



BelPres Church

Fess Up

Speaker: Scott Dudley

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Well, thank you so much for being here. It's great to see you. I'll hear those of you online as well. Those of you in the room, thanks for joining us on a really sunny, beautiful Sunday morning.

Some of you have heard me tell a story before that I heard a while back on the radio about a 10 year old boy and his friends were playing baseball and they broke a window in an apartment complex and all the boy's friends ran away. But the boy went into the apartment building and knocked on every door until he found the manager and told him that he broke the window.

So the manager then took the boy home to his parents and said to his parents, OK, you're going to have to pay for this window, but don't be too hard on your son because he told me himself that he'd broken the window. Well, the boy's sister was there delighted to see her brother in trouble. And she said, what are you going to do to Bobby? And the father said, I'm going to give him a new bike because he had been honest and confessed his mistake.

And in a culture, in our culture where when celebrities or politicians get caught doing something bad, they say things like mistakes were made. Oh, far out right. Mistakes were made by you, dude. Right. In that culture, that boy's honesty is so refreshing and so hard to do right.

It's hard to do, and all of us, including myself, sometimes don't fess up when we should. But that's because we don't understand the gospel. It is not hard to be honest about our sins, flaws, and mistakes if we really understand the gospel.

That when we confess our sins, Jesus gives us grace and forgiveness just like this Dad did with his Son.

When we get honest about our sin, Jesus response is not I told you so. It's not what a terrible person you are. It's not you should feel guilty for a while to work off your sin. It's I love you and I'm going to help you change for the better. You're not on your own now. That doesn't mean he'll spare us the consequences of our sin. We still face those. But with Jesus, we are forgiven because and he has the right to forgive us because he is God in human form who died on a cross to pay the price for those sins.

He has the authority to say you are forgiven, you are set free, you are clean. We're doing a sermon series called Holy Spirit Unleashed about what happens when people and churches give the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus living inside of him of us. What happens when we give the Holy Spirit free reign in our lives and in our churches?

And traditionally when lots of people do that and lots of churches do that, that's been called revival. And we're looking at those times in history where there have been what we're calling transformational revivals that lasted for years and actually changed cultures for the better.

Starting in Acts chapter 2 in the Bible when the Holy Spirit is poured out on Jesus followers. And from there, the Jesus movement grew 40% per decade for the 1st 300 years and transformed the Roman Empire for the better. In U.S. history, there was the First Great Awakening in the 1700s, the Second Great Awakening in the 1800s, and the Azusa St. revival in the early 1900s.

And all of these transformation revivals had some things in common. For instance, large numbers of people coming to Jesus, intense emotional experiences of the presence of Jesus, signs, wonders and miracles and social healing. Things like abolition, racial justice, child labour reform, rights for women, temperance movement all came out of these revivals.

Now none of these revivals were perfect. They had their they had flaws, but they also change thing for the better. And we selected the text for each Sunday several months ago. And there's an actual order to how we're doing these texts and these sermons.

So, you know, we started two weeks ago this series by saying often what precedes revival is a holy discontent with the status quo. And then last week, Pastor Annie talked about how revival is burst in prayer. And what both of these

two things lead to historically is confession and repentance of sin, which is what we're going to talk about today.

You've come on Confession Sunday, Yay. We're going to pass the microphone around, and you're going to tell your family here about your deepest, darkest sins.

This is nothing but good news. Confession and repentance is nothing but good news. This is how Jesus sets us free. This is how Jesus breaks the chains. This is how Jesus changes us and through US, changes our world.

If we really understand the gospel, we understand that confession and repentance is nothing but joy because it is the key to freedom and transformation. And every one of these revivals, confession and repentance was a big part of them. Because transformational revival doesn't begin with changing culture. It begins with changing hearts and proceeds to culture.

And you can't fix a problem and unless you diagnose it correctly. And the problem is sin, which is anything that goes against God's command to love him above others, everything else, and to love others the way we love ourselves. And our sin hurts us. It hurts other people and it wrecks whole cultures.

And the word confess means to agree together, or in the original Greek of the New Testament, to say the same thing as it means to agree with Jesus about what he says is sin. That does not mean wallowing in guilt and shame and feeling terrible about ourselves. That's not the gospel. It's saying to Jesus, I agree with you that this behavior or this attitude misses the mark of your intended best. And then he says back to us, I love you, I forgive you, and I'm going to help you live differently.

The Bible says it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. Not his sternness, not his anger, not his punishment. It's his kindness that leads us to repentance. And when you know that you're going to be met with grace and forgiveness, it's easier to confess.

