

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/7/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

There is a cute story about a young boy who decided to go into the kitchen and sneak a cookie out of the family cookie jar, even though it was near to dinnertime. His mother came into the kitchen to check on dinner and caught the boy halfway through eating his cookie.

“Jimmy,” she said “what are you doing eating cookies when you know that it is so close to dinner?”

Jimmy, crestfallen, looked down at the floor for a moment, and then suddenly looked up hopefully and said, “Well, I did take one cookie...but Sally took two!”

I think this is part of our human nature. We don't like to be caught in sinful behavior. The world tells us to never admit guilt. In court, lawyers try to get their clients off on technicalities or shift the blame elsewhere to try to save their clients. Even in our everyday life, when we are found guilty, we try to save ourselves by, like Jimmy, pointing at someone else who is more guilty or sinful than we.

This is especially true in our relationship with God. We know that we are sinful. We know that we have failed to be the people God intended us to be. And we don't like living in the knowledge of our sinfulness (unless or until we fully grasp the greatness of God's gracious forgiveness in Jesus Christ). Even then, we don't really like admitting our unworthiness (which also shows how great is God's mercy). But the way we deal with this often is to try to diminish the size of our sin—taking a cookie—by finding others who are, or at least who we think are, bigger sinners—two-cookie-takers—than we.

There are those who, first, identify a sin which they believe to be greater than anything they have done, and then, second, find ways to publicly point out that more sinful sin to the world. That shifts focus from them onto that more serious sin and those who have perpetrated it. It takes the attention from little sinful old me, to bigger sinner you.

In God's sight, however, sin is sin. It doesn't matter how large or how small. If you sin, in any way, to any degree, you are a sinner. So, even that “bigger” sin still places that person in the same boat in which we find ourselves—we are all sinful and unclean. But because God loves us, God offers us mercy and forgiveness. All of us. We, therefore, need to let go of the finger-pointing and instead focus on living in gratitude to God. More than this, we also need to be making sure that others—even the big sinners—know that they are loved and forgiven by God. It doesn't mean that there aren't earthly consequences for sin. But, God's love and forgiveness is the good news that has come to us and which we need to share with others.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey