

Lent 2C – Our Lord breaks the cycle of “Wash, Rinse, Repeat”

1. Does it seem like we've been here before?
 - a. It's another Sunday, it's Lent, the banners and paraments are purple – like last week, like last year, like last decade
 - i. The cycle is the same in your home life too – get up, get a shower, go to work, come home, prep dinner, do dishes and laundry, go to bed wake up and do it all again.
 - ii. In other words, life seems like an endless cycle of, “Wash, rinse, repeat,” – the same thing, over and over again.
 - b. Have you ever noticed that when you read Scripture you get the same impression, whether it's OT or NT
 - i. Take an example from the book of Judges, I use this because the pattern is SO clear.
 - ii. Here is the record of Othniel, **“And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. Therefore, the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of...Mesopotamia...eight years. But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.”** (Jdg 3:7-9)
 - iii. The pattern: the people forget the Lord, God sends an oppressor, they call out in distress, and He sends a deliverer who saves them and when that deliverer dies the cycle begins again.
 - iv. Wash, rinse, repeat...the same cycle for about 400 years until they demand a king rather than judges to rule.
2. You would think the people would have learned their lesson, but they didn't because we see the same pattern continues throughout the history of Israel.
 - a. King David was faithful but his son Solomon, for all his wisdom, was led astray by his many pagan wives.
 - i. After Solomon the kingdom split in two – North and South and they continue the same pattern of unfaithfulness, persecution, repentance, deliverance...repeat
 - ii. The Northern Kingdom eventually was taken by the Assyrian empire and disappeared
 - b. The Southern Kingdom limped along for another 140 years which is when our OT lesson occurs.
 - i. And we see the same pattern unfolding in our reading which occurs a few years before the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem.

- ii. Jeremiah is the faithful prophet of the Lord sent to call the children of Israel back from their apostasy and false worship or the Lord would send Babylon to destroy the city.
 - iii. And we can see his preaching was met with great enthusiasm, **“And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die!”** (Jer 26:8)
 - iv. Not the reaction a preacher wants but the message did arouse a response – REJECTION followed by persecution and exile...wash, rinse, repeat!
 - c. Fast forward to the Gospel, and you’ll see the same thing.
 - i. Jesus, the sinless Son of God has been sent to call Israel to repentance and salvation.
 - ii. But His message is rejected; surprisingly some pharisees come to warn him, **“Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.”** (Luk 13:31)
 - iii. And the Lord sums up the history of Israel which was destined to catch up with Him as well, **“...I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”** (Luk 13:33-34)
- 3. This isn’t just the story of Israel it’s the story of human history but through His perfect sacrifice on the cross Jesus ends our sinful cycle of wash, rinse, and repeat!
 - a. Prior to our Lord’s ministry we were trapped in the that never-ending cycle because of our sin, humanity was destined to repeat that same cycle as Israel
 - i. Paul tells us, **“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”** (Eph 2:1-3)
 - ii. When Christians read the OT, they are often amazed at how often Israel turned away from God and wonder how could they do that after all that He had done for them?
 - iii. But the sad fact is that if we had been in the same spot, we would have done the same thing – the Israelites of old were no more sinful or lost than any of us today.

- iv. How many of us go through the same cycle of faithful to complacent-disobedient, suffer some consequence, cry out for deliverance and are saved only to repeat it all over again?
- b. But God promises us, as He did Israel, that we don't have to be caught in an endless feedback loop because we have been freed through Christ,
 - i. Once again listen to Paul, **“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”** (Col 2:13-14)
 - ii. The shame and guilt of what we've done has been covered by the blood of the Lamb, we have been washed whiter than snow and now wear the robe of His righteousness.
 - iii. But we live in a war zone – Satan and his minions will not rest in their quest to destroy your faith OR make your faith weak and ineffective
 - iv. He uses this wash, rinse, repeat cycle of our sins to repeatedly knock us down in order to make us question our salvation and the promise of God's power to deliver.
- c. Thanks be to God our Lord doesn't give up so easily!
 - i. Satan wants you to believe that you have committed the unforgivable sin (which only is unbelief) and therefore should fear to approach God in prayer or confession.
 - ii. But God's promise to you is written in Ps 103, **“He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”** (Psa 103:10-12)
- d. And He promises that you don't have to live in an endless cycle of wash, rinse, repeat but that through the power of the Holy Spirit you can overcome that endless cycle that is so easy to fall into.
 - i. Our Lord has left us with what we need for this war in His Word from Paul in Eph 6, **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil...Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth...the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes...the gospel of peace...take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,”** (Eph 6:10-17)

- ii. My brothers and sisters in Christ our Lord has given us victory over sin and death through the cross of His Son and has equipped us with His armor that we may break the wash, rinse, repeat cycle of sin through the Holy Spirit!