



Links Players

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8, NIV)

AMONG GOLFERS, WE HARDLY EVEN WHISPER THIS, but our problems almost always run deeper than swing issues. Sure, I get the club “stuck” underneath on my downswing, killing my speed and flipping the face shut. But the greater problem is that I can’t stay focused for 18 holes. My to-do list contains too many unchecked boxes, my doctors need to see me tomorrow, my car isn’t sounding quite right. Besides these outside distractions, there’s me. I don’t like to practice that much, and I keep telling myself there’s no way I can hit the proper fade this course calls for on six different tees. So what you don’t see when I take the club away is my real problem.

I was reminded of all this on a recent tour of the news feed on my Twitter account, where reactions were pouring in regarding the shooting on Sunday at the West Freeway Church of Christ in Texas. Here are a few samples, in my summary wording: “The problem is the Republicans. Get them out!” “The problem is families. Get them together!” “The problem is hatred. Go love somebody!” Hundreds of ideas about what the problem is and what the solution should be. Yet I scrolled for a while and found none that suggested what we write and talk of so often in these devotional studies.

The problem—and I know this hardly gets whispered anymore—is sin. The solution—if we dare say his name—is Jesus.

I know these words sound simple, and that simplicity is why so many push back when we preach our little gospel. They argue: “If Jesus is who you say he is in his authority and power and his mercy and love, why isn’t he solving the problem right now?” A question like this comes from a perspective similar to the one that sees the golf professional standing on the range with a frustrated golfer and thinks, *Problem solved*. Yes, there are problems in the world like hunger and homelessness that have God’s attention and which are often met by the care of God’s people. But these are only swing fixes, we might say. We’re emphasizing the problems we can see and ignoring the big one, which is invisible: our hearts of sin.

The preferred political party, the most compassionate ministry efforts, the broadest support programs, and even the most loving neighbors can’t solve our sin. Only Jesus can do that. It’s why he died—the single solution to our greatest problem.

Opening questions What are your biggest problems on the golf course—the ones we can see and the ones we can’t? How have you tried solving these?

READING Matthew 23:25-28; Psalm 51:1-17

Inside and out (Matthew 23)

What did Jesus see in the hearts of the hypocritical teachers that they could not see for themselves? To what extent does his confrontational language challenge you to examine your own heart?

David’s view of sin (Psalm 51)

How willing was David to own and confess his sin?

Why is it important to recognize that our sins are committed both before God and others? What responsibility do we have to confess, repent (turn away) from, and make reparations for our sin?

What replaces a heart of sin (vv. 10-12)? How does attaining these things in Christ change the way we approach the world?