So if you have a Bible, turn to Second Chronicles Chapter 7. We're going to really challenge you this Sunday by turning to an obscure book in the Bible. If you can use the table of contents to find it, or you can just follow along on the screens. And just just a reminder, we preach from the New International Version of the Bible. Your translation may be different. Don't let that distract you.

And the context of this passage is that King Solomon has just finished building the temple and then God comes to him in a dream. And God says this Chapter 7,

verse 13, when I shut up the heavens so there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people.

OK, let's just stop there. What's up with that? Why would God send a plague of locusts to eat all the crops? Well, in the Bible, the Israelites attributed everything to God. Whether God actually caused them or just allowed them to happen, we would probably say God allows it to happen.

And I know that raises a lot of questions, and I've preached a lot of sermons on those questions in the past. That's not for today, but for today. Think of it this way. When your life feels like it's falling apart, or when your nation feels like it's falling apart, anybody. Anybody.

Here's how you find hope. Do this. Here's how you find hope. Here's how you find joy. Here's how you find revival.

Verse 14 If my people who are called by my name. So in context here, it means the Old Testament, it means the Israelites, but the New Testament calls Christians the new Israel and the word Christian literally means little Christ, sort of like mini Christ. So who is this addressed to? Does it say it? It doesn't say if those people who aren't Christians would just clean up their It says if those people who are called by my name, people who take on the name of Jesus AKA Christians, little Christ AKA you and me.

If we if my people would do what will humble themselves, that does not mean that we grovel around like the guilt ridden miserable worms. Humility is just realizing I'm not God and even though I think I know how to run my life better than God does, I actually don't know how to run my life or my marriage or my parenting or my anything better than God does. I'm prone to wander away from the things that God says will bring life to me and to others.

As I've said before, what's the difference between you and God? God never gets confused and thinks he's you. Humility is just took some of you a while to connect That humility is realizing I'm not God.

And fortunately life has a way of humbling us, doesn't it? A couple weeks ago we took a family trip to Hawaii and at one point I needed some rubber bands to hold some stuff together. So I went to the front desk of the hotel and I asked the clerk for a couple of rubber bands and she smiled and said, do you need them for your hair?

Was that necessary? Does she need to point that out? I don't think so. I can look in the mirror, right? Life has a way of humbling our and that was very humbling.

To humble ourselves is to ask the Holy Spirit to show us our sins so that we can confess it and experience Jesus grace and forgiveness. That changes us and sets us free.

A friend of mine recently said to me, you know, we think humble confession, We get this picture of us getting down on our knees, kind of groveling and Jesus is towering over us, when actually what it means is that Jesus is humble, humble enough to die for us. He is on his knees, metaphorically speaking. And it's only when we get on our knees that we can see Jesus face to face because he is humble. And if we're going to meet him, we have to meet Him in humility.

If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray. No revival ever started with a strategic plan. Every revival was burst in prayer. And prayer is the way that we acknowledge I'm not God. Oh, I think I am. Sometimes I think I know how to run this world better than He does. But it's to acknowledge I actually don't.

We can't fix our marriage issues or our friendship issues or our career issues or our nation's issues. We can't revive the places that we live, work, play, or learn. We will not see revival happen unless it is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot do it, and prayer is saying we can't. We think we can, but we can't, only by the power of the Holy Spirit. So we choose prayer over despair.

If my people were called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face. Whose face? The King's face, the president's face, money's face, our jobs, schools face, Republicans, Democrats faces no, the face of Jesus. And if we are anxious about money or career or our nation, it's because we're staring at the face of those things, which are important things. But if we are looking to them for hope or revival or salvation, we're going to, we're going to, we're going to be anxious because they will fail us if they will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn.

The word repent literally means to turn around, to make AU turn, to go the opposite direction of where you were headed. So to turn means to admit that the ways we're handling money or sex or relationships or school or career are not reviving us. In fact, they're killing us. Turn from their wicked ways.

Wow, that seems a little harsh. Wicked. I mean, you know, that's just kind of extreme. I mean, ethical growth opportunities maybe. But wicked, like, I'm not wicked. Very few people are actually wicked, except for Hitler and people who vote differently than me.

But here's the thing. The smallest things we call little sins can do a lot of damage. There's a psychologist named William Backus who says that the average person tells 200 lies a day, 200 lies a day. Now, if you're like me, you're thinking, Nah, that's too many. I don't lie like that. That would be #1 And so early in the morning, you are already on your way to the number 200.

And those little lies erode trust in a school, in a workplace, in a church, in a family, in a nation. And that erosion of trust drives suspicion and division. It does real damage.

