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Trinity Lutheran Church  
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## **CLEANING UP THE INSIDE**

God's PEACE is ALWAYS YOURS in Jesus.

Hear the Word of God from Isaiah 64,

“O that You would rend the heavens and come down!.....All of us have become as one who is unclean, and all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags.....Yet, You, O Lord are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter, and we are all the work of your hands. Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord. Do not remember our sins forever. Look on us, we pray, for we are all Your people.”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

Today's good and perfect gift is a clean heart. And who doesn't need that? So let's get started.

Imagine, for a moment, a father getting his family ready to go on vacation. And he walks into his garage, thinking that he is unplugging his son's bike pump, but instead he unplugs the family freezer. Oblivious to what has just happened, he gets in the car with his family and off they go. Now, did I mention that this is a summer vacation? In August? In Texas? When it gets really hot? And that the freezer is full of meat? So, for 7 sweltering summer days this guy's garage freezer is unplugged.

Now when the family returns home, dad decides to get some meat out of the freezer for a family barbeque. I won't go into all of the details, but let's just say it is a moving experience.

Now what? So the father takes a rag and a bucket of soap water and begins cleaning the “*outside*” of the freezer. And when he’s finished, the “*outside*” of the freezer is clean enough to pass a Marine boot-camp inspection. But when he opens the door, it’s the “*inside*” that’s the problem. And it stinks to high heaven.

Next, the dad says to himself, “Now, what should I do?” He thinks to himself and says, “Well, I’d stink too, if I had the social life of a freezer in a garage.” So he decides to throw a party, and invites all of the other appliances in the neighborhood. The appliances have a few chuckles about limited warranties; while the blenders mix it up with everyone. Now, I’m sure this will come as no surprise, but the party doesn’t fix the freezer either.

So the guy decides to give his freezer some status. He gives it an iPhone-12, with some great apps, and even gives it an American Express Gold Card. Now his freezer looks classy, stylish, and: dare I say it, his freezer is cool. But when the dad opens the door, expecting it to be clean, but it’s still a putrid and disgusting mess.

Finally, he comes up with one more idea, and he tries getting a date for his freezer. A little high-voltage excitement ought to cure the freezer’s problem! But that cute Westinghouse down the block gives his freezer the cold shoulder.

Now, I know what most of you are thinking. You’re thinking: “Who is crazy enough to concentrate on the “*outside*” of the freezer, when the “*inside*” is such a mess?” Do you really want to know the answer to that question?

A woman unloads terrible verbal missiles at her children, and then begins to feel guilty. What’s her solution? She goes on a spending spree at her favorite outlet mall

I know what you’re thinking: “Who is insane enough to focus on the “*outside*” when the “*inside*” is repulsive, rancid and rotten? A husband who gets involved in an affair. It’s a thrilling adventure, But it ends up driving him into deep despair and guilt? What’s his solution? He finds some new friends who will affirm his actions.

A teenager uses drugs and alcohol to avoid being the oddball among his friends. So what’s the solution to his problem? Hide the evidence, breath mints, and lies.

Let’s be honest. The sinner in us wants us to clean up our lives on the “*outside*”, but it’s the “*inside*” of us that’s the real problem.

Let me repeat that. The sinner in us wants us to clean up our lives on the “*outside*” but it’s the “*inside*” of us that’s the real problem. Just ask Isaiah. He tells it like it is “***All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.***” (Isaiah 64:6)

So what does Isaiah mean when he says, “***All of us have become like one who is unclean.***”? In the Old Testament, ‘*unclean*’ referred to someone with an infectious disease. And Leviticus 13 says, “***The person with an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face, and cry out ‘Unclean! Unclean!’***” What does he mean? When Isaiah says we are all ‘unclean’, he’s saying that our sin – what’s inside of us - is like a contagious disease that kills people. When we live in sin, and get others so sin with us, we’re spreading the deadly disease of sin to others. Imagine if we had to say to others: “*Hi! I’m dying from sin. And it’s contagious. If you follow me, my sin will kill you too!*” We may not have too many friends, but often times we’d be telling the truth. And then God’s Law, sort of quarantines us: “***Everyone who sins, is a slave of sin,***” “***and the soul that sins will die.***” Because of sin, you and I are a mess, definitely on the “*inside*”, and maybe on the “*outside*” too. We may look ‘*fit as a fiddle*’ on the outside, but on the inside we are a rotten mess. And this mess or ours’ is highly contagious!

