

"Eyes that Cannot See, Make the Whole World Blind"

Michael Ranieri and Cory

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Scripture:

Psalm 32 (MSG/TLB/Michael Version).

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be—

you get a fresh start,
your slate's wiped clean.

2 Count yourself lucky—

God holds nothing against you
and you're holding nothing back from him.

3 When I kept it all inside,

my bones turned to powder,
my words became daylong groans.

4 The pressure never let up;

My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day.

5 Then I finally admitted all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess them to the Lord."

Suddenly the pressure was gone—

my guilt dissolved,
my sin disappeared.

8 Let me give you some good advice;

I'm looking you in the eye
and giving it to you straight:

11 Celebrate God.

Sing together—everyone!

All you honest hearts, raise the roof!

Sermon

Michael:

The Lord forgives my mistakes -- so it's been said.

But it's also been said that in order to be forgiven, we need to do X, Y, Z.

I want to start this off by asking, what have you been told you need to BE/DO, in order to be forgiven?

[WAIT FOR RESPONSES]

Today, I'd like to consider that this message is two things:

1. Conditional
2. This condition is based on OUR desire to be real with *ourselves*.

So. It's really just based on whether or not we can be real. And see ourselves accurately.

Cory:

In Psalm 32, we learn that sin is not our foundational downfall, but rather, it's blindness to who we truly are. At cursory glance, it seems like it's about saying, "I'm sorry, I screwed up." But I think it's about just...seeing. Seeing Truth.

Most people want to be the best. I think this is observable inside humans--most of us want to be happier, richer, in better shape, better looking, be in a better relationship, be in better job circumstances... and I think this sort of has a tendency to detract from what our actual reality is. And this probably applies to much of us-- we don't acknowledge our own bullshit.

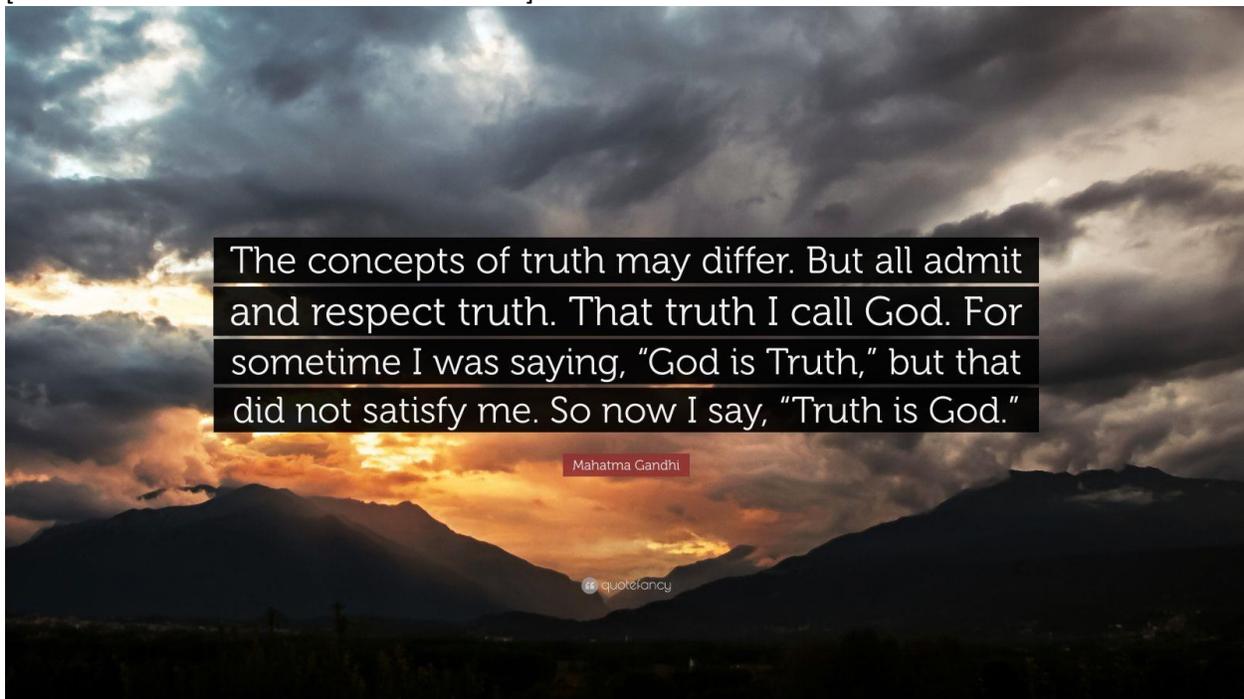
We are starting with the notion today that the Lord forgives our mistakes, that God forgives our transgressions when we *'miss the mark,'* which is what we learned a few weeks ago that fits the definition for sin.

