

Grace, Mercy & Peace from God our Father & our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen

When Sara and I discovered that we were going to have a baby we got this warm glowing feeling. As the pregnancy progressed, Sara started to show and we began to tell people the good feelings and joy of imminent parenting swelled within us. Then Sophia was born. She came three weeks early, but she was healthy.

Two days later, I brought Sara and this incredibly fragile infant home. *I recall being suddenly overwhelmed by the fact that this child was now entirely our responsibility.* All the warm fuzzy feelings evaporated, and *what I was completely aware of was how utterly unprepared I was for parenting.* There would be plenty of supportive people down the line, *but the life and destiny of this helpless, little child depended on us.*

That sobering moment unsettled me. More than at any previous moment in life, *I knew that I had to grow up, take responsibility for myself, confront my shortcomings as well as I could, and face the world for the sake of this innocent life for which I was responsible.*

Lately, there seems to be an epidemic of *people refusing to take responsibility for their own behavior.* We've seen it from the Oval office to the board room to the kitchen table. The epidemic boils down to a cultural,

societal and individual abdication of everything that does not immediately affect us.

When was the last time you heard a public figure actually admit doing something wrong and take responsibility for it?

In the wake of the “Me too” movement we’ve witnessed a great many people fall from grace as institutions, corporations, charitable organizations, and people in general distance themselves from sexual predation or one sort or another, but **how many people have acknowledged their culpability and resigned because they have failed in their leadership and personal responsibility?** Virtually none.

When they’re no longer able to hide behind some excuse they engage in damage control, say they’re behavior that was “unethical” – not wrong. We see public shaming, but very little public repentance. Such confessions.

It’s not just public figures anymore. These days *everyone* at every level is *out to dodge the bullet of personal responsibility*. We try to blame it on the system, the government, someone else, or just ignore it and hope no one brings it up. *As we move ever deeper into bubbles of individual media and private security, we see an ever-deepening unwillingness of people to own up to their mistakes and their consequences on others.*

We are living through *a crisis of integrity and responsibility* in our generation, and we continue to see the consequences in thoughtless, *irresponsible environmental policies*, increasingly volatile and violent weather caused by global warming, *an ever increasing number of children killed in school shootings* (we’re up to 122 children since Columbine in 1999) and adults killed with mass shooting – 310 in the same period. And it’s *all because people who can, refuse to take responsibility for what’s*

happening. *The urgency to address problems has been replaced by a growing need to arm and protect ourselves from the problem.* The truth: at some level – often one we dismiss – ***we are all responsible for what's happening in the larger world.*** ***Responsibility means simple that we are “able to repond,” but we don’t.***

We don't care enough about creation or future generations to stop driving around solo in SUVs. ***We don't contact our elected representatives to demand change, even when children are dying.*** We don't care that the chemicals we use on our yards and fields poison the sound, the rivers, the oceans; we only care about having picture perfect green lawns. And ***people in positions of responsibility*** – that means positions able to respond to the situation – seek only after their political or business future, and nothing changes.

This is the reason that confession is the root of Christian life.

And yet we do not feel particularly inclined to do confess these days. But, ***it is only in confessing – to each other and God – that we own up to our “responsibility,” change our behavior, and address what is wrong in our lives and the world.*** Otherwise, we are enslaved to our own lies and fears about ourselves.

We would rather go on with our personal belief system which allows us to look passable by comparison, or be just plain blind to our offenses toward God and our fellow human beings – including those who will come after us. Because for the most part we go through life thinking that we pretty much haven't got anything to be sorry about, and if we have done something we feel it's been justified by some circumstance or other person's behavior.

Ash Wednesday was a pretty good indicator. On Ash Wednesday we gather to confess our sins, to admit to God that we have failed to care for our neighbor across the street and across the world, that we have chosen our own selfish comfort over the basic needs of others, and only 30 people showed up. Ironically, 85 showed up to eat pancakes.

The situation was *the same in Noah's day. People had pretty much abandoned everything except belief in their individual rights and selfish pursuits. Humanity was suffering under its own callous, self-centeredness, its own deluded, self-righteousness, but God knew.* God could not ignore the pain, corruption, wickedness and evil that humanity decided to ignore or even condone. *God decided to "respond",* and put an end to all the flesh on the earth.

Except for Noah. Noah was a righteous man. He walked with God Genesis 6 says. *No doubt, he wasn't perfect, but he must have been honest with God, acknowledging his limits, faults and offenses before God and neighbor. Being honest allows you to walk along with someone, even if you've hurt or offended them.* It allows the other person to know that they are important to us and we are aware that we may have harmed them. Noah wasn't sinless, but he was honest about his sinfulness, and that allowed him to walk with God with integrity and righteousness. *Noah allowed his neighbor to matter and God to be God.*

See, if we ignore the sin, we have to ignore God also, because God knows, and we know that God knows.

Jesus didn't ignore human sin. He didn't even try to dodge the bullet of personal responsibility. He didn't act like it was excusable, or permissible, or explainable; *he acknowledged it, took responsibility for it,*

and suffered for it. This morning we read about the temptation of our Lord. ***Mark doesn't specifically say what that temptation was, but I suspect the temptation amounted to some variation of taking responsibility for no one else but Himself.*** ***Even though it wasn't his sin, but ours.***

But sin divides us from God, and that's not what God desires, and so ***the Father sent his Son to respond to our self-absorption, so that we start to admit our humanness, and start living again.*** Lent is about just this: ***coming to accept our responsibility for the way our lives and our world is, and then turn to God for help so that together we can live an honest and abundant life with God and each other.***

Jesus died so that we can return to God without fear, knowing that God does not desire our death, but desires that we turn to God and live. ***Jesus came to show us another way of living with integrity. Acknowledging that we are not the most important thing in the world, but still loved and important as part of God's people.*** He came to show us how to make each day of our lives count toward building his Kingdom of love, rather than wasting our efforts trying to camouflage or cover our mistakes; ***because "thoughts and prayers" just won't cut it when children are dying.***

Christ comes to give us a chance to come clean and admit that we haven't got any idea what we are doing or where we are going, or what we are about unless we follow Him. But ***we can all respond.***

He invites you this day to face yourself, turn, learn and follow in a new life of personal responsibility. ***The life and destiny of our children depended on us.***

AMEN !!!