

Guilty or Not Guilty?

Lets start with Prayer:

Our Father, we seek your presence with us in this time of worship, that we may be enriched through your word, and through our shared time together. As we turn to your Word, may it speak into our hearts , and renew your spirit within us.

In Jesus name we ask this. Amen

SONG SIS 509 by Henry Smith

Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy one,
Give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ his Son.

And now, let the weak say I am strong,
Let the poor say I am rich because of what the Lord has done for us,
Give Thanks

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BIBLE READINGS:

- Leviticus: 16:1—2, 15—16

The day of atonement 1—2: The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the Lord. The Lord said to Moses “Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the most holy place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover or else he will die. For I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.”

15—16 (in part) : He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people—and sprinkle the blood on the atonement cover as a sin offering for the people- in this way he will make atonement..... for himself and for the whole community of Israel.....he shall then bring forth the live goat, lay hands on it for the whole sins of Israel, he shall send the live goat into the wilderness, taking with it all the sins to a remote place..... ”

The original Hebrew meaning of the term Atonement, was “to cover”. Leviticus , the guidebook for Hebrew worship, gives us a glimpse of the Messianic purpose and promise as can be seen by the sacrificial goat (Christ’s blood) and the -- “freed”-- scapegoat, (the resurrection), and a life of renewal -- for all. In Christ, once and for all..

Have you ever felt guilty? I know I have, and there are times when its very hard to NOT feel guilty. Pope Gregory c. 600 compiled a list of 7 deadly sins (greed, sloth, wrath, envy , pride ...) and later a list of virtues (faith, hope, charity, justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude....) not sure how that played out in Catholic confessionals?

After many years in, and around law courts, and preparing briefs for prosecutors, I know a little about guilt and guilty pleas, also about law AND justice (No, not the same, just (distant) relations).

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- Luke 23: 36—43

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!

But the other criminal rebuked him “Don’t you fear God?” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus answered him “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise”.

The guilty had two options. The first, anger and denial. The second confession, contrition and redemption. The latter available because atonement had been achieved. This “process” of forgiveness is spelt out for us through the lost son parable (Luke 15:21). In prison ministry this is usually a moot point. Being sorry you were caught, or just a casual “sorry is not quite enough in my understanding

When thinking of living with guilt, I am drawn to Saul’s encounter with Stephen’s death (Acts 8:1—3), after which he notoriously went on a crusade against Christians. How did he live with that in later years?? Just a question perhaps, but what he did must have cast a shadow over his life. Could that have been the affliction he spoke of? (2 Corinthians 12:1—10). Maybe it was guilt? (depression), “a messenger of satan” he describes it as.

Certainly sin can weigh heavily upon us, even though Christ has set us free. All have sinned and fallen short of God’s purpose. How wonderful that we can ALL look to the atonement achieved in Christ.

But it’s even better than that. Jesus’ complete understanding of us, and our struggle, Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (see also Luke 18:13—14) this leaves us in no doubt that our flawed life, scarred selves, can shape up as “not guilty” in and through the atoning, resurrected Christ. In other words, Paul says it like this Gal 5:1 “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened by a yoke of slavery”.

May His Blessing be yours.

HYMN: AHB 478 William Williams 1717—1791

1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah; pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou are mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand;
Bread of Heaven, feed me now and evermore.
2. Open now the crystal fountain whence the living waters flow;
let the fiery, cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through;
strong deliverer, be thou my strength and shield.
3. When I tread the verge of Jordan bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell’s destruction, land me safe on Canann’s side;
songs and praises, I will ever give to thee.

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PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD – guide - latest Barnabas Magazine- Burkina Faso:

Lord God, our thoughts turn to Christian brothers and sisters in Africa this day in Burkina Faso. The poverty and persecution of the Christian minority in this country is beyond our understanding. We ask Lord that they will experience the peace of the risen Jesus as a comfort, and a guide. Be with them Father, and with the Barnabas workers who bring the every day support, the e-pap, shelter, and many other daily needs.

Draw near Lord, and help us to be generous both in prayer and money as we join with them in the spirit, in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

HYMN: AHB 141 Charles Wesley 1707--- 1788

1. O for a thousand tongues to sing my great redeemers praise,
the glories of our God and King, the triumphs of his grace!.
2. Jesus! The name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music to the sinner's ears, 'tis life, and health, and peace.
3. He breaks the power of cancelled sin, he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me.
4. He speaks, and listening to his voice, new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.
5. Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ:
ye blind, behold your Saviour come; and leap, ye lame for joy!
6. My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad, the honours of your name.

(That hymn reiterates Paul's words to the Galatian church and for us today!)

BLESSING :

How much better to get wisdom than gold, and understanding rather than silver. May the peace, blessing and renewal in Jesus Christ, be with you , now and always. (Proverbs 16:16)

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