So what will we do with the mess on our “*inside*”? Here’s the options people try:

- “BLAME IT” “***The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me; she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’***” (Genesis 3:12) Adam took his sin like a man; he blamed his wife!
- Others prefer to “STUFF IT”: “***When I kept silent (that is: unrepentant) my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.***” (Psalm 32:3) This is like burying toxic waste - to not deal with your sin, will corrode/destroy you.
- Some decide to “MEASURE IT”, “***When they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.***” (2 Corinthians 10:12) This is the person who says: “*I measure up to my own standards.*” But what about God’s standards of the Ten Commandments?

No matter what we do on the ‘*outside*’, we still have a huge problem on the ‘*inside*’. My “*inside*” it like a rotten, rancid mess; that spreads into every part of my life, and the lives of others, like a lethal disease. So is there any other way to deal with my mess, than to BLAME IT, STUFF IT, OR MEASURE IT? Yes, there is!

CONFESS IT! CRY OUT TO GOD TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEM! Isaiah says, ***“Oh, that you would rend the heavens, O Lord, and come down.”*** (Isaiah 64:1)

Talk about filth in the freezer! God’s people were once “knee-deep in it” in Egypt. What did they do? They cried out to God for help. And what did God do? Exodus 3:8, God came down, and spoke to Moses in a burning bush, about how He, the Lord, was going to save His people. And guess what? God provided, and the people walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. So Isaiah pleads with God in our text, ***“God, you did it once before, and You can do it again!”*** And what Isaiah cries out for: ***“Rend the heavens, and come down, O God, and save us on the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, and God’s answer*** arrives in Christ Jesus. ***“Who for us men and our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man.”*** ***Isaiah held God to His gracious reputation to save, and said, “You came down and did awesome things that we did not expect.”*** So do it again God. We need you to clean us up. (Isaiah 64:3)

And when God comes down he does the unexpected. In his first miracle at Cana, Jesus turns wash water into the wine of gladness – a picture of the wine of His blood, that gladdens the heart of His forgiven people. No one expected that. When Jairus’ daughter died, Jesus says ***“She’s sleeping.”*** And He takes her by the hand, and brings her back to life. No one expected that. Jesus carried all of our filth and rottenness to the cross, and there God the Father damned God the Son to save us. No one expected that at all! And finally, against all odds, Jesus rises again from the dead, conquering our death. And absolutely no one expected that.

Why would a holy and perfect God send his Son into our ugly mess to do such a radical cleansing of guilty sinners? Because our God is finally a loving and gracious Father. That’s what Isaiah says. ***“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father.”*** (Isaiah 64:8)

A little girl came to her daddy and said, ***“Daddy, I took your scissors and cut my hair.”*** And the little girl now looked like a punk-rock star! So what do you think the Father did? He lifted his daughter into his lap and asked, ***“Is that a good thing to do?”*** And the little girl sheepishly said, ***“No.”*** ***“And what does Daddy do when you get his scissors?”*** ***“You spank me.”*** ***“And what do you think Daddy should do this time?”*** And the little girl said, ***“Love me, like my daddy.”*** And guess what? The daddy took her in his arms, and forgave her.

Don't we all want a Father like that? Who is at his best when we are at our worst? Whose grace is strongest when our faith is weakest? A Father who will pick up the pieces and clean up our messes? **This is the Father you have in Jesus Christ, Who sent His only Son to us, to mop up all of our mess ups, by His blood.**

So why blame your messed up inside on someone on the outside? Why stuff your mess ups so deeply, that they make your life toxic, when the forgiving cross is open for business? Why measure your mess ups against your self-chosen standards, trying to convince yourself of the lie that you haven't sinned? There is a better way. Confess it. Confess it to your loving Father. He will do awesome things, things that you do not expect. He did it before, on Calvary. And He will do it again with Calvary.

Why is that? You know the answer. It's Jesus. Isaiah, like no other book in the Bible, shows us the beauty and splendor, mercy and grace of our Savior, Jesus, who still comes down in the middle of our messes, using His pierced hands and feet to tenderly draw us to Him without fear, so that we give Him our unclean mess, and receive a clean heart, and a new and right spirit in exchange. Amen.