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May the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts please you, O Lord.

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Where do we place evil?

We Lutherans don't like to talk much about evil, and I think that's too bad.

Sure, we can name a few people that we consider to be evil. Maybe some political leader or the head of corporate America – whoever that might be. Perhaps it's something or someone more personal -a little closer to home.

John places evil in the world. Typical Johannine theology is that the evil one is the ruler of the world, and that evil is in the world. That's why we say we live in the world but are not of the world.

There was a song by the Poppy Family I remember from my childhood. The song "Where Evil Grows" from 1968 said;

Evil grows in the dark,
Where the sun, it never shines.
Evil grows in cracks and holes,
And lives in people's minds.

I think Paul would agree. Paul typically places evil in the flesh. As if being human itself is somehow evil.

Many people want to place evil **some** place – someplace else, that way we don't have to think about the evil that's within ourselves. It's difficult to see our own faults. It's much easier to see the faults of others. We **say** that we are sinners, but we might not really **see** ourselves as sinners. And maybe that's sin enough.

Jesus sends an Advocate to us, the Spirit of truth – God's truth.

Jesus knows that the truth is sometimes hard for us. It's hard to see, hard to believe, hard to understand, even harder to accept. The Advocate is here to help us.

Evil is found in each of us. This is truth. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to us not to combat or to confront this evil. No, the Holy Spirit is a reconciling force within us, not a force opposed to evil. The HS does not come to battle evil but to be an advocate for us.

Evil is not a cancer that needs to be rooted out. Evil cannot be removed from us. It needs to be healed from within. **We need to recognize that evil is within us.**

We are all sinners and saints.

We need reconciliation from sin to be healed and put right with God.

Jesus tells the disciples “⁸And when [the Holy Spirit] comes, she will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.”

This is Johannine language for the world is evil and the evil one rules the world, but because of Jesus, the evil one has been defeated.

We are all sinners in need of reconciliation.

The Holy Spirit comes to us to advocate. The Holy Spirit speaks the words that we cannot say. The Holy Spirit speaks the words for us when we cannot think of what to say. Sometimes there are no words to express how we feel. Communication is often more than just words and when we don't have the words, we have the Holy Spirit to intercede with sighs too deep for words.

We hear in Paul's letter to the Romans, “²²... that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves,” we “groan inwardly while we wait.”

And we wait.

There is something Holy in the waiting, something sacred. We wait in Hope for something we cannot see.

I heard the other day that Hope is a verb. Hope is something we do. Hope is action. In this case we are waiting, but not that passive waiting. We are actively waiting.

We're waiting to pray, but we don't know how. We're waiting for the right words to come, but we can't find them. Or maybe words can't express how we feel. Maybe the words just haven't been invented yet.

We wait for the Holy Spirit to come and speak on our behalf.

We're waiting for redemption.

We need to be aware of the Holy Spirit active around us. We need to be aware of the Holy Spirit active in us. We need to take a deep breath – go ahead and take one now – take that deep breath and feel God's Spirit enter your body.

The Holy Spirit gives us strength to speak God's Word. The Holy Spirit gives us the very Words, so we don't have to worry about saying the wrong thing. We can speak with confidence because we have God's Spirit in us, to advocate for us, to redeem our evil selves so that we are made pure in Christ and can serve God's children.

We are redeemed so we can bring Good News to God's people.

We are Loved by the Living Christ. Now go and Love others as you are Loved.