

Introduction: Seeing or Not Seeing

On Monday, after the sentencing in a much-hyped murder trial, I received an excited recorded message congratulating me on the 33-year sentence with no parole. I felt terrible listening to it. I could say many things, but the sender's joy was in the punishment, showing no concern for the person or their family.

Justice and righteousness are important, but so are reconciliation and new beginnings for those affected. Punitive justice won't stop crimes. If you have murder in your heart, the value of others' lives, and even your own, becomes meaningless. Reconciliation and justice require our community to acknowledge the truth.

Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't see any issues" when it's crystal clear that something's amiss? It's like they're living in a bubble, oblivious to the truth. We hear it in politics, in our communities, even in churches: "Everything's fine. Nothing to worry about." But sometimes, what we call "not seeing" is actually a form of blindness, a blindness of the heart.

Our readings today challenge that blindness. They invite us to see as God sees — to notice idolatry, injustice, the marginalised, the lost — and to believe in the transforming power of repentance.

1. Moses: Interceding for a New Beginning (Exodus 32.7–14)

After escaping Egypt, Israel made a golden calf, breaking God's covenant and justifying God's anger. Ironically, Moses had just received the ten commandments, the best way to love God and honour others.

Moses, after his incredible journey back from the Mount, and all the amazing things he saw while leading the Israelites out of slavery, turned to God with a heartfelt plea. He said, "Oh, God, please don't be so angry. Remember all those promises you made to us."

This story really shows the power of repentance. It's not just about feeling sorry for yourself, it's also about stepping up for others. Thanks to Moses' plea, God gave Israel another chance. It's amazing how God is so merciful. Judgment is real, but mercy is even stronger.

Today, our idols aren't gold calves, but rather consumerism, greed, or an insatiable desire for constant growth that sometimes harms our planet. God calls us to reject these pursuits and repent—for ourselves, our communities, and the wider world.

2. David: From Sin to Solomon (Psalm 51.1–10)

David faced the weight of his sins: adultery, betrayal, and guilt. He grappled with the affair with Bathsheba, the cover-up, Uriah's death, and the child's demise. He cried out, "O God, create in me a pure heart."

From his repentance, extraordinary blessings emerged: his son Solomon, through Bathsheba, became the heir to the kingdom, and through him, the splendour of Israel's temple and wisdom arose. God brought unexpected blessings from profound sin and repentance.

Repentance doesn't erase consequences, but it transforms shame into hope for the future. It's not about grovelling, but surrendering brokenness to God's creation. Restoration may not restore what we had, but it brings a new life where there was only darkness.

3. Paul: Grace for the Persecutor (1 Timothy 1.12–17)

Paul, once a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent man, received mercy and his life was transformed by grace. On his way to Damascus to arrest Jesus' followers, he was blinded for three days and nights, becoming an apostle sent by Jesus to spread the gospel worldwide.

Paul used to be violent and even approved of the execution of Christians. But Jesus brought him back out of mercy. In his letter to Philemon, Paul asks for Onesimus, a runaway slave, to be accepted as a beloved brother, not as property. Once forgiven and reintegrated, Paul now advocates for inclusion.

True repentance changes us, not just for our benefit but so we can support others—the marginalised, refugees, the forgotten, and even the earth itself.

4. Jesus: The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin (Luke 15.1–10)

The Pharisees were perplexed by Jesus's decision to dine with sinners. In response, Jesus reminded them that God rejoices over the lost sheep or coin, emphasising that no one should be regarded as expendable.

Dismissing the marginalised or asserting the absence of a problem demonstrates a lack of spiritual awareness. Conversely, sharing in God's joy entails acknowledging the worth of those we might otherwise overlook.

During the community round table, we discussed who society overlooks or dismisses. We also showed the wider community that poverty exists in Paynesville, Eagle Point, Newlands Arm, and Raymond Island. Jesus emphasises that even those in poverty deserve a fresh start or a helping hand to begin a healthier journey.

Today's readings clearly outline our responsibilities: Israel receives a new covenant opportunity through Moses; David's repentance leads to Solomon's glory; Paul's forgiveness enables advocacy for outsiders and freedom for captives; and the lost sheep and coin remind us that God celebrates finding us, even in seemingly insignificant things.

The message is clear: repentance is not the end; it is the door to God's new beginning.

6. Our Call Today

Personal: Where do we need to seek purity of hearts in our own lives and embrace the possibility of beginning anew?

Communal: Who in our town or church is seldom recognised, heard, and welcomed?

Ecological: Which idols of consumption and convenience should we repent from, so that creation can breathe freely again?

Repentance holds great power because it interrupts the cycle—of guilt, exclusion, and destruction—and creates room for mercy, reconciliation, and renewal.

Conclusion: Joining the Celebration

God is not blind. The Gospel reveals our idols, failures, and exclusions. But more importantly, the Divine Image in which we are created recognises our worth. God listens to our repentance, honours our intercessions, and delights in giving us all and others a fresh start.

Our question is: Can we see as God does? Will we allow mercy to lead us to rejoice over the found as we support the marginalised, and care for creation?

By adopting a new perspective and taking control of our situation, we can discern that repentance is not a somber matter but rather a liberating experience. Previously lost, we have now been found, and we express our joy with enthusiasm. Heaven rejoices, and so can we.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

Remember, O mortal that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Repent, and believe the Gospel. Amen.