Easter 2017

**How Can It Be?**

**After 3 song worship set - turn all lights off and play video -**

https://www.vevo.com/watch/lauren-daigle/how-can-it-be-(lyric-video)/US8391400134

Part of the story behind the song is from John 8 - Woman caught in adultery - which was a crime worthy of stoning 2000 years ago in Jewish culture.

John 8:1-11 - …A crowd soon gathered… As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law … brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”

They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, …until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

“No, Lord,” she said.

And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

Now, we don’t stone people for committing adultery today and lots of people do it. But almost everyone still believes it’s wrong. Even folks who claim not to believe in God and don’t want a relationship with God, they know adultery hurts - it breaks a solemn promise. One party is hurt greatly - and while it may bring pleasure for a moment, it always brings pain in the long run.

*I am guilty*

*Ashamed of what I've done, what I've become*

*These hands are dirty*

*I dare not lift them up to the Holy one*

Do you feel that way? Do you ever feel guilty?

Are there things in your life of which you are ashamed?

Maybe it’s not adultery, but something else.

I heard someone say recently that we all have things in our lives that we hope no one finds out about. I think that’s probably true. I know there are things I have said and done that I hope no one finds out about.

But Jesus knows - and He loves me anyway! I have to tell Him what I’ve done because He already knows! I have to confess to Him to receive forgiveness!

But I have this promise -

1st John 1:9 - But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Maybe I lied to my parents.

Maybe I’m having any kind of sexual relationship outside of marriage.

Maybe I’m cheating on my taxes.

By the way, did you know one of Jesus’ followers - one of His chief disciples - ended up writing part of the Bible - he was a tax collector?

His name was Matthew and in that day collecting taxes meant he was

cheating and stealing from his own people in order to ingratiate himself with the Romans who were killing Jews left and right - crucifixion was common - and this guy was siding with the Romans against his own people. He was hated and rejected by his own - like a leper, no one wanted to have anything to do with him.

People condemned Jesus for having dinner with tax collectors!

So, Matthew is thinking:

*I am guilty*

*Ashamed of what I've done, what I've become*

*These hands are dirty*

*I dare not lift them up to the Holy one*

Until Jesus walked by one day and said, “Follow me.” The Bible says Matthew IMMEDIATELY got up and followed Him.

He needed relief from the guilt!

Jesus gave us the story of the Prodigal Son to show us how much He wants to forgive us …

That prodigal son was thinking -

*I am guilty*

*Ashamed of what I've done, what I've become*

*These hands are dirty*

*I dare not lift them up to the Holy one*

Until he came to his senses and said, “I will go to my father.”

Maybe that’s you today.

When Jesus was hanging on the cross He asked God to forgive those who nailed Him there.

There was a thief by His side who recognized His sin and put His trust in Jesus while they were hanging there.

There was a moment in time in which this thief and those who crucified Jesus had to be thinking:

*I am guilty*

*Ashamed of what I've done, what I've become*

*These hands are dirty*

*I dare not lift them up to the Holy one*

But then, they began to think along the lines of the chorus to the song:

*You plead my cause*

*You right my wrongs*

*You break my chains*

*You overcome*

*You gave Your life*

*To give me mine*

*You say that I am free*

*How can it be*

We are all sinners - How can it be that a holy, righteous God will forgive us? The reason He is able to forgive us of our sins is because He rose from the dead!

The resurrection is the answer to the question, “How can it be?”

If you are here today because it is Easter, and that means you are supposed to be in church, but you think you are too great a sinner for Jesus to forgive - you are thinking, “I am guilty - ashamed of what I’m done - you say that I am free? How can it be?”

The answer is the resurrection!

*I've been hiding*

*Afraid I've let you down, inside I doubt*

*That You still love me*

*But in Your eyes there's only grace now*

Have you been hiding from God because of your sin? Running from God? Are you here today in spite of the fact that in the past you’ve said, “If I went to church, the roof would fall in?”

You think you’re so great a sinner, you have to hide? You think you’re not good enough to be a part?

That happened in the very beginning!

God created the world - created a garden - plants, animals, life, beauty - then He created man and woman.

He came into the garden and walked with them in the cool of the day - Man, woman & God - and no separation.

