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Speak...Repentance

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Every household makes its attempt to maintain some type of order... some routine that helps orient us each and every day... maybe even several times a day... because every household is in the midst of change... constant change... and healthy households come to some kind of balance with that constant change of kids growing... jobs changing... the disorienting reality of the world... and so at home... routine... dishes... laundry... shoes, hats, jackets in the closet... I've been telling my wife for years... shoes, hats, jackets... in the closet... you can do whatever you want out there in the world... but in this house... those particular items belong in the closet...

One way we try to help our kids orient themselves is by holding them accountable to keep a clean room... not a pristine museum of a room... but a picked up room... reminds me a bit of my own parents efforts for me to keep my room clean... the phrase you weren't "born in a barn" still rings in my ears as a clarion call to get to work... but Jesus was born in a barn... his room must have been a huge mess... shouldn't I be like Jesus... ok... so I'd think it... but never say it... lol...

However, my son didn't have that sense of caution... it might have been his approach... instead of taking the theological/sarcastic route... he would go the scientific/existential route... one day, Jonah my son was 6 or 7, my wife was directing him to clean his room and his retort was... "Cleaning my room is pointless mom. Entropy. You can google it."

What? Ok, so, lots to unpack there. First...what you need to know is that my son, from a very early age loved all things science... and he also loved reading... usually about science and he has a good memory... couple that with a gift my parents had just given him... the gift... books on the various scientific disciplines... and the book he spent the most time reading was this book on Physics... now... let me read to you what this Physics for kids book says about entropy...

"Entropy, I am the king of chaos – a mixed-up prankster who makes sure that energy always changes from useful forms to messed-up, spread-out forms. A renowned troublemaker. I'm the reason why things break and burn out, and I'll get you, too, in the end. Ultimately, I'll cause your body's cells to degrade and stop working properly and you'll die.

I always increase, and I work in one direction only – things NEVER get neater unless you put some effort in... Hurrah! In short! I create havoc. This is why it's pointless cleaning your room – because the universe is working against you. Next time, try that as an excuse!"

So... great argument son... you did your research... I am so proud of you... you have taken in information and applied it to your everyday life... and thank you for encouraging us to further educate ourselves through the google... but here is a phrase for you to google... "because I said so" ... look that up smarty pants...

But it is true that at times we can feel that the universe is working against us. We age. Life does slip away. And lots of times we aren't that helpful. By the things we say and do, by the things we don't say and don't do we can amplify the discord. We can amplify the brokenness. We hurt one another. We refuse to help others. There can come this chasm between us. We cause trouble. And all of that seems to speed up the entropy burn. We burn ourselves. We burn others.

But the good news, that is repeated over and over and over and over again in scripture... so much so... it's baked into God's design and intention... let's say it this way... if the ultimate inevitable burn of entropy is real... then what also is real is the healing power... the life changing power of God's redemptive work...

King David, who had been engaging in activity that was accelerating the burn of entropy in others' lives, when confronted with that reality wrote this famous Psalm.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

Now this wasn't merely a confession – to admit wrongdoing. This was an act of repentance – to ask

for a new and right spirit is an act of change. To turn, to change one's behavior. 180 degrees.

And later in the story of God and humanity God seems to respond through the prophet Jeremiah...
For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Jer 29:11

Repentance... an intentional act to turn back... to do a 180 from the trajectory that you are on. To turn from wrong and return to right. We, you, and I, all of us are creating history as we move into our futures. And in that history, we at times can leave others and ourselves burned. To repent is to acknowledge that, and to change by living into a new future. We speak repentance and our history changes. Here is an example...

There is an important character in the bible named Judah. Judah has a very disorderly house. Lots of entropy. Let's start at the beginning.

Abraham had two sons... one named Ismael... the patriarch of the Islamic faith.... And the other one named Isaac... the patriarch of the Jewish and joining much later, you and I, Christians. If only the children of these Abraham could get along. Anyway... later in the story we'll hear a bit about Ishmael's children.

Isaac had son named Jacob...

Jacob the trickster tricked his dad Isaac to give him... the second born... the all-important family blessing... a very disorderly house...

