you.

We know what happened to sin; In Jesus, God revealed a savior and delivered salvation.

Your sin is forgiven!

Your oppressor has been defeated.

**JOY IS LIVING IN THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S SALVATION WHICH IS AT WORK IN YOU.**

Amen and AMEN!

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COMMISSIONING: (In Honor of Dr. Seuss)

*I know you folks are all grown up, sophisticated, mature, responsible and such;*

*I know you've learned how to pretend and not let your joy show too much.*

*But maybe, just maybe, maybe it wouldn't be too wrong,*

*For you to get excited about Jesus breaking forth in joyful song.*