But God didn’t want and doesn’t want anyone to serve Him or love Him by force - so He gave us a choice - free will - independence - this was the “image of God” -

You can eat from all the trees of the garden except one - if you eat from that tree, something will change in your body - something will change in your soul and your spirit - there will be times you will get sick - there will come a time when you will die - you will cease to exist.

They couldn’t really comprehend that, because at the time everything was perfect.

So - they had to trust God - they had to trust that God had their best interest at heart - He wanted them to love Him by their own choice, so He gave them free will and simply said, “Don’t eat of this one tree - it’s not good for you - I love you - trust me.”

There came a day when they didn’t trust Him - they ate from the tree - and all those changes happened - their bodies, spirits and souls began to die.

And they hid -

Genesis 3:8-10 - When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man

and his wife heard the lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the lord God among the trees. Then the lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid…

Imagine … walking with God personally every day … every evening … personal communication … intimate love with God …. a perfect life … married to the woman God created … no guilt or shame in your life whatsoever -

Then, you disobeyed … God had given you everything - every opportunity - the greatest possible life - and you threw it away because you didn’t trust in Him!

What else are you going to do but hide from Him?

But He still loves you!

Jeremiah 31:3 - have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love.

In His eyes, there is only grace now!

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound*

*That saved a wretch like me*

*I once was lost, but now I’m found*

*Was blind but now I see!*

Written by a man who captured slaves in Africa, hauled them to England as captain of a slave ship, separated them from their families, didn’t care if they died, if they got too sick he just threw them overboard.

John Newton was a horrible man - but he realized his guilt - He wanted to be free - He confessed His sins to Christ - asked for forgiveness - God always gives it - He changed his ways and said there were two things he would always remember - that he was a great sinner, and Jesus was a great savior!

How could such a horrible man survive? How could such a horrible man be loved? How could such a horrible man be forgiven by God?

You say that I am free, how can it be?

*You plead my cause*

*You right my wrongs*

*You break my chains*

*You overcome*

*You gave Your life*

*To give me mine*

*You say that I am free*

*How can it be*

How can I be free from my past? How can I be free from my sin? How can I be free from my shame?

How can I be free from my adultery … other sexual sins … lying … cheating … stealing … cursing … hating … wishing people dead … abuse … being abused … disobeying God in so many ways …

How can I be free from my personal guilt?

The resurrection is the answer.

Jesus pleads our cause!

1st John 2:1 - My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.

As our Advocate, He pleads our case before the Judge, who is God the Father. We have sinned. We deserve punishment. We want to run and hide, but He pleads our cause. He goes before God says, “Their sin has already been taken care of - their restitution paid, punishment made equivalent to the sin - remember - I died on the cross - I took care of it!”

And when we put our faith in that Advocate and His pleading of our case, He says that we are free!

Jesus rights our wrongs!

Jesus breaks our chains!

Jesus overcame!

He gave His life, so we could live forever beyond death.

He says that we are free - how can it be?

The resurrection is the answer!

If He had just stayed in heaven it wouldn’t have been enough.

* If he had just come to earth on Christmas it wouldn’t have been enough.
* If he had just lived a sinless life that wouldn’t have been enough.
* If he had just performed miracles …
* If he had just taught …
* If he had just died on the cross …

He had to rise from the dead! That’s the answer!

And He did!

1st Corinthians 15:3-8 - I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time… Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all… I also saw him.

1st Corinthians 15:17-22 - And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins... And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world.

But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.

He says that we are free - how can it be? We believe - we accept - we put our trust in Him. The resurrection is how it can be!

We said the song was based on the woman who committed adultery in John 8 -

We don’t know if it is the same woman, but there is another story in Luke 7 …

Luke 7:36-38 - One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat.

When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

Luke 7:47-50 - “I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.” Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

…Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

This is how I want you to go today - I want you to go in peace, knowing that your sins are forgiven.

**Prayer -**

He has pled your cause

He has righted your wrongs

He has already broken your chains

He has already overcome all sin, shame and guilt for you.

He gave His life - so that you could have yours.

He says that you are free

How can it be?

He was crucified on a cross, then He rose from the dead!

That’s how it can be!

***Greet guests at end - thank them for coming … mention Gifts & Growth Track -***