Christianity for the Curious
Week Five: The Human Condition
The Great Gap
Sin and Separation

• The History: God creates the world, the world gets lost, God seeks to restore creation

• The Problem: Therefore, sin is the problem we need deliverance from

• The Tradition: For centuries, Christians have seen sin as what separates us from God
What is sin?

• **Disobedience:** Breaking the rules, 'God's law'

• **Self-Concern:** Reinhold Niebuhr: the root sin is self-concern out of which flows specific behaviors

• **Estrangement:** Paul Tillich: we center our lives on the world or the self and not on God → estrangement
The Human Condition

Is sin the best description?

• Traditionally: If sin is the catch-all description of the problem then forgiveness is the solution

• Beyond this singular view: there are other images that capture the human condition of our gap from God: blind, in exile, lost, hunger & thirst
• Hamartia (sin): The primary Greek word for sin in NT = "To miss the mark"

• Metanoia (repentance): to change of heart, to turn back

• The Lost Son: the Father runs out to meet him once he has changed his heart and turned back to come home
Questions

1. What does your life tell you? Do you experience being lost, estranged, blind, sick, in bondage, grasping, paralyzed...?

2. If this is what you experience, what best describes what you need as a way out?
**Sin and Salvation**

*Beyond Formulaic Christianity*

- **Salvation in the afterlife:** If you turn to Christ, you gain access to heaven.

- **Salvation in this life:** Not preoccupied with what follows in the next life, but with transformation of self and society in the Kingdom of God in this life.
Stories of Salvation
A rich biblical tapestry

- **Exodus**: Salvation = Liberation
- **Exile**: Salvation = Return
- **Temple Impurity**: Salvation = Cleansing

- **Jesus as all these**: the liberator, the way home, the cleansing of the Temple
Structural Sin
Beyond personal salvation

• Liberation Theology: A theology for the non-person
• Social Structures of Sin: Beyond me and my Jesus is the struggle to end global injustice, a struggle we either aid or obstruct e.g. Who produces your coffee? Your clothes?
  • Why is Wal-Mart so cheap?
Holistic Salvation

A new personal and corporate reality

• The dream of God: Salvation is the dream of God for the world and for each of us

• A new social and personal reality in this life: Nothing less than the transformation of self and society

• Holistic Salvation: The mission of the Church
Questions

1. What new reality are you seeking in your life?

2. What are you prepared to do to journey toward that reality?