But first, we must be able to see ourselves clearly.

Michael:

I once heard a quote that was supposedly from Gandhi. I've printed it out for you all.

[PICK SOMEONE IN THE AUDIENCE TO READ]



"God is not the Truth.
The Truth is God."

I would like us all to contemplate this as we read it a few more times. And before anyone freaks out that I'm an atheist, I'd like to just remind everyone that I just enjoy reframing our perspectives on spirituality-- As Karl Rahner said, we should perhaps stop using the term 'God' for 50 years. I think we get too attached to the word 'God' & start creating God in an image, rather than remembering that God is described in attributes like 'infinite' and 'love' over and over again throughout the bible, and outside

of it. And Truth seems to be of God's biggest concerns. Specifically, seeing our own Truths--seeing the log in our eyes.

[CLOSE EYES & REPEAT THE GANDHI QUOTE 3 TIMES]

I'm not sure why every culture around the world has a respect for Truth. It exists in all cultures, and the definition of Truth seems a bit more definitive and universal, as opposed to our many perceptions of God. While some see an old white guy and others see an elephant-headed deity, Truth seems to be understood globally, in relatively the same manner. It's also easy, globally, to call out untruths in others, but for I'm some reason, hard to call out in ourselves.

Cory:

When this Psalm tells us to not hide, and to acknowledge our shortcomings to God, this doesn't tell us we have to get on a megaphone and tell the whole world we screwed up, but I think there is a vital implication here that we need to be real with ourselves. And it doesn't tell us anywhere in this chapter, "**FEEL SHAME.**" It doesn't tell us we need to feel any sort of sad, self-pitying emotion. Saying 10 hail mary's and telling God, "I suck," is NOT a part of this chapter.

-invitation to forgive selves

-invitation to release "I suck" from vocabulary

It just tells us to see the truth, and pretty much, as Christ told us, "You shall see the Truth, and the Truth will set you free."

-invitation to recognize old path/event/habit/etc, and awaken/grow/evolve from it.

-invitation to select His path, truth, answers, peace

-shift from our path, to His

-shift from disorder, or order

-shift from darker, to lighter

-shift to freedom

-shift to forgiveness

Here, we're just told that we're forgiven. And it seems to be implied that all the negatives--groaning and drained vitality and our bodies wasting away--all these things should reverse. I'm not sure if that's all literal, but I think when we see truths, it does take weight off our shoulders. It sets us free. Or, at least more free--maybe like 1% more free. That may seem insignificant, but maybe if we stack up, we can be 10% more free.

Wonder what that would look like.....

I've met many people in the past who believe that God provides happiness. This may be in-part true, but it seems that more often, God gives us the opportunity to improve our lives--but puts it in our hands.

-the invitation for a shift, closer to him

Michael:

I sometimes wonder if our entire society has our perspective of sin wrong. I've heard "don't sin" my entire life, as if God is waiting there to just get upset with us, like a strict teacher who doesn't want his students out of line, because it inconveniences or annoys or angers him.

But the more I do this search, I think God is just telling us to... *get free.*

Get. Free.

