



The Timeless Psalms

by Joan Stott

A Call to Worship

Lent 1, Year A, Psalm 32

We gather O God, to celebrate with joy the lifting of the heavy burden of our sinfulness!

All people whose lives have been purified from sin, sing and shout for joy - great is our Forgiving God.

Teach us and lead us O God, in the paths of honesty, and may we learn the lessons of confessing our sin.

We count ourselves among the blessed, because we have learned our difficult lessons.

O Lord our God, you are our hiding place, our place of security and blessing.

What a joy is it to know forgiveness of sin and a renewed relationship with God! Amen.

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Prayers of Penitence and Thankfulness

Lent 1, Year A, Psalm 32

Generous God, we gather together to share in our mutual experiences of personal and joint brokenness, failure and disappointment - as we know very well that we are guilty of sin. Even though this is a very unpopular concept these days, each of us are aware of the weight of personal and shared sin that presses down so heavily on us, and the knowledge that this sin separates us from our loving and merciful God.

We each have a difficult lesson to learn, O God, and we need the encouragement and support of each other to give us the strength to throw away this heavy burden of sin. God of compassion and forgiveness, we ask that you help each of us in this struggle, so that we may once again know the joy of forgiveness, and the blessedness of being in a right relationship with our God.

God of community and comfort, we give thanks for the love we have received this day, not only from within our community of faith, but especially from you, our God of hope and freedom. The weight of sin has been removed, and the joy and security that is ours cannot be underestimated – and we celebrate with thankful hearts and minds, the sense of shared release and liberty we are experiencing. Thanks be to our God. Amen.

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A Personal Meditation

Lent 1, Year A, Psalm 32

Guilt! Sin! Alienation! Suppressed fears! Shame! Regrets! Stubbornness! Pride! These are not very healthy or popular feelings and they are seldom freely expressed these days! Yet they are very real to me (and I suspect to other people as well), and they are pressing heavily on my mind and heart; on my health and wellbeing; and in my relationships.

Creative pause: I still want to do it all my way.

Gradually, the weight of those feelings began to crush my spirit, and I chose to wander in the dark alleys of non-acceptance and distraction to try to avoid dealing with those issues. None of my tactics of avoidance worked of course, and that crushing weight only became heavier! Platitudes are not what I need! What I needed was God's and my own forgiveness!

Creative pause: Platitudes are not what I need!

Finally, eventually, and at long last...I threw away my worthless independence! How gracious is our God! With tenderness and love, the long-held clutch on my sin was removed, and release, freedom, liberty and joy filled my heart and mind; the weight of my past slid off my back and was gone. But... even though I knew God was waiting there to welcome me back home again, the best part of it all was that I could go to God assured of a new relationship, new trust, and new hope – my self-imposed barriers were gone.

Creative pause: God was waiting to welcome me back home.

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