

do the God pleasing action, but our sinful flesh wins out. This is incredibly frustrating. Before God it's humiliating. Left unchecked it can lead to either despair or haughtiness. Despair because we become convinced that we won't be saved because we believe we will never bear fruit in repentance. Or else haughtiness because we will begin to think that God will overlook this or that sin since it's just part of "who we are". Both are equally damnable.

May the cry of the crowds be our cry, too. "Hosanna!" Lord, come quickly and save us lest we despair or arrogantly think we don't need saving. When the Lord leads us to repentance and our souls are brought low, it is precisely the time for us to confess with the Psalmist, *Ad te levavi* as you see printed at the top of your inserts: **"To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; let me not be put to shame" (Ps 25:1-2)**. We confessed in the Introit that when our souls are brought low, in repentance and faith we lift them to the Lord. We commit our spirit to Him (**Ps 31:5**). It's like if you are at the bottom of a pit, there is only one place to look and that's up. Thus, when our souls are at the bottom of the pit, feeling the weight of sin, there is only one place to lift them to, and that's up. We lay our sins on Jesus hoisted on the cross.

By faith in Christ, the shame from our sin is removed. Now shame is a fickle thing. On the one hand, once forgiven sin is removed. No questions asked. When God forgives, He forgives. On the other hand, it's often the case that even after we are forgiven we are ashamed of such a violation of God's will. If the shame is merely a form of disappointment over such a thing, that's appropriate. That's evidence of a living faith. But if the shame takes on the form of embarrassment before God as if it inhibits our coming to Him in prayer or thanksgiving, then we must be exhorted to believe that we are actually forgiven. For when God forgives our sins, He removes them as far as the east is from the west. Our slates are wiped clean. By His grace, He answers our Hosannas!

The Vicar was there a few weeks ago when we had a man come in after church who was seeking absolution for what was troubling his conscience. When I pronounced those words, "For Jesus' sake, you are forgiven", he shook his head no. He was despairing. He didn't think it possible that God could forgive him especially because he knew in his flesh that he was probably going to sin again. My heart bleeds for those who suffer this way. It makes you think of the words of the Psalmist, **"A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps 51:17)**.

The broken and contrite heart must be exhorted to cry out in faith: Hosanna! Lord, save me. Hosanna! Lord, help me. Hosanna! God help us to believe that in You we will not be put to shame. No head shaking. No doubting God's promise. Lord, give us the faith to trust that when You say, "I forgive you all your sins" that we are forgiven. *Ad te levavi*. Lift up your souls to He who comes in the name of the Lord. He comes bearing your sins and giving you His righteousness. The Lord helps. Jesus saves. In Jesus' name, Amen.