Holy Happy Hour—February 12, 2026

St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church and Pro-Cathedral

What Is Sin?

"And Indeed, It Was Very Good"

Genesis 1:26–27, 29–31

Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

> So God created humans in his image,
> in the image of God he created them;
> male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Sin and Redemption

An Outline of the Faith, in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 848–49

Q. What is sin?

A. Sin is the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation.

Q. How does sin have power over us?
A. Sin has power over us because we lose our liberty when our relationship with God is distorted.

Q. What is redemption?
A. Redemption is the act of God which sets us free from the power of evil, sin, and death.

"Saying 'No' to Bad Things: On Naming Sin Rightly" (Excerpt)

By Sara A. Misgen, Ph.D., on *Earth & Altar* (Jan. 13, 2020)

Sin is about naming correctly what is right and what is wrong with the world. Because of this, it is essential for Christian faith. To call something sinful is to say two things at once: first, that something is not part of God's ideal and desire for the world, and second, that we need God's help in overcoming it.

Take, for example, the second verse of "O God of Earth and Altar:"

From all that terror teaches
From lies of tongue and pen
From all the easy speeches
That comfort cruel men
From sale and profanation
Of honor and the sword
From sleep and from damnation
Deliver us, good Lord.

Here, many things are named as wrong. We should not let fear be our guide and teacher. Lying is bad, as is comfort of the powerful. Death ("sleep" in the hymn) is our enemy. Yet these things surround us. Being able to identify these things as wrong is a quietly powerful act. To call lying sinful is to admit that it's not what God wants for us. God does not want us to be led by fear, to experience death, to comfort the cruel at the expense of their victims. Naming sin is a way to identify that this world is not as it should be.

In relief, the doctrine of sin helps to name what God wants for us. These are often things we know from Scripture: God is truth (John 14:6), and is opposed to lying because lies are

contrary to who God is. God is perfect love, and God's perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:8). When we follow fear, we are not following God. Naming sin helps to point us in this direction—away from what God does not want for us, and towards what God does desire for us.

Yet, we are not on our own to overcome sin. At times, discussions of sin in Christian circles can feel a little like self-help; for example: lying is bad, so you have to be extra careful not to lie. You can live into what God wants for you simply by trying extra hard—setting goals, making good habits, praying the right amount, going to church, etc. But this never lasts. Instead, we need God to help us, to deliver us from sin. Calling something sinful means that we cannot tackle it ourselves. It means that we need God, with us, to save us from it.

There is great hope in this. A half-way doctrine of sin, one that sees sin as only naming bad things, leaves us stuck in a mess where we're constantly failing to eradicate sin. We're never doing enough. We're surrounded by all of the terrible things "O God of Earth and Altar" names, and we never gain any ground. But add this second movement of the doctrine of sin, and we notice something true about God: God is also opposed to these things, and working to deliver us. There's no clearer illustration of this than the incarnation, which we just celebrated at Christmas. God comes to be with us, to fight sin in our midst, and to save us from the evil that surrounds us.

In the face of lies, Jesus tells the truth. Against the cruel, Jesus shows compassion for the downtrodden of society—the poor, the sick, the widowed, and the orphaned. He shows us what it means to honor the Lord. In his life, death, and resurrection, he worked to defeat death and damnation. God is with us, working against sin. Jesus's behavior is both a model and a promise: a model for how we too can oppose sin through telling the truth, works of justice, and through letting God, not fear, lead us. But his behavior is also promise that God is already with us, alongside us, and working to deliver us from sin. The call to be delivered from sin, as the hymn ends each verse, is a call for God to bring the work that God is already doing to completion. Sin is never something that we have to face

on our own. It is never just our problem to solve. God is actively working against it and opposing it now. …

God's work against sin is God's acknowledgement that the world is not as it should be, and God's commitment to us and all of creation, that things will be made new. Lord, deliver us indeed.

Confession of Sin

Book of Common Prayer, p. 360

Most merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will,
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Enriching Our Worship I, p. 19

God of all mercy,
we confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives.
We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us,
the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us
through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love
and serve only your will. Amen.