

Becoming Clean
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What Jesus Did For Us...

I found out the other day that there is something called the Cupertino effect.

The **Cupertino effect** is the tendency of a **spell checker** to suggest or **autocorrect** with incorrect words to replace misspelled words and words not in its dictionary.

Has that ever happened to you where you are texting and a word you didn't want to text automatically comes up?

The reason this tendency is called the Cupertino effect is that the unhyphenated English word "cooperation" was often changed to the word "Cupertino" by older spell checkers.

Even now if you have an older version of Microsoft it still happens that words get replaced and its not what you intended at all.

For instance I was responding to somebody the other day on text and I wanted to type the word **Definitely** - and I misspelled definitely - and it auto-corrected to the word **Defiantly**.

So frustrating....when your desired intent, isn't what comes out. In the same way,

The gospel of Mark shows us how many failures the disciples make, in the week before Jesus' death...

They want to be brave
They want to be faithful,
They declare this boldly – they promise they will not betray,
deny, fall away...
and yet when the pressure is on...something completely
opposite comes out in their actions...

...Peter denies Jesus after declaring..."I'll never deny you"...Yet he does indeed deny Christ three times – and weeps bitterly...(Here we have the weeping bitterly in Mark – Peter is Mark's source, remember? And we really get sense of how horrible Peter feels) Its not what Peter wanted to do at all- but its what comes out.

The disciples can't stay awake in the Garden with Christ...even though they want to and they try. Their eyes were heavy with sorrow. Jesus' response to them? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak...

In fact in the end - Mark 14:50 – One of the shortest most heart wrenching phrases in all of Mark..."**All of them deserted him and fled.**"

Years later Paul would write these words "**Oh wretched man that I am...I do not do what I want to do...**" I start with good intentions...but it comes out wrong.

Christians down through the centuries have called this coming out wrong "not what I intended" proclivity in humanity...."sin".

The word sin literally means missing the mark. In other words, we've had our good intentions all along of hitting the bull's eye.

(Archery (C&K wedding...I always try...I want it to work...and it the arrow never gets in the center of the target)

We've wanted ourselves to act differently than what comes out.
We've wanted to make the right choices, have the right attitude, forgive and be generous, servant hearted and loving.

Yet though we try ...

We miss the mark. We can't hit that bulls eye on our own. Its almost a force beyond us, like that automatic spell checker that keeps pulling us down...making something else come out than we didn't intend.

Now Jesus died to forgive our sins, and cleanse us from our wrong-doing – and give us the power to hit the bulls eye by the Holy Spirit – his power working inside of us.

But as you look at this communion table today, as you ponder the meaning of the bread and the cup, (Jesus body and blood given for you to forgive your sins) and as you are now at the point in the Mark series where Jesus is preparing himself for the cross, that would make all this possible, I don't want you to take this for granted...

I want you to understand contextually what the Jews in the OT went through to be cleansed before Christ came- and the amazing sacrifice that Jesus made-SO That we could be made clean.

I want to add a little Old Testament knowledge to your New Testament lingo that I think so easily slips off of our tongue – “Jesus died for my sins” – and help you understand and appreciate Jesus even more (and I am indebted to Tim Keller for part of this information)

Cleansing of sin was a huge long process in the Old Testament

The Jews took sin very seriously. It was not a minor thing.

They knew and believed that human beings were “not okay”. They knew and believed that there was a huge gap between their mortal selves and the Invisible Holy Eternal God.

When you take the train in England there is this little recorded message that says “**Mind the Gap! Mind the Gap**”. It means that passengers need to pay attention to the space between where the platform ends and the stepping into the train begins. Don’t get your foot caught in the gap...it could mean tragedy.

The Jews fastidiously minded the gap between themselves and God. They knew if they didn’t it could mean tragedy.

