How blessed is he whose rebellious acts are taken away and whose sin is covered.
How blessed is the man whom the LORD never accuses of sin and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
When I kept silent about my sin, my bones were worn out because of my cries of anguish all day long.
Day and night Your hand laid heavily on me. You tried to destroy me in the dry summer heat.

Selah

I made my sin known to You, and I did not cover up my guilt. I said, "I will confess my rebellious acts to the LORD," and You took away all my sin.

Selah

For this reason let all who are faithful pray to You at a time when You may be found. Then raging floodwater will not reach them.
You are my hiding place. You protect me from trouble. You move protectively around me with songs of deliverance. [Psalm 32:1-7]

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Before God no one is guiltless. Everybody is guilty, especially those who do good works, who imagine that in this way they can escape from the causes of their guilt. No one can rescue himself from guilt. Therefore blessed are they -- not those who are sinless or believe they can work their way out of guilt but those who God forgives freely by grace. But who are they?

No one is sinless. Even though we may not see sin at work in us or try to cover it up so others can't see it, God clearly sees it. Your whole history is in a strand of your hair. The details of your fingernails explain you. The lining of your stomach is a document. The calluses on your hand tell all your secrets. Your teeth give you away. Your accent. The wrinkles around your mouth and eyes. Everything you do shows your hand. You are a sinner. A hopeless case. Things will never get better for you. On your own you're unable to desire or pursue what God calls *"good."* There is only One who is good, God. There is only One whose work is good, Jesus Christ. He alone is God: good, and righteous, and loving.

Blessed are you then when God covers your sin, doesn't see, doesn't remember, doesn't want to know about it, but completely forgives by grace. You don't cover, forgive, or forget your sins. You look at, recognize, remember and judge them for what they are: the things that you fear, love, and trust more than God. You understand the truth about the things we consider the very best in ourselves, that these are the things God considers most damnable. So you bring them to Him. You don't hide and cover your sin. You confess it and God covers and hides it, forgives you and makes you acceptable to Him.

When you judge yourselves then God will praise you. When you pull yourself down off your place of pride God will raise you up. When you accuse yourself God will acquit you. When you speak against yourself God will speak for you. When you express your worthlessness He will talk about your value, as he did to Mary Magdalene in the house of Simon the leper [Luke 7:44-47].

You are blessed. That is, you are *"holy"* when you stand, not in your good works and imagine you've escaped judgment because of them, but on the Rock of God's forgiveness, Christ Jesus. Everyone who is his own accuser, punisher, and judge is affixed firmly on Jesus. Then the blows of judgment don't crush him and the flood of afflictions don't overwhelm him. He is humble before the LORD his God. In all these onrushing waters of affliction Christ Jesus is your Rock. He stands immovable, holding you firm so that nothing can drown you. Afflictions may rise up and swirl around you, but by His grace you will overcome affliction. He will save you from sin, death, and hell. So don't fear, the Good Lord, Jesus Christ can find you even in the middle of hell.

Don't hide your sin. Don't become angry when afflictions come. Don't become impatient when you feel wronged even if it's God Himself whose hurt you. Don't try to escape your guilt. Don't try to deflect God's judgment. Confess your guilt to the One who has blessed you in Jesus Christ; who covers all your sins in baptism; who cancels all you owe Him by offering up His body and blood to you. This is where He wants you to be ... you ask that He deliver and rescue you.

On the other hand those who imagine they can manufacture the kind of life that excuses them from God's judgment lie to themselves. They excuse their evil ways. They get into arguments with other people and lapse into pride, anger, hatred, impatience, condemning and mutilating peoples reputations. They imagine they are innocent which makes them really guilty, yet they insist they are right and act fairly toward everyone. They hide their sin. They look at themselves. They don't sincerely confess their sins to God. They are not moved by love or sorrow so they lie. They do it to serve themselves. They love what they need. They love what makes them feel good. They love what is convenient. They don't want God's authority forcing them, like dumb animals with a bridle, to obey. They act only according to their judgment. Yet they imagine they respect and serve God in the best possible way.

They are obedient, pious, forgiven; they have good intentions and consider right what their good intentions suggest ... God always opposes these people. They are proud and don't obey Him. Thus they will suffer much and have many sorrows. Their work is useless, without value and comfort. They are terrorized and flattened by trivialities, they are eaten up by nothing. They don't have a good conscience. They sorrow and work for their good life because the Law and a heavy, evil conscience drives them like an animal. They want the whole world or nothing.

Men who through faith receive the forgiveness of all their sins in Jesus' name don't hide their sin, don't become angry, don't grow impatient even when they are wronged. They don't feel that they can be wronged, since they find nothing good in themselves. These are the blessed men whose sin God covers and cancels because they confess it. Since they don't hide and cover their sin God covers and hides it for Christ's sake.

So don't teach Him, and don't teach yourself what is good and what is evil. Surrender yourself to Him. He will lead you in the Way that is pleasing to Him. Things must go, not the way you think or feel they should go, but according to God's understanding. Use your baptism, drown yourself,

your lack of understanding about sin, guilt, grace, Jesus' agony, forgiveness, and so on, and He will give you understanding.

You don't understand and you don't know the way you should go. Like Abraham who left home and family and didn't know where he was going [Genesis 12:1ff] you too may yield to God's knowledge, because He knows how and in what way you will reach the right goal.

This is the Way of the Cross. You can't find it, He must lead you like a blind man. Not you, not any man, not anything in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth can rescue you from what is coming. Only God's Spirit and God's Word will teach you the Way you must go. You don't follow your works or imagination. You don't choose the way you go. You don't choose the afflictions that fall on you. Surrender yourself to the LORD, give up on yourself, and He will be your hiding place. He will protect you from trouble. He will move protectively around you with songs of deliverance as He is doing for you again this morning.

Forsake yourself. Forget yourself. It's true that nobody, especially not you, can save you from yourself, but God knows you're worth saving. It's a war not easily won but if anything is worth winning then, for Christ's sake, you're it. Therefore, be at peace. Jesus Christ, our LORD, is at your side, in your ears, and soon ... in your mouths. He will never leave you or forsake you. You are His, His own, and He cannot deny Himself. Amen.