Then Jacob had 12 sons and one daughter from 4 different women. Ok... for us messy but for them... actually normal.

One of those sons was name Judah... the son of Jacob and Leah... Jacob had been tricked into marrying Leah... Jacob really wanted to marry Leah's sister Rachel.

Later Jacob finally did marry Leah's sister Rachel and Rachel had two sons named Joseph and Benjamin.

Those two sons, Joseph and Benjamin would become Jacob's favorite sons as they were born of his favorite wife, Rachel. Crazy household. Judah and his other brothers were jealous of Joseph, so they were going to kill him, but Judah did not see any profit in simply killing Joseph,

instead Judah convinced his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery...

A terrible thing but Judah got his money... and who did they sell him too... the Ishmaelites... cray cray... the kids in these families... But they tell their father Jacob, that his favorite son Joseph, had been killed by wild animals.

Judah takes the first step into a future that at that point will be historically terrible. Judah becomes the worst kind of slaver... he sells his own family... Judah ends up getting married and has sons of his own. However, Judah's wife dies, and his first son marries a woman named Tamar. Then Judah's his first son dies. As is the custom, again weird for us but normal for them, Judah gives his second son to his dead son's wife, Tamar but then that son dies too. Wait... what?

However, Judah does not do the right thing by giving his third son to marry Tamar... that's a big no, no... because now Tamar is out in the cold... however... through some more trickery... Judah and Tamar hook up and Tamar gets pregnant but when Judah finds out he flies into a rage and decides he is going to kill his daughter-in-law Tamar – Jerry Springer anyone!

But Tamar shows proof that Judah is the father, Tamar has twins and guess who traces their lineage to one of those twins? King David... and who traces their lineage to King David? Jesus! Wow!

Talk about God's redemptive power. Talk about God making crooked ways straight... however it will soon all hang in the balance.

Judah's family – Jacob and all the rest – experience a famine – they are all facing death so they head over to Egypt where they will unknowingly ask their brother Joseph, whom they sold into slavery – who is now a big wig in the Egyptian power structure – for the food they need to survive.

What is Joseph going to do? Through more trickery Joseph lays claim to his little brother Benjamin... the only one without blood on his hands... Benjamin... the only one that Joseph really wants to see and hang with... his little brother...

But it is Judah that steps forward and speaks repentance... speaks repentance through bearing his soul... repenting from the history of selling his

brother into slavery... Judah instead offers up himself to be the slave instead of Benjamin... knowing the pain that their father Jacob would suffer if he would end up losing both of his sons of Rachel.

The pain that Judah helped create. Judah the slave trader... the one who convinced his brothers to sell Joseph so they could profit... that Judah... turns toward a future that will create a whole new history....

Joseph responds... seeing the repentance in Judah... Judah is no longer the same person... no longer a slaver... no longer disloyal to his family... Judah puts his family before himself... Judah has changed and is willing to sacrifice himself for his family...

Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and the family is reconciled... the family is saved... and through the nation of Israel a baby will be born... yes in a barn... lol... very messy.

Where is the entropy happening in your life... where is the burn... like Judah, where you need to speak repentance?

You see... repentance is not just an exercise in freeing yourself from guilt or shame... repentance doesn't guarantee freedom from those things. What repentance does is give you a chance to turn... to start anew... to walk into a new future that will leave a history of reconciliation and life. Step one... like King David you need to feel remorse for whatever action you are responsible for that created the burn in the first place. Repentance without remorse is not repentance it is a trap – a cul-de-sac that keeps you repeating the same action over and over again and you'll never ask for a clean heart and a right spirit.

Then... restitution... some type of making amends... this doesn't have to include receiving forgiveness from the other... you may never get that... but your repentance is not dependent on someone else's forgiveness. Repentance is about your change... your turning away from a destructive path... And then resolve... be resolute... be honest with yourself... ask for help if you need to.

Know that you are not alone... even in our most holy of books... our bible, there are lots and lots and lots of stories of repentance because people

have needed it, and God knows it... as God says through Jeremiah – God is here to give you a future with hope. Trust it. We are held we are loved. So... Go ahead... speak repentance.