That was why every year they observed what was called “**The DAY of Atonement.**”

It was a day of cleansing...”**At-One-Ment**” is the break down of the word atonement – meaning that in being cleansed we are made right before God and reconciled.

The word atonement when translated means “to cover up”

What happened on the Day of Atonement? (Yom Kippur...same thing). It was a big deal...

Inside the Tabernacle of ancient Israel, was a room called the Holy of Holies, separated from the Holy Place and the rest of the Tabernacle by a thick woven veil. (this is the veil that was torn in two in the temple after Jesus was crucified)

(A picture of all this would be good here if you can find one)

In this inner room rested the Ark of the Covenant, inside of which was stored the Law of God as handed down to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Like a cloud, the **Shekinah (dwelling) Glory of God hovered over it all**. Once each year, on the Day of **ATONEMENT**, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark for the sins of all of Israel.

"But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance." (Hebrews 9:7)

That priest was the only person on this one day of the year who was allowed to go into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement- and that Holy of Holies was a scary place.

The very presence of God - hovered in there.

And God says in the Bible in the OT, "You know what...be careful...if you come near the mercy seat...put a lot of incense smoke up in the air, because if you see me you will die...and I don't want you to die. I know you can't handle me, so there's got to be some mist between us"

In fact when the priest would enter that Holy of Holies in the center of the temple on the Day of Atonement, a long chord was attached to his robe, just in case he did drop dead, they would have a way to pull his body out..."no one could see the face of God and live"

It gives you a sense of the scariness of all this and the great separation between us...who are sinful...and God who is HOLY...holy meaning other than us - Reminds me of the words

to an old hymn...“Immortal, invisible, God only wise...in light inaccessible hid from our eyes.”

We get so familiar with God in our Christian perspectives sometimes we forget the glory, the power, the otherness of who God is and was for the Jews.

So in order to prepare for the Day of Atonement the priest had to go through a certain ritual.

A week ahead of time the high priest was put into seclusion – taken away from his home and into a place where he was completely alone.

Why?

So he wouldn't accidentally touch or eat anything unclean. Clean kosher food was brought to him and he'd wash his body and prepare his heart.

The night before the Day of Atonement he didn't go to bed. He stayed up all night praying and reading God's Word to purify his soul.

Then on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, he bathed from head to toe and dressed in pure, unstained white linen. (*I put on white cloth*)

First, the priest went into the holy of holies and sprinkled blood from an animal sacrifice to God to atone, or **to pay for the penalty for his own sins.**

After that he came out and bathed completely again, and new white linen was put on him, and **He went in again a second time, this time offering blood for the sins of the priests.**

But that's not all.

He came out a third time, and he bathed again from head to toe and they dressed him AGAIN in brand new pure linen **He went in a third time to the holy of holies and atoned for the sins of all the people.**

This was all done in public

The temple was jammed on this day and those in attendance were cheering the priest on...encouraging and clapping each time he came out.

Also these folks watched very closely what was going on.

There was a thin screen that the priest bathed behind. But the people could still see through that screen, the procedure...they could see him bathe, dress and go in, and come back out.

He was their representative before God, so they wanted to be sure he did it right.

So they made sure that when he went in to represent them before God there was not a speck of dirt on him.

You have to understand this, to get why what we read this morning was so astounding...

Zechariah sees Joshua the high priest (and **Joshua is the same word as Jesus in Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew**)

standing before the presence of God in the holy of holies – but Joshua’s garments are filthy. (*I put on the dirty cloth*)

(the Jewish Bible says he is covered in dung)

Joshua/Jesus is absolutely defiled!

And after all I have explained to you about the day of Atonement you can understand why Zechariah was astounded and asked...

How could this have happened?

There is no way the Israelites would ever have allowed the high priest to appear before God like this!

God is showing Zechariah that this is what our sin looks like to God!

And Joshua – or Jesus in this vision...is wearing that excrement for us. And just as Zechariah is about to despair at this horrible scene he hears God say...

