

“Just a Phone Call Away”

“Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 18:18, ESV)

I’m a residential pastor. This means that I reside in the same community/area as those I serve - a shepherd in the midst of the sheep. Therefore, I’m just a phone call away. But I’m not the person to call if you are having mechanical problems or health questions or legal worries. While I’m always happy to speak with you, yet a mechanic or a health care professional or an attorney are the individuals to call if you need help in the examples I listed in the previous sentence. But what about Biblical questions or concerns with your spiritual walk? Well, then I’m your man.

And of course, if you are struggling with sin and the guilt associated with your transgressions, once again, I’m your man. For absolving sin in His name is what God has called me to do. For after having risen from the dead, ***“on the evening of that day, the first day of the week” (John 20:19, ESV)***, Christ told His disciples: ***“Peace be with you. As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you.” When He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of anyone, they are retained’” (John 20:21-23, Modern English Version).***

See, God’s Son took away all of your sins and mine at the cross – suffering, as our substitute, all of the judgment and punishment that you and I deserve. And He now delivers that forgiveness to us today through His Gospel in the Word and the Sacraments (the Means of Grace). And our Divine Savior has given His church the authority to forgive sins in His saving name. ***“Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*** And I, as your pastor, have been called and ordained to publicly proclaim and administer Jesus’ forgiveness through His chosen Means of Grace.

But being a public servant does not exclude absolving sins individually and privately. For private confession and absolution ought not be dismissed as some “Catholic thing.” In *Article 11* of the *Augsburg Confession*, it says: *“Our churches teach that private Absolution should be retained in the churches, although listing all sins is not necessary for Confession. For, according to the Psalm, it is impossible. ‘Who can discern his errors?’ (Psalm 19:12)”* (Augsburg Confession, Article XI. Quoted from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions. Second Edition*. Published by Concordia Publishing House, Copyright 2006, pp. 35, 37). And as you’re undoubtedly aware, private confession and absolution is also mentioned in *Luther’s Small Catechism* as well.

So, I’m just a phone call away. As a pastor I’ve vowed never to divulge any sins confessed to me. The absolution pronounced from my lips is God’s free and full forgiveness – it’s my voice, but God is telling you that you are forgiven. For Jesus said: ***“Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”*** And see, this remission of all your sin and guilt is available anytime. Absolution is a free and one-of-a-kind gift that God provides. All thanks be to Him. Don’t neglect such a terrific blessing. For it certainly is my privilege and joy to share this wonderful gift with you. Feel free to contact me anytime – I’m just a phone call away (906-934-2570).

See you at worship this month,
Pastor