

**“Hiding from God, or Hiding in God?”**  
(Psalm 32 – Midweek Lent 2 – February 25, 2026)

Psalm 32:1-11 – <sup>1</sup>*“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. <sup>2</sup>Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. <sup>3</sup>When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. <sup>4</sup>For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. <sup>5</sup>I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. <sup>6</sup>For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. <sup>7</sup>You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. <sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. <sup>9</sup>Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. <sup>10</sup>Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. <sup>11</sup>Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*

Dear Redeemed in Jesus Christ,

Have you ever hidden from God? Psalm 32, written and prayed by King David, compares a person who hides *from God* to one who hides *in God*. This is not just about outward actions; it is more a matter of the heart. Like Adam and Eve, hiding from God after eating the forbidden fruit; like King David, hiding his adultery with Bathsheba by having her husband killed in battle; or like Judas in our Passion History reading, hiding his plot to betray Jesus; so also, we at times try hiding our sins *from God*. For a time, we may think we are succeeding.

When it comes to other people, we can hide our thoughts and actions for a time. We can keep thoughts of betrayal and adultery to ourselves, and no one will ever know. We can keep thoughts of envy, greed, and coveting what God doesn't want us to have under cover. We can even turn hateful gossip and slander into something that sounds justified to other people, like we are just expressing sympathy for those who are wronged. Yes, we can hide our sins and sinful motives from other people very well. We can be very successful at convincing others that we are upright and moral in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. In fact, we can be so good at convincing other people that we become blind to our own sin. So our own hearts and lives can easily become enshrouded in that spirit of deceit David warns about in this Psalm.

But no matter how successfully we may hide our sins from other people and ourselves, hiding from God never works. In Jeremiah 23:24 God says: *“‘Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?’ says the LORD; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the LORD.”*

Psalm 32 describes what happens when we try to hide from God. David says: “*When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer*” (vs. 3-4). In other words, when we hide our sin from God, it has consequences. One consequence is guilt. Guilt eats away at us. We may try to cover up our guilt with work, good deeds, hobbies, entertainment, alcohol or other substances, or whatever we might use to distract ourselves and change our focus. But our guilt will not just go away; it is still there eating away at us.

That is the effect God’s Law has on our life. It exposes our sin and shows us that we deserve God’s just punishment. The truth of the Law is painful, and it is supposed to be. For remember, God’s ultimate desire is to forgive our sins. But to do that, He has to kill us with His Law first.

But our Old Adam does not want to come out of hiding. Our proud and defiant sinful nature does not want God to see our guilt. It does not want us to face our guilt honestly. How often, like a child hiding behind his hands, we go on thinking and acting as if God will not see our sinfulness. Yet it weighs heavily on our heart. We may be able to put on a happy face for a time, but time does not heal the wounds of guilt. It is always there, even after years of hiding.

That brings us back to God’s purpose, as David discovered: “*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit*” (vs. 2). Since God loves us, He cannot be happy when we cover our sins in self-deceit. He is pleased when we confess our sins, so He can cover our sins in His forgiveness and righteousness. That is reason He came into our flesh, to suffer and die on the cross. God was dying to forgive us. Now that He has sacrificed His own life to pay in full for our sins, He wants to deliver His forgiveness to us. The angels in heaven are eager to rejoice over one sinner who repents. That is you and me.

This brings each of us to the question: “How does God forgive my sins?” This is what Lent is about – seeing how Jesus’ blood cleansing comes to you and me to wash away all our sins. In this regard, let us hear again the words we recited earlier from the *Small Catechism*:

#### *What is the Office of the Keys?*

The Office of the Keys is the special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth: to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

#### *Where is this written?*

The evangelist writes, John 20:22-23: “*Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; and if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’*”

In His mercy, God has given the binding and loosing keys, to His Church. In other words, this is where God comes to forgive our sins and set us free from our guilt. He forgives our sins through the preaching and hearing of His Word. He also forgives our sins through His Sacraments, which are the Gospel in visible form – in the washing of Baptism, in the partaking of Jesus’ Body and Blood in the Lord’s Supper. He also forgives our sins in two kinds of Absolution. Again, *Absolution* is simply another word for “forgiveness.” One form of Absolution we know very well, the other we may not be so familiar with.

The first form is Corporate Confession and Absolution. This is what we do at the beginning of the worship service, as we bring our burden of sin and guilt before God and together we pray: “*We poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean...*” Then as your pastor, whom God has called to speak His Word publicly to His people, I absolve, or forgive your sins: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” So it is not by my authority, but it is by God’s authority. In His name, your sins are forgiven.

The second form is Private Confession and Absolution. This is when a person comes to the pastor privately or individually and confesses his or her sins. A person may or may not have specific sins to confess, but a burden of sin and guilt is brought before God. Then using words similar to our worship service, I pronounce God’s forgiveness of sins to that individual: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Private or Individual Confession and Absolution is not always so formal. Often, it happens in conversation or counseling when a Christian shares his or her burden of guilt, and the pastor uses the Word of God that declares the sinner forgiven, released of his or her burden of guilt by Christ.

Unfortunately, God’s gift of Confession and Absolution has not been used as it could be. Our sinful nature often makes us like the horse or the mule, as our psalm describes: “*Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you*” (vs. 9). Yes, how often in our ignorance or stubbornness, we do not know what is good for us. Instead of unloading that burden of sin and guilt we have been carrying, instead of making use of God’s gift to hear His Word of forgiveness pronounced so personally to us, our sinful nature convinces us that with time we will “get over it.” The result is that we go on hiding from God and wallowing in unresolved sin and guilt. And all too often, we just keep taking it out on ourselves and others.

What a relief it was to David when finally, he made use of God’s gift of Confession and Absolution. For some time, he had let his sins weigh on his conscience day and night. He had begun to feel as if his bones were growing old, as he constantly groaned under the burden of guilt. He had felt the heavy hand of God’s Law upon him for so long, urging him toward confession and repentance. Until finally, his stubborn spirit was broken. And He said: “*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin*” (vs. 5).

The painful moment of honesty David had avoided for so long was not so painful after all. The fear of coming into the light of God's truth had imprisoned him in the darkness for so long; but suddenly all that was replaced with release and relief. He wanted nothing more than to forsake his path of self-deceit, to start anew in the grace of God. As he confessed his sin from the heart, he heard no words of condemnation or judgment. Instead, as God promises the penitent sinner, he heard only God's Word of Absolution: "I forgive you all your sins."

When there are sins we are trying to hide in our lives and in our heart, we can be sure that God is seeking us out. If we are feeling the rebuke of His Law, with that heavy hand of God on us, it is only because He loves us too much to let us go on in self-deceit. He is urging us to confess our sins honestly and to forsake them. The Lord, who loved us so much that He gave His life for us on the cross, wants nothing more than to forgive our sins and release us from the burden and pain our sins bring with them. He wants nothing more than to bring us healing in His wounds.

So at His invitation, let us flee for refuge to His infinite mercy. Let us hide *in* God, not *from* God. Let us confess our sins together. Let us also make use of private and individual Confession and Absolution, so that Satan may not tempt us to despair. Let us unload the burden of specific sins, saying with the hymn:

I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God;  
He bears them all and frees us From the accursed load.  
I bring my guilt to Jesus To wash my crimson stains  
White in His blood most precious Till not a spot remains.

As we hide ourselves in the grace of God, in the full forgiveness of sins Jesus won for us on the cross, we can rejoice and pray with David: "*You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance... Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!*" (vs. 7, 11).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.