

Sunday 25th February Sin as Leaven

Today we continue with our series on looking at the different shadows which sin can create. We have used the term shadow deliberately as sin is so elusive that it is helpful to see it from a range of perspectives. Shadows leave an impression and no one shadow tells the whole story.

Remember.... Jesus conquered sin and once and for all, paid its penalty, dealt with its shame and guilt and adopted us into his family. What love! What grace! Nevertheless until Jesus returns, we live in a world where sin is still active and will try and con us.

This series, therefore, can be a helpful way of preparing us for Easter and the celebration of Jesus' complete victory over sin. By focussing on the deception and wiles of sin our prayer is that the magnificence of God's grace will become even more amazing for us all.

Last week we saw sin as predator. That is, camouflaged, pretending to be smaller than it is, hiding, and looking insignificant but still seeking to devour us completely. We also saw that in Genesis 4, God was also tipping us off that sin will be defeated.

Review of last week: It is interesting that some of our immediate responses to sin as predator focussed on the impact of being caught up in the "big sins" as we often see in the media. E.g. sex, drugs and alcohol etc. You might remember that we were also encouraged to see the impact of issues such as gossip, slander, seeing someone as inferior to us, etc as also being examples of "sin crouching".

Question 1: What have been your reflections over the week on this aspect of sin?

This week's focus is on seeing sin as leaven or yeast.

Question 2: Andrew Nicholson challenged us with a question, "What need has a sinless person of a saviour?" What does this show us about grace?

What is yeast? Yeast or leaven is a single-celled micro-organism (fungus) that converts fermentable sugars present in starches, potato, wheat and

barley into carbon dioxide and ethanol. In Jesus' day the yeast would not have been pure baker's yeast but a mixture of wild yeast and baker's yeast, which we know as sourdough. Each batch of sourdough prepared would have a little piece of it separated and put aside in a warm place to grow and be used to leaven the next batch of flour. They never started with all fresh ingredients but rather, used a piece of the old bread (or yeast) and had this mixed with the new ingredients. They knew that a little bit of leaven would go right through the whole new batch of dough.

Let's look at four characteristics of yeast.

1. It is alive and active and yet can remain dormant for long periods of time before beginning to grow rapidly.
2. It is hidden...
3. It spreads...
4. It sucks up all the sweetness from where it is growing...

Question 3: If in a group, turn to the person near you and discuss one of the above characteristics of yeast and give some examples of how that comparison of sin is applicable today. (the leader may also allocate which characteristic for your coupling)

Question 4: Read Mark 8:11-13. Why was Jesus seem frustrated with this question? (Hint - note events just prior to this.)

Question 5: Read Amos 4:4-5 and 1 Cor 5:6-7. Why is the sin of leaven particularly important for Christians to note?

Question 6: "The essence of sin is its proud denial of grace". How does this quote refer to the issues of yeast?

Question 7: Read Ezekiel 11:19, Ephesians 4:24, Hebrews 8:10 and Romans 6:5-9. (There are many more such verses). How do these verses point us to the wonderful and magnificent work of Jesus in his death and resurrection in dealing with leaven...and even leaven which is hidden, dormant, quarantined and pretending to be harmless.