

Defining Sin

Good morning, as some of you may already know me, I am Lois Williams, usually a hospice chaplain, however I am beginning to enjoy this Sunday liturgical gig.

I need to warn you, you may not like today's topic, we as Episcopalians don't usually like this topic, but I feel it is one that is long overdue for discussion, and also one that can change your life, not out of fear, but from a place of wisdom. And let's admit it, it can be a hard road from ignorance into wisdom. What is today's topic?

Sin.

All our readings today are rooted in the journey of sin. It is interesting that they all involve women... and could be called the Biblical female version of the Good, the Bad, and the ugly. So let's look a little more deeply into these three stories.

In our first story we have two sinners, both Ahab and Jezebel. We have Ahab coveting something he cannot have, and quite frankly acting like a child in that he refuses to eat until he gets what he wants. We have Jezebel actually arranging for the death of Naboth as Naboth just wanted to keep his own land. Two peas in a pod, both committing sins. What do they have in common, they are looking for love in material ways. And we more than 2 thousands years later sit here making a judgment.

Our second story involved King David arranging for the death of Uriah so that he could take possession of his wife. Similarly to Jezebel he arranges a death. As for Uriah's wife, she is caught up in the middle and there is no telling of her objections to her desire to be with David, although she is not immediately involved in today's reading. And again, we sit here 2 thousand or so years later making a judgment.

And lastly we have a woman who has sinned, and what sin we don't know, washing the feet of Jesus with her tears and drying them with her hair, and yet it is not she who has sinned, but Simon, for not providing hospitality. And again, here we sit, making judgment. Let's make clear exactly what we are making a judgment about.

In the Hebrew context, the context in which these stories take place, we need to know exactly what sin is, not so we can judge others, but so we can be aware of ourselves.

The original word sin means - **to miss**.

It doesn't mean to commit something wrong; it simply means to miss, to be absent.

The Hebrew root for the word sin, means to miss.

That exists in a few English words: misconduct, misbehavior.

To miss means not to be there, doing something without being present there — this is the only sin. And the only virtue: while you are doing something you are **fully alert** — what Gurdjieff calls **selfremembering**, what Buddha calls being rightly **mindful**, what Krishnamurti calls **awareness**, what Kabir has called **SURATI**. To be there! — that's all that is needed, nothing more. You need not change anything, and even if you try to change you cannot.

The original Hebrew word for sin is very beautiful. By translating it as "sin," Christians have missed the very message of Jesus. **The original Hebrew word for sin is so totally different from your idea of sin that it will be a surprise to you.**

**The root word means forgetfulness;
it has nothing to do with what you are doing.**

**The whole thing is whether you are doing it with conscious being or out of unconsciousness.
Are you doing it with a self-remembering or have you completely forgotten yourself? ¹**

When you define sin this way, it is easy to see how we all fall into the category of sinfulness. I think my biggest sin is that I can drive in the morning to work, and literally don't know how I got there. According to the Hebrew definition of sin, that is a Big Sin. You may say then, that I didn't hurt anybody, and I do it all the time. That is not the point. The point is, I am doing something unaware that could potentially cause great harm to myself and those around me. My whole being should be trying to be aware – especially aware that I am a child of God, I am loved by God in an eternal way beyond my understanding, I with gratitude should live my life. I also want to shine my light and lead others to be awake. Awake that I am part of God and so are you, and the earth, and all the creatures in it.

Jezebel, if she thought about what she was doing from the standpoint of knowing the love of God in her heart, living with gratitude, she may have chosen a different path. Same for David, and whatever sins the woman washing Jesus' feet had done.

We were graced with a body, we should know what it is doing. Yes. So often we follow blindly without question, or our motives are not based on being truly present. And as a human there is

¹ OSHO, "The Original Hebrew word for "sin" has been wrongly translated... Its true meaning will pleasantly surprise you!" October 31, 2011.

no way to be 100% present all the time, and those who come close, like Ghandi, and even Mohammad Ali, are aware of who they are, what they are, what they are doing, and willing to take the consequences, in a hope of waking up the rest of us.

Jesus was without sin, not because he never got angry – we see his anger in the temple overturning the tables. Not because he did not love deeply, because we can hear the tenderness in his actions of patience with the disciples, not because he didn't have sex, and I say that because what good Jewish man would not marry in his late teens – even though we have no Biblical proof – I feel he was probably a widower by the time we pick up the story with his Baptism. The point is, it is not our humanism that makes us sin. It is our lack of the awareness of our Godliness, of truly being a loved child of God that makes us sin. The awareness that we cause others to suffer, our unawareness of ourselves and our selfishness, our unawareness of our greed, lust, our need to have something beyond our already given blessings. An unawareness of the goodness and blessings that God has already shared with us. Jesus was ALWAYS present in his human form, much to the dislike of those in authority around him.

OK so we now have a fuller picture of sin. What is the cure? It is not kneeling and pleading with God, although some may have a different opinion. It is not sacrificing a burnt offering, or offering oneself into martyrdom, although that can happen when we become truly aware of our actions and those of others, it is not going to church every Sunday in the hope of being slain by the Spirit, or feeling better about oneself.

The cure for sin, as Jesus puts plainly before us is Love. The woman who has sinned has shown great love. Her actions are loving Jesus, being aware of Jesus, being in the present moment with Jesus, having faith that her Love for him is enough to turn her life around so she may go in peace.

What would the story be like if Jezebel felt truly loved by God, would she have to stop at nothing to gain the love of her husband. Could she instead love her husband so deeply the vineyard became a moot point? What if David loved God enough to tame his lust? What if Simon loved Jesus enough to anoint his head?

Jesus tells us there is no difference between one sin or another. Sin is sin, love is love. Most of Jesus' parables turn our world upside down by showing us there is no grading system for sin, or for love, but the greater the love, the more of a chance you are not going to do something out of unconsciousness – suffering the consequence later.

You may say, but if I do something out of love, there may be consequences as well, even Jesus was killed on the cross. I say yes, there are consequences to love, and when you are fully alive in that love, the consequences can be extremely painful. The difference is the peace of mind and heart that you have acted out of love.

I challenge you this week, to sin no more, to act out of awareness and love. Love yourself, love your neighbor, in awareness. Not out of fear, not because scripture tells you to, but because you are aware. Aware that God loves you, and when you are aware, you realize the impact you have on another, and yourself. We are Christians, we are to be known by our love. Jesus showed us this love –this awareness- the blessedness of just being here on earth on this journey. Let's model that instead of judging ourselves and others. Let's be aware and awake when making a decision. Aware that we already have all the love we need from God/ from Jesus. Let's look at the motives we use as excuses for not acting out of complete love. This way we are less likely to misbehave, do misconduct, or be misunderstood. And when we fail to be awake and conscious, we miss the mark, or we misbehave, let us fall back on the Love of Christ, and continue on...knowing our faith has saved us, and we can go in peace.

Amen.