“Take off his filthy clothes.”

Then God says to Joshua, **“See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you...Listen...I am going to bring my servant, the Branch (a reference to Christ)...and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.”** (Zechariah 3:4, and 8-9)

I am sure Zechariah was thinking, *“Now hang on here God... wait a minute...for years we’ve been obeying the cleanliness laws on the day of Atonement...We can never get the sin off ourselves... ..We keep missing the mark...so we have to keep doing these cleanliness procedures ...”*

But God is saying, “Zechariah...this is a prophecy... someday all your little animal sacrifices will be over because I will sacrifice myself for your cleanliness and purify you by my death. I will take your sins on myself!”

What? God... whose face is so brilliant I will die if I see it... sacrificing himself...dying? Wearing my filthy garments? How can that be?

You and I know what happened of course...that **Centuries later Jesus, Yeshua, Joshua showed up and staged his own Day of Atonement.**

One week before the Day of Atonement Mark shows us that Jesus begins to prepare for the cross...just as the priest prepared one week ahead (*this is what you are reading about in Mark right now - Holy Week is this week of preparation*)...

The night before, just like the priest, Jesus didn't sleep. What happened? He prayed - just like the priest did - with agony in the garden with his disciples - preparing himself for what lay ahead. And the disciples wanted to, but couldn't stay awake with him...their intentions came out wrong. And that night Jesus was arrested and condemned.

Unlike the priest who was cheered on by the people in the OT, Jesus was mocked by the crowd, jeered at, tormented and shamed. Crucify him! They cried.

Everyone whom Jesus loved - betrayed, abandoned and denied him. And instead of being clothed in rich garments he was stripped naked and beaten and killed. He was bathed - not in the baths that priests bathed in - but in human spit.

Why?

“God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Hebrews 13 says Jesus was crucified outside the gate where bodies are burned – the garbage heap, a place of absolute uncleanness – so that we could be made clean.

Revelation 19:7-8 says, “Let us rejoice and be glad...Fine linen, bright and clean, is given to us to wear.”

Jesus’ death means *our* cleansing and *our* salvation.

I was reminded as I wrote this talk of Michael Monsoor, a U.S. Navy SEAL, who was killed during the Iraq War.

On September 29, 2006, an insurgent threw a grenade onto a rooftop where Monsoor and several other SEALs were positioned.

Monsoor quickly covered the live grenade with his body, absorbing the resulting explosion and saving his friends lives. Monsoor died 30 minutes later from the terrible wounds caused by the grenade explosion.

By covering a live grenade with his body, Monsoor sacrificed himself for them. A 28 year-old lieutenant who served with Monsoor said, "He never took his eye off the grenade, his only movement was down toward it. He saved our lives, and we owe him."

From the verb “to cover” comes the word "ATONEMENT**."**

Jesus is our **ATONEMENT, our covering. He is our fine linen. When God looks at us now he sees not our filth, but the holy righteousness of Christ who covers our sin -**

Jesus selflessly and willingly threw Himself over the live destructive grenade of human sin, taking it on, and offering both His body and His blood to save us. Not once did Jesus take His eye off of His goal.

Mark is clear about that as his whole gospel moves and focuses us toward the cross.

Jesus had a choice. He could have saved Himself. Instead He chose to save us.

Don't take this lightly today as we partake in communion folks - the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ..

Do you love him today?

Revel for a moment in who God is...first in terms of his power, and glory...so powerful that if you saw him you would die...so holy that the high priest alone could enter his presence and had to bathe numerous times and wear clean fine clothes to approach...

Then, take that immortal holy God, and put on him the filthy sins of all humanity for all time for all places - for you and for me - and try to grasp the enormity of his love for you - his willingness to bear all that for a relationship with us...

Let's move into communion together now by reading this passage from Romans in Unison together...

Romans 5:8-11

⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ⁹ And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. ¹⁰ For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. ¹¹ So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.