

It's a Mess in Here

Last night I dreamed that my children and I traveled a great distance to visit a dear friend. While my friend and I settled into a long conversation, the kids went off to play. Suddenly, my friend became angry and asked me to leave. Surprised by her anger, I took a moment to survey my surroundings and knew exactly what had gone wrong. In just a few short minutes, my kids had completely trashed the place. Embarrassed and in shock, I attempted to have them clean up. As I helped one child clean up, another child would create a new disaster worse than the first. Finally, after what seemed like hours of cleaning and getting nowhere, I sat bolt upright in bed, wide awake. As I made my way to the kitchen and flipped on the light, the reason for the dream became apparently clear. The mess wasn't just a dream; it was the reality of my life at the moment.

While I may be hesitant to admit it, my mess isn't just limited to the house I share with a husband and four kids. It is the reality of my spiritual life as well. This week I was going to master that pet sin. Today, I was going to be patient with my overloaded schedule and my overtired kids. This week I was going to give myself to others instead of getting so overworked about my own problems. Today, I was going to be like Mary. I was going to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to him. Instead, I was Martha fluttering around absorbed in distractions that really don't matter. Daily, as I look in the mirror of God's law, it's evident that it's a mess in here. Sins pile up, doubt and worries grow, and guilt threatens to bury me under its weight. Try as I might to clean things up, it just keeps getting worse and worse. Horrified that others might see the chaos, I attempt to create a facade that everything is in order. Yet, that doesn't change my situation. It's a mess in here and I can't get it cleaned up.

Thankfully, that cleaning job isn't up to me. Again and again, as I look at the clutter and disorder in my life, Jesus redirects my eyes. Right before Jesus began his public ministry, John the Baptist's disciples thought he might be the Messiah. John redirected their gaze. "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) When the disciples were dealing with their own denial, desertion and the death of their dear friend, Jesus redirected their gaze. "Peace be with you... Why are you troubled and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself" (Luke 24:36-38).

When we get too caught up in the mess we've made of our lives, Jesus redirects us. Through his Word, he reminds us that it isn't about us. He invites us to see the Lamb of God walking along the banks of the Jordan River living the perfect life we could not. He invites us to put our fingers in the nail marks and see the death he died for us. He invites us to see him alive on that first Easter morning and to fall on our knees before him, clasping his feet in worship. We too can be filled with joy knowing that our Lord and Savior has arisen and conquered death. ALL our sins have been washed clean. Because of Jesus, our sins no longer condemn us. Instead we stand in His grace. The sins, anxieties and messes of this life will be with us until we leave this world. But in the midst of all those trials, Jesus gives us peace that transcends all understanding.

Even though we are armed with this peace and joy, the devil continues to tempt us with his lies. The devil wants us to turn our eyes away from the one who does all things well and back to ourselves. He wants us to believe that we're not worthy, that we're nothing but failures, or that we're just too big of a mess for anyone to handle. Instead of listening to the devil's lies, listen to

the gentle, loving voice of our Savior reminding us, "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:22). Even if my life looks like a catastrophe right now, this moment is part of God's plan. Yes, this very moment that looks anything but perfect is woven into God's perfect plan for me. Although I may see only chaos and disaster right now, I know how the plan ends. It ends in eternal perfection and joy at Jesus' side in heaven.

Even better, I don't have to make excuses before God. He knows how messy it is in here. I don't have to explain why it happened or feel embarrassed about it. Jesus loves me in spite of it. I get to come before him daily in repentance confident that he's already got the mess cleaned up. By his grace, God has washed me clean in the blood of the Lamb. Through faith in Jesus, he doesn't even see the mess anymore. He sees me completely clean, completely forgiven, and dearly loved wearing a perfect white robe of righteousness.

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