And notice it says their wicked ways, plural. Revival is both individual and corporate. As Jesus revives more individuals, that revival goes corporate. So their sin means all our personal sins, but also called to confess corporate sin, Our family sin, our church's sin, our workplaces sin, our nation's sin, even our ancestors sin, which seems odd to us if we grew up here in the US because of our hyper individualism.

But most of the rest of the world thinks communally, and the Bible absolutely thinks communally. And there is such a thing as corporate sin, which is why people in the Bible confess the sins of their nation and even of their ancestors. They're thinking corporately.

In Leviticus 26, for instance, God says if they will confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors, I will remember their land. And we actually see this happen. Number of places in the Bible, not just here, where people confess their ancestors sin often even owning them sort of for themselves, even though they didn't actually personally commit the sins of their ancestors.

But they identify themselves with them not to feel guilty, not to feel ashamed of who they are. It's not about guilt trip. It's about recognizing that the that they have inherited the long term consequences of their ancestor sin that continue to wreck their culture, and then maybe in some cases they might even have benefited from their ancestor sins.

It's about telling the truth, because without truth, there can be no confession, and without confession there can be no repentance. And without repentance, there can be no healing.

So we confess our individual sins as well as our family's sins, our nation's sins. And our country has done some wonderful, amazing good things. We're going to celebrate the 250th anniversary. And there have been some really, really good things about the United States. And like every country, there's been some bad things.

Everything from slavery and white supremacy whose effects are still with us, to the hyper sexualized nature of our current culture that treats sex as an appetite to satisfy rather than a something sacred to unite lives and hearts and souls. A hypersexual culture that wrecks marriages, Dr. sexual addictions and body images. Image issues for both men and women that we see in excessive diet culture or the new trend of looks maxing among young men who are doing things like getting surgeries just to get a better jawline.

We confess both individual and corporate sin not to wallow in guilt, but we can't heal a problem if we don't call it a problem. If they will turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive. We are met with grace and forgiveness, not condemnation. I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land.

I will heal their land. I think our land could use some healing right? And Jesus is in the healing business and that means restored marriages, reconciled relationships, families that are thriving, unjust systems getting reformed, integrity in business, and lots and lots and lots of people finding a life giving relationship with Jesus.

When we get humble and agree with God about our sin and turn to Him, what seems dead gets revived, what seems hopeless becomes hopeful, and what seems impossible becomes possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

A great example of this is Rwanda when after the genocide where Hutus killed close to 1,000,000 Tutsis. They did this verse as a country and a lot of that was led by churches where perpetrators confess their sins to the victims and to God and work through the process of forgiveness. And we're also, Tutsis acknowledge the oppression of Hutus that they've been under for generations, which created anger, which when exploited by propaganda, erupted into the genocide.

And I have sat in some of those reconciliation seminars and over the years, I have told you a lot of different stories of victims of the genocide, who forgave the perpetrators that killed their family, who now call each other brother and sister in Christ in some cases, or even in the same church. There are people in

this church, right here in our New Hope East African Community who have done this themselves.

And today in Rwanda, there's been healing, reconciliation, and restoration. It's not perfect, there are still problems, but it's way better. It's way better. And a lot of that is because God's people got humbled, confessed their sin, and turned away from their hatred and division. And God is restoring their land. It can be done. It happened there, it can happen here.

So action steps. First, offer heartfelt confession. This week in your prayers, just in prayer, agree with Jesus about your sin. And if you're having a hard time figuring out what that is, ask Jesus to show you your sin. And if that doesn't work, ask your spouse or your friends or your coworkers or your kids. They may have a suggestion or two for you.

And then also agree with God about corporate sin in your family or workplace or in our nation, not to feel guilty, but to begin to be set free from those things.

And then second, put this date on your calendar and resolve today that you were going to go to the first one roof gathering on May 22nd, where all of our communities are going to come together. New Hope, East African Community, Chinese covenant, modern worship, traditional worship. We're going to come together, We're going to have a meal together to be to be better at community, to know each other better. We'll do some in depth teaching of the Bible from multiple cultural perspectives because that expands our understanding of Scripture. And we're going to pray.

And we're going to pray because revival is not birthed in a strategic planning session. It is birthed in prayer meetings. So we're going to pray. So even if you don't think you will like this, actually, especially if you think you won't like this, come because this is a game changer.

I am. I don't know of any other church that's doing this and I believe it's going to unleash the Holy Spirit in our lives, church region and world.

I have a friend who used to be a pastor, now isn't for a variety of different reasons, and he is very good at confessing his sin. In fact, he was the one who said told me that in order for us to see Jesus face to face, we have to be humble because Jesus is humble. He said that to me in the context of confessing his sin.

