

METANOIA/CHANGE OF HEART

Speaker: Spiritual Director

Time: Saturday 6:45 p.m.

Length: 30 minutes maximum

Purpose:

This talk flows from the previous one, “Unless a Grain of Wheat Dies.”

Since by Baptism we are plunged—buried with Christ into His death—we also must “die” in order to rise. In this talk, we prepare for the death (our confession of sin) and for absolution (our reconciliation with God).

Outline (Begin your talk here.)

Scripture Reading: Luke 22:55–62

Response (ALL): “The Lord turned around and looked straight at Peter and Peter remembered [the Lord’s words] . . . Peter went out and wept bitterly.” (Luke 2:61–62)

Introduction:

Briefly, recall the “Unless a Grain of Wheat Dies” talk. For the Christian, death comes first, then life. “Those who try to gain their own life will lose it; but those who lose their life for my sake will gain it” (Matthew 10:39).

The first, if not the only step, in dying to self is admitting sin (confession).

I. Confession is difficult; it makes us vulnerable.

A. It’s like the stages we face in any human death or trauma: denial, rejection, anger, defensiveness, and bargaining.

1. **Denial:** “I’m not a sinner; I didn’t do anything wrong.” We manage to ignore the obvious; we deny the seriousness of sin.
2. **Rejection:** “I didn’t *sin*, I just made an unfortunate choice. What I did isn’t so bad.” We rewrite the rules to fit our desires, and we twist the truth of God.
3. **Anger:** “God, you’re picking on me. Why *that* sin? It’s your fault. If you hadn’t set me up, I wouldn’t have needed to sin.” Like Adam blaming God for giving him Eve, we blame God for our sin.
4. **Defensiveness:** “I’m not really so bad. Compared with what others are doing, I’m not so bad at all. Go accuse someone else!” We use others’ sins to justify our own sins.
5. **Bargaining:** “Well, God, maybe I did sin a little. But forgive me this time, deliver me from this mess this time, and I promise I’ll never do it again.” We think we can make deals with God. *(Provide personal examples of the above if appropriate.)*

B. Though confession is difficult, it is possible in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. He is transforming our hearts. In Christ, we are changing from a life neither He nor we want to a life that He desires for us.

2. *Metanoia* is a Greek word that means “change.” It is also translated “repentance.” Repentance is changing, turning around, dying to self.
3. In Aramaic, *metanoia* can also mean “returning home.” This is like the Lost Son parable, when the son returns home to where the father wants him to be. For us, it’s when we return home to the original, pure holiness of when God created us.

II. Compare Peter and Judas on Maundy Thursday.

- A. **Peter:** He hits rock bottom. Broke commandments 1, (2), 4, 8, to say the least. He also broke the two Great Commandments (Matthew 22:37–39). When Jesus looked at Peter, Peter experienced the guilt of his betrayal. Peter saw that he had broken his relationship with his Friend and his God. And Peter felt the weight of his sin and cried. This is what God’s Law does. **It shows us our sin.** And it drives us, like it drove Peter, to Christ to whom we make our confession.
- B. **Judas:** His sin drove him to literal and spiritual death. Broke commandments 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, to say the least. Worse, he broke the two Great Commandments. Having done so, Judas also saw that he had broken his relationship with his Friend and his God. And Judas felt the weight of his sin. But Judas refused to confess, to repent, to change. Jesus still offered love to the end; He called Judas “friend.”

III. The Problem with sin is that it has consequences!

When we choose anything over Jesus, it is sin. It always destroys two relationships (the two Great Commandments). Sin always makes Christian relationships impossible—even the sins we think are private (1 Corinthians 12:26). (*Give examples, if possible.*) Our hope is only in the Gospel that removes sin and restores relationships.

IV. Tonight’s Invitation: Surrender “Self” to God

- A. Tonight we invite you to take a long, honest, difficult, accurate look at yourself, to make confession and to receive forgiveness. Because sin destroys community, we invite you to confess in two ways:
 1. First, as a group, in a general Service of Confession.
 2. Second, individually with one of the pastors.
- B. We invite the second because when you reveal your sin to another person, *you* are more conscious of it and its seriousness. In private confession, we perceive more accurately how things really are—the confession, the forgiveness, and the desire to change. Saying it impresses its reality on us.
- C. Private confession also personalizes the forgiveness in an indescribable, beautiful way—to which anyone who has been on a TEC can testify.

V. Some Objections

- A. **It isn’t Lutheran.** Look at the Arise Book, pages 15–16, which are taken from Luther’s Small Catechism.
- B. **No Lutheran church does this.** Its decline among Lutherans occurred only in the last 150 to 200 years.

- C. **Why to a person? Can't I just confess to God?** Confessing to the pastor (or to any Christian) is confessing to God ... and the absolution is also from God (Arise Book, pp. 12–13).
- D. **I don't know what to confess.** Check your life for broken relationships and sins that are especially troubling you. Look also at the Ten Commandments (Arise Book, pp. 17–21). Think not only of actual but also original sin. Think not only of sins of commission but also sins of omission.
- E. **I don't know what to say.** Share your hurts and your participation in making them hurts. Share your guilt in hurting others, especially those you love. Confess "those sins which trouble us in heart and mind."
- F. **I'm afraid.** Others have lived through it! Or is the real problem that "I don't want to let go of my sin by revealing it to anyone?" We beg you, let go. Die to self in order that you might have new life in Jesus. Fear can get in the way. "I'm afraid the pastor will think less of me." No way! We have all sinned—including the pastor—in ways as serious as your own.
- G. **What will happen?** The pastor is a person who has also privately confessed his sin and received absolution, so he knows what it is like to speak of our sins in the presence of another person. The pastor is bound, in his ordination vow, to keep what's shared in confession absolutely confidential.
 1. When you come in, the pastor will ask you to sit and maybe have a prayer with you. He may describe how the absolution will be spoken and what kinds of prayers may be said.
 2. When you feel it is time, simply speak to God the sins that trouble you.
 3. When you are finished, the pastor will speak the words of the Absolution, using your name. He may place his hand on your head. The words he speaks are God's words for you.

Please come. Forgiveness is incredible.

VI. Some Directions for This Evening

- A. Write a sin that is bothering you on a piece of paper. No one will see it.
- B. After the Service of Confession, meditate using Arise Book, pages 17–22.
- C. Make private confession, then continue to meditate while others visit with the pastor.
- D. Stay in the church. Please don't visit idly while others meditate.

Note 1: *At the end of the talk, remind everyone to take along their Bible, Arise Book, the Way of the Cross meditations, and the slips of paper with sins. Ask the group to follow you to the first station of the Way of the Cross.*

Note 2: *At end of ashes service, remind TECites of the invitation to confession.*

No discussion question follows this talk.