

Psalm 51's opening phrase is a plea for mercy. When is mercy needed? When there is an overwhelming opposing force, when there are stresses and strains in life that seem too much, when temptation has been too strong and forgiveness is needed, to name a few. We get depleted easily enough in this life. When our fuel tanks are empty life feels empty, whether it is or not. When we have been crushed by life, all the things that usually sustain us are in danger of leaking away. We need to know how to recover. It really doesn't matter if the damage was caused by our own unwise choices or someone else's mean spirit or by circumstances whose cause cannot be traced or for any other reason; we need to know how to make sure we get filled up again; filled with energy, vitality and spirit.

So how does one recover our joy in life? First thing is to recognize who has the power. When we are crushed, it is easy to recognize that we do not. However, in our 21st Century American Culture the prevailing attitude is that we are supposed to be able to do things ourselves. It is, after all (according to our society) all about us. If we cannot maintain "the perfect life", advertisers are quick to tell us what product we can purchase so that we can. The problem is, there is no "stuff" that will do it. No manufactured item, no product, no material element has the power to give life or to give meaning to life, nor can it restore either one previously given. Only God has that power.

The heart of Psalm 51 is "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, put a new and right spirit within me.*"

" (Psalm 51:10) There is the key. Only God has the power to put things right within us. Only God

can cleanse us from the inside out. Only Divine Love can purify us. We only open ourselves to receive it, make space for it to flow in, and then work to maintain it in our lives.

Renewal is a gift of grace. Receive it and be glad. When you are overwhelmed: Breathe deep, for the love and power of God's creative and life giving spirit is as close to you as your next breath. When you are stressed out: Close your eyes and feel the love of God surrounding you, supporting you and blessing you. When you are in need of forgiveness: admit it and receive the transformation that repentance brings.

blessings to you from Pastor Karla