And he's always asking Jesus to show him opportunities to share his faith with other people. And part of that is he always says hi to people in his apartment

building, talks with him at the mailboxes or the workout room in their apartment complex, ask them about their week, stuff like that.

And in one of these conversations, casual conversation, he was talking to two young guys in their 20s. And they knew he'd been a pastor. And then one of them said, well, don't they have some kind of thing in churches, like where you study the Bible or something like that? And my friend said, yeah, we've got that right. And they said, well, could we do that with you because we've got some questions.

So they started meeting to talk about the Bible, and these two men started inviting more of their friends. And so the group grew. None of them have any faith background at all and they're super open about their struggles and their sins because no church ever taught them to hide those things and pretend to be perfect. So they just are all out there. But also because my friend is so transparent about his sins, it gives them permission to be honest.

So for instance, one night one man was confessing that he used a lot of cocaine and is still using cocaine. And he asked my friend, So when you feel really close to God, is that better than cocaine or like maybe your best business deal? And my friend said, yeah, way better than those things.

Another time at the end of the Bible study, my friend said, well, let's end our time together in prayer. And one guy, one guy said, well, we were just talking about Jesus in our lives for the last 90 minutes. What is prayer if it's not that? Another great question.

That's what I love about people who haven't been to church. They just did this fresh view of who Jesus is. And this group keeps growing and these guys are starting to give their life to Jesus and it's making them better men, better husbands. It is preparing them to be better fathers. It's even changing the atmosphere in the apartment complex for the better.

They're honest about their sins. They're praying in lots of different ways. They're giving the Holy Spirit free reign in their lives. And it's changing them and it's changing the places where they live, work, play and learn. The word for that is revival.

What if every apartment building in our area had this? What if every school, every neighborhood, every senior living center had that going on? How would that change us as individuals, as a church? How would that change King County?

There's a study that was done at UC Berkeley that shows that the only two urban areas in the United States that have never experienced revival are the Bay Area and the San Francisco Bay Area. And Seattle never had revival in those two places. They're the only two places that have never had revival. They also happen to be the two places where I've done in my entire ministry career. But remember, correlation isn't always causation. So, but let's, let's take Seattle off that list, shall we? Let's bring revival here.

Centuries after the verse we just looked at, which references a plague of locusts, Israel experienced an actual plague of locusts that ate all their crops and God reminded them of the prophet Joel about what he says here in these verses.

So listen to these verses from Joel. God said even now declares the Lord, return to me with all your heart, rend your heart and not your garments. So back then, people tore their clothes as a sign of intense emotion, right? We began this sermon series 2 weeks ago with a verse from Isaiah where Isaiah says to God, rend the heavens and come down. It's a passionate plea for revival.

And here Joel says, don't just go through the outward motions of confession and repentance by tearing your clothes, but rend your hearts wide open to the radical grace and healing of Jesus.

Joel says return to the Lord your God. For he is what? Angry, stern, ready to punish you? No, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love. And then God says, I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten. You will have plenty to eat until you are full, and you will praise the name of the Lord your God.

And afterward I will pour out my spirit on all people. Notice he doesn't say I'll sprinkle my spirit. I'll dribble out my spirit. I will pour out my spirit in abundance. Your sons and your daughters will prophecy. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

And later, centuries later, the Apostle Peter quotes this verse in the New Testament on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on Jesus followers that ignited a revolution that continues to this day.

It has happened before many, many times, and it can happen again. And it's got to start somewhere. So why not us, Bell Press? Why not us?

Let it begin with us, Jesus. We confess that we think we know how to run our lives better than you do. We think we know how to run our friendships and careers and marriages and money and sex life and our nation better than you do. I confess that I think that.

I confess that I have strayed from your ways. We have strayed from your ways and we have made a mess of things. But Jesus, you are in the healing business, you are in the reviving business, you are in the business of making all things new.

So Lord, rend the heavens and come down. Holy Spirit, we give you free reign in our lives and in this church. Fill us, change us, revive us, and through US revive your world that really, really needs it.

We pray this in the strong and powerful name of Jesus and all God's people said together, Amen.

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- Looking at the four things God commands in verses 13-14 why is each one so important?
 - Why is humility the starting point rather than just asking for help?
 - How does the command to pray here differ from the prayers we say when things are going well?
 - What does it mean to seek God's face? How do we do that?
 - Why is turning from wicked ways (action) just as important as praying (words)?
- God makes three promises in this text (hear, forgive, heal). What does each one mean to you and why are they important?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Of the four commands, which do you struggle to do the most? Explain.
- Of the three promises God makes, which do you need from him the most right now? Explain.

Closing Group Prayer:

Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your

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conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement for the week ahead.