

# CONNECTIONS online

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## Double Good

Essay by Rev. Chris Brekke



Does your congregation do the Confession of Sins on Sunday mornings? I hope so. I know that many clumpings of Christians do not do that. They may think that it's a downer, or is too judgy. It doesn't build self-esteem. They may want to start worship with a welcome and a thank-you prayer and some songs, rather than focus on our sins and flaws.

I can worship at a church that does that, but I do think that it's better to include confession and honesty about our sinfulness. I think we are missing out on something valuable if we don't. Why would I think that? As I see it, confession is double good. It serves two necessary functions for us as Christ-followers. See if you agree.

First: It is good for us to humble ourselves before our Maker and own up to our sins — not just our “brokenness” or our “shortcomings,” but our moral failures for which we need God's forgiveness. We need not pretend that we're just fine, that we are righteous people. It's better for us to reflect on our wrongs and not paper over those failings. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’; then thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:1,5 RSV).

Confession is good for the soul. It softens us and opens us to hear the gracious mercy of the Lord that we can then pass on to other stumblers and bumblerers. It gets us ready and in position for renewal of life. As we say it in our Lutheran confessional prayer: “Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.” Whether you are 7 or 97, confession is a good thing.

Now, here's a second good thing about the

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12 RSV)*

confession of sins. Even at times when you are not too aware of how you have fouled up, it is obvious that we as a human race are deeply mired in sin. Look around at the woes and messes of the world, and you know it: We are sinners. We have badly mangled God's sweet world. We can confess and seek mercy not just for our own personal sins, but also for the sins of the world. “The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). We can set our sorrows before the altar and be very grateful that the Lord is merciful.

Some days our hearts are heavy with all the wickedness and sadness on earth. We lay our sins on Jesus. We know he cares, and that he loves us fools and sinners, no matter how awful we have been. How good to know the extravagant grace of God! How good to be bathed in the love that we all need so badly.

Double good is what I need. You too?

A prayer as you go: My Savior and Friend, how good and gracious you are. How we need your powerful presence to cleanse us, and to send us out as your merciful ambassadors into our wounded world. We ask you for this today, in the healing name of Jesus, Amen. 

**Chris Brekke** pastored churches in Nebraska, Colorado, and Minnesota and now stays good-busy in retirement. He is a member at [Community of Grace Lutheran](#) in White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

# Journey Through the Psalms

Mini Bible Study Installment



## PSALM 10:16-18

The Lord is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land.  
O Lord, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

As a reminder from last month, Psalms 9 and 10 compose a singular prayer and acrostic poem. While these psalms still make sense as stand-alone prayers, reading them in conjunction with one another reveals more about the heart of the Psalmist and how we understand God's action in our life. Much of these two psalms focus on the anxiety, shame, and anger that God's people feel towards the nations that surround them. Israel has been conquered, slaughtered, mocked, and shamed. Their own earthly kings continuously disappoint them, no matter how righteous they may have first seemed. The wicked seem to prosper at every turn, and they are confident that they will continue to maintain power and wealth through deceit, violence, and oppression. You know what I'm talking about. Just turn on the news. That's where the Psalmist is writing from. What hope is found in that?

The hope is found in the beginning of Psalm 9, as the psalmist sings of the deliverance God has already provided his people. He has led Israel out of Egypt, blotting out the names of slavers and rooting out their cities. That's who God is. That's what God has done. That's who sits upon the throne of Zion, and that's the memory and truth we carry with us as we begin to acknowledge that we are once again in need of deliverance. Singing of the Lord's mighty deeds is what gives the psalmist the confidence to declare again, at the end of Psalm 10, what God will do. The Lord

who is on the throne will surely rise again. The nations and the wicked will not have the last word. The needy will not be forgotten. The poor will not perish. God has and will deliver us.

Read the Psalm and reflect upon the following questions provided for personal devotions or in a short Bible study session with group discussion.

1. What has God done in your life? What confidence does that provide you with?
2. In what ways do we see ourselves in the "nations" or the "wicked"? How does God bring this wickedness to "everlasting ruin"? Why is that a good thing for us?
3. In what ways do we see ourselves as the "poor" or the "needy"? How does God provide us with deliverance from these afflictions?
4. What does it mean to trust that the Lord is upon the throne of heaven?

## PRAYER

Holy Father, you led your people out of slavery and into freedom. Deliver us once more from the wickedness of our enemies and the wickedness of our own hearts. Remember us in our needfulness and brokenness for the sake of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. 

The author of this installment, **Rev. Taylor Rister-Stempniak** of Fresno, California, is pastor of [Immanuel Lutheran Church in the community of Easton](#).

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