And there seem to be a few parts to this path.
Isaiah says to take care of the poor and stop oppression.
Jesus says to be merciful and we shall receive mercy.
And David here is telling us to see our own truths--I think the way we truly are.

Do the 7 proverbial deadly sins apply to me? Am I greedy? Do I get envious? Yes, these things apply to me. I'm able to tell you this right now because I've been able to look at myself realistically over the years, and as a result, I've seen some of my extremities decline a bit.

I have flicked people off in traffic and cussed out the window at them.
If I didn't see myself clearly, there wouldn't have been change.
Maybe some of you guys know this, maybe you don't, but I actually get super resentful, i.e. envious, at super-rich people buying 5 private jets, who own multiple houses. I watch as some struggle day-in, day-out, ignored and forgotten. And I feel resentful sometimes. I don't think this is a good emotion to hold onto, even if I tell myself there is an element of justice here--slowly, though, I'm letting go of it. And it's because I'm looking at myself more clearly & honestly.
Pride has been one of my biggest errors, for many years--which led to blindness of my other so-called sins. Because then, I can justify and ignore and pretend like none of this stuff applies to my own life.

I want to try something today, with all of you.

I want you to see where you're not perfect, and I want you to not apologize for it.
I just want us to see it.

In Psalm 32:5, the Hebrew word for confess or acknowledge is *yada'*, which basically means "to know" or... "**to make known**" as in this context.

So, David says, "I make known" my screw ups.
Make it known to yourself.
Maybe we don't have to get down on our knees everytime and say "I'm sorry" 1000 times.
I think there is room for just seeing a Truth, without pronouncing ourselves as "guilty."
I want us to know, to see. To observe our own life, without judgment.

Cory:

We're going to have a little meditation/breathing exercise.
I want to see if we can not make such a big deal out of our lives.
We screw up. And that's okay. And sometimes we are wrong. And that's okay. We screw up over and over again, along with the other 7 billion humans who are currently breathing on this planet, at this very second.

We make such big deals out of our screwups, as if God can't look past this. I think God does--but we can't. So we can't be free.
-A lack of self-forgiveness

We stew in our little screw up and pretend like it's the end of the damned world. Maybe that's just the ego, pretending like it's so important, that God Himself is constantly remembering what we did 5 years, 7 months and 14 days ago at that party, when we had 5 too many drinks.

It all just seems a bit silly to me. That's all. Like Kurt Vonnegut said, "Don't take it all so seriously." I'm sure there are people out there who would think God would be mad I just quoted a writer who said he didn't believe in God.

God's not a micromanager. I think God is pretty chill, and we just create our own little hells and hyper-exaggerate our importance, and so we hyper-exaggerate a God who is tallying our screw-ups.

We are sort of tallying our own screw ups, As our Lenten basket is probably showing us. It's getting big. Weeks of our own personal shortcomings are included in there.

So for today, we're not going to make the pile bigger today.

No real ceremony here--we're just going to make our crap known to ourselves.

The only rule should be this:

Come up with A Sentence of Insignificance.

Don't expect a miracle from this thing.

Maybe say,

"It's okay to make mistakes"

"It's okay to be wrong sometimes"

"Oh well."

"Now, if that wasn't that was small, I don't know what is."

"Smaller potatoes than what I was creating."

How about, "7 billion people on this planet all feeling guilt and shame and we were loved the whole time."

We are given permission to release the things we are holding on to, we are given permission to cut ourselves some slack.

Close your eyes.

Let's take a moment to repeat your Phrase of Insignificance quietly and repeatedly amongst yourselves.

Michael:

We need to accept forgiving ourselves, so that we can fully receive divine forgiveness, the divine shift.

And with this dangerous combination comes freedom. A freedom of shame, guilt, dwelling, grossness, et cetera. But a freedom full of peace, truth, a lighter path, lighter shoulders.

Thanks y'all. Life is good.