

“VACATION FOR THE SOUL”
“Confessing to God: Fear and Awe”

We have begun a new sermon series, “Vacation for the Soul.” As a child, I always looked forward to summer vacations. I still feel that sense of relaxation when summer hits. I spend long evenings on the deck, ride my bike for both exercise and enjoyment, find more moments to be with family and friends. I believe we need vacations, we need time when the pace slows down and we can savor life a bit more. In scripture, that is called “Sabbath.” Our lives have become so complex and driven, that this summer is a good time to focus and reflect on a vacation for our souls, that we might deepen in our spiritual walk and learn to find the paths which connect us with Christ. Our study guide will help us focus on one of the classical Spiritual Disciplines and on Wednesdays there will be a prayer time from 12:10 pm -12:40 pm in our chapel to practice that discipline and have a prayer pause in the week. Last Sunday we looked at Fasting in all its forms. This week our focus is on “confession.” This practice may be uncomfortable in a different way from fasting. The honesty required can be a vehicle through which we experience grace upon grace. May our confessions this week reconnect us to God and remind us of immense power to change our lives.

Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Confessing to God: Fear and Awe”**

Prayer for the Week

Our hearts long for your cleansing touch, Merciful One. In your grace, wipe away our guilt, and renew our spirits, that we may serve you with joy all our days. Amen. Psalm Prayer based on Psalm 51, in Upper Room Worship Book, #277

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, June 25, 2018 Job 38: 1-3 Richard Foster in his book *Celebration of Discipline* writes, “At the heart of God is the desire to forgive and to give.” These first three verses today may not seem to bear out that sentence. Up to this point Job has been struggling, crying out to God about the injustice he has experienced. His “friends” have explained to him that maybe he wasn’t all that good, maybe he should just confess. His wife encourages him to curse God and die. Job often cries out that he wishes he had never been born. But Job never curses God, Job wrestles with God and with his life. God confronts Job, in some ways as equal. There are not many other places where God goes toe to toe with a human being. Job gets what he asks for and it may be more than he expected or bargained for in the end. Before God can give and forgive, human beings need to confess they are not God, they are not in control and they do not know everything. *Today, pray the prayer printed in this study guide. I think this gets to the heart of God’s desire to forgive and our desire to be forgiven.*

Tuesday, 6/26/18 Job 38: 4-11 Here is where God lays out and continues to do so for the next three chapters. Obviously Job didn’t create the world and everything in it. Job was not in charge and he repents of his own limited ability to understand the mystery and majesty of God. Now God was unhappy with Job’s friends who also had limited ability to understand. They thought they knew it all as well. God commands that Job pray for his friends and offer sacrifices on their behalf. Confession is not just individual, it is communal. In our culture, we often don’t want to do “communal prayers of confession” because why should we confess as a group? In the scripture, we are all, if you will, “guilty by association.” In the traditional prayer of confession it says, *“Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”* There is never a time at least one of those things are not true for me. *Today, pray this confession, asking God to forgive us so that each one of us may be free to serve with love.*

Wednesday, 6/27/18 Psalm 51 Confession begins in pain; not physical usually, but emotional, mental and spiritual pain. Confession comes from deep within when we have said or done something that is contrary to our moral center, that has hurt someone we love, or we have participated in something that is wrong, unethical, immoral or maybe even illegal. The visceral pain encourages us to admit where we have failed or gone wrong. The psalm for today, tradition says, was written by David after he had been confronted with his affair and the murder of Uriah. David gives voice to this pain each of us have when we are broken, afraid and wanting to make amends. Richard Foster writes, “The Discipline of confession brings an end to pretense. ...Honesty leads to confession, and confession leads to change.” *Today, slowly read this psalm and list those whom you have hurt or sinned against. Begin to discern how you will make amends out of your confession.*

Thursday, 6/28/18 Mark 4: 35-37 How much of our lives feel like there are “gale-force winds” or “great windstorms” beating about us? “When the storms of life are raging, stand by me,” the old gospel hymn implores. When our lives are filled with fears, real and imagined, we are overwhelmed. We end up with a drum beat of how we are “losers,” we are “dumb,” we are “unworthy,” we are “incompetent,” or we will “never amount to anything.” These voices don’t help us truly acknowledge who we are or who we are called to be. Confession is about real acts and words or those times we have not spoken or acted in a way that brought God’s love and grace into the world. Forgiveness is not about imaginary sins, but about the things we really do and say. The winds of grace and love encourage us to turn back to God, to know that we are capable of living differently and more faithfully. Like Job, we cry out to God that somehow God doesn’t care about our lives. *Like Monday, read the prayer that is printed in this study guide. Be reminded that in the storms of life, God is with us.*

Friday, 6/29/18 Mark 4: 39-41 Jesus calms the wind and asks why the disciples are frightened? Where is their faith? Of course they are in awe and wonder who this Jesus is? Tish Harrison Warren in her book, *Liturgy of the Ordinary*, writes, “Confession reminds us that none of us gather for worship because we are ‘pretty good people.’ But we are new people, marked by grace. Repentance is not usually a moment wrought in high drama. It is the steady drumbeat of a life in Christ and therefore, a day in Christ.” In other words we fail, we lose faith, we lose heart and part and parcel of a life of faith is offering our confession for things we have done and not done, for the words we have spoken and not spoken. Confession is not for the purpose of putting us down or making us feel bad. Confession is the tool which we use in order to be more fully present to God and more fully engaged in the work of the kingdom. *Today, I invite you to confess, to meditate, to pray and to be immersed in the love and grace of Christ.*