

# Prison Break: not guilty

Reconnect – October 30, 2011

**Text:** Psalm 32:1-11; I John 1:8-2:2

**Key Thought:** Jesus, through his death in our place, can forgive any and every sin and give us a new life.

Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! (Psalm 32, NLT)

## Pre-Intro: Hurt (Cam singing the Johnny Cash version)

### Intro: messy lives

- “And you could have it all/my empire of dirt/I will let you down/I will make you hurt”
- I remember the first time I heard Johnny Cash sing that song – I cried and cried as I watched it
- It seems like such a great summary of a life – our lives – our messy lives, that we try so hard to make beautiful, but ultimately, can be so exposed as not having the worth we thought they did
- It’s a man coming before God, out of a life lived hard and fast and big, with the realization that now, things that mattered a lot in the past don’t matter much at all
- Our lives are messy – they are unpredictable, they seem to crawl forward or go nowhere for years until suddenly, everything changes at once – and then we have to adjust, to difficulties, sudden changes, tragedy – and things get messier
- And it’s not only our circumstances, but it’s our relationships, too – friendships begin and end, people part ways, we are betrayed or we are the betrayer
- And just like someone in a mud fight, no matter how good we are at life, we still get dirtied up – we still get messy as a result
- We look for meaning in the mess of our lives – we cling to the good and true and pure when we find it – and it sets us on a journey of spirit, a quest to find that meaning, of something that will make everything else make sense
- We look for the beauty in the broken, for what is good and right in the messy
- Sometimes we settle – we turn off parts of our brain, or we decide that our lives are going to have different compartments, that don’t need to all line up with each other
- But more often, we never really settle, no matter what we tell ourselves – we look for something that will make sense of everything else, a foundation on which to stand and build
- This morning is about finding that foundation through... forgiveness

### Background

- At the beginning of October we started talking about forgiveness – the choice, or refusal, to forgive – and how our refusal to forgive effectively becomes our own prison, where we relive the hurtful events, or experience, or relationship, over and over again
- And how we are there as long as we choose to be – we hold the ability to escape, if we will use it
- We ended that morning with a time of silent reflection – asking God to inform our thoughts as to if there was someone that we were refusing to forgive

- Then just after Thanksgiving we looked at the struggle to keep on forgiving – not just seven times, but umpteen times, because we have all needed forgiveness many times too
- And again, we ended with the same kind of reflection, on those we were “in the process” of forgiving
- Last week we looked at how the choice or refusal to forgive is seen as a private matter, a personal choice that we should be able to make without pressure or interference from anyone else – but how the refusal to forgive is foreign to life with God, and how a willingness to at least try to choose to forgive is necessary in order to enjoy life with Him
- And that brings us to today – we’ve now been “on the run” for a month, talking about choices – whether to forgive or refuse to forgive – this morning we’re going to look at a fundamental dimension of our lives and see a model of forgiveness that changes everything, that can take us out of our empire-of-dirt building and out of the mess that we walk in, to a new way of living

### **Read Text: Psalm 32**

- It might be new to you and me, but it’s actually a way that people have been finding for thousands of years, and there’s another song that lays it out – a song that was already read this morning, found in the Bible, in Psalm 32

**A psalm of David.**

**Oh, what joy for those**

**whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!**

**Yes, what joy for those**

**whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!**

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**When I refused to confess my sin,**

**my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long.**

**Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.**

**My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.**

**<Interlude>**

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**Finally, I confessed all my sins to you**

**and stopped trying to hide my guilt.**

**I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.”**

**And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.**

**<Interlude>**

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**Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time,  
that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment.  
For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble.  
You surround me with songs of victory.**

**<Interlude>**

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**The Lord says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.  
I will advise you and watch over you.  
Do not be like a senseless horse or mule  
that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.”**

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**Many sorrows come to the wicked,  
but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord.  
So rejoice in the Lord and be glad, all you who obey him!  
Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure! Psalm 32:1-11, NLT**

### **Finding the right starting point**

- Whitney – “learning to love yourself, it is the greatest love of all”
- We talk about being able to forgive ourselves or unable to forgive ourselves, like it has some kind of impact on what we do – we watch movies and read books that make much of the idea, of characters who have made so many mistakes, gone so wrong that they are tormented by their past sins and unable to move forward
- But in my ordinary world, I find that I am actually the easiest person that I know to forgive\
- We know we need forgiveness – in our quiet moments, reflective times, and when we make mistakes and hurt people, we look into their eyes and we know we need forgiveness, either at the time or later when we’ve calmed down and are better able to understand the situation.
- But how will we get it? How we will shake the feeling that even as we try to forgive others, that something is wrong in our foundation, that there is rot that we can’t necessarily see or put our finger on?
- It’s bigger than us

### **Sacrifice**

- A sacrifice, today, is something that someone does in order to succeed – parents “make sacrifices” for their children – they give up things to give them to others, instead – or athletes do it to win games, they “sacrifice their bodies” to win
- But that word has a much older meaning, an original meaning – it goes back to a system of approaching God that is almost as old as the world itself

- A sacrifice was something that was valuable that you gave up, in order to have an audience with God
- It was a way of demonstrating to God and others that He mattered – and that His opinion of you mattered, that you needed to be right with him
- The system worked this way: the wrong that a person did – mistakes, conscious acts, whatever – was an affront to God, who had created the world and everything in it
- The way that this would be atoned for, the way that this would be made up, would be through an act of contrition, of giving up something that mattered – making a sacrifice
- In a rural, nomadic society, wealth was measured in animals – and so the way that God laid things out was to demand that an animal be sacrificed for the sin that had been committed
- That made sin and redemption a costly matter – because you only had so many animals, after all – your sins were hitting you in your wallet
- And ultimately, it was a losing battle – there needed to be a lasting solution

\*\*Idea, notion of sacrifice – then and now – talk about the system of sacrifice, what it meant  
Then move to Jesus

### **Key Thought:**

**Jesus, through his death in our place, can forgive any and every sin and give us a new life.**

If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

**I John 1:8-2:2, NLT**

### **Conclusion: get out of jail free card**

- Unfair and outrageous – unless it's for you

### **Response: New Orleans Team Commissioning**