

## From Whom No Secrets Are Hid

*Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

We pray these words together every Sunday as we prepare to go deeper into our communal worship. Commonly known as the Collect for Purity, *The Book of Common Prayer* actually designates this as an optional prayer that the Priest might pray in preparation for what is to come, or that the people might pray silently as the priest prays aloud.<sup>[1]</sup> I have long since designed the service so that all of us say the prayer aloud together, people and presider together as we begin our weekly worship. The petition is that we may set aside our own egos, needs, pains, wounds, and distractions, and stay transparent to the love of God; open and receiving vessels, empty and waiting to be filled, wounded and ready to be healed, divided and ready to be reconciled, tired and ready to be renewed, hopeless and ready for hope to be restored. Whatever the human condition in which we arrive, this prayer is offered as a plea and a pledge that we want to participate fully in the Abundant Life of Christ as we meet with one another in our Sunday gathering. In all my years I have never let this prayer become rote; I pray it with all of my heart for myself and for all of you. How much I want to *perfectly love God* and how much do I want all of us to *worthily magnify God's name*. It is a tremendous prayer of preparation and I hope as you encounter it again this Sunday, you might hear and experience it again in a new and fresh way. One of my favorite Biblical scholars, Walter Brueggemann, has a book called, *Prayers for a Privileged People*. In this book he composes modern day Psalms meant to call the comfortable into both comfort and affliction. He challenges our privilege even as he expresses our pain and fear. I want to share a Psalm from that book called—no surprise—*From Whom No Secrets are Hid*:

The priest says, “Almighty God...from whom no secrets are hid.” We rush to the next phrase but now linger there. We are rich conundrums of secrets, we weave a pattern of lies in order to be well thought of, we engage in subterfuge about our truth. We carry old secrets too painful to utter, too shameful to acknowledge, too burdensome to bear, of failures we cannot undo, of alienations we regret but cannot fix, of grandiose exhibits we cannot curb. And you know them. You know them all. And so we take a deep sigh in your presence, no longer needing to pretend and cover up and deny. We mostly do not have big sins to confess, only modest shames that do not fit our hoped-for selves. And then we find that your knowing is more powerful than our secrets. You know and do not turn away, and our secrets that seemed too powerful are emptied of strength, secrets that seemed too burdensome are now less severe. We marvel that when you find us out you stay with us, taking us seriously, taking our secrets soberly, but not ultimately, overpowering our little failure with your massive love and abiding patience. We long to be fully, honestly exposed to your gaze of gentleness. In the moment of your knowing we are eased and lightened, and we feel the surge of joy move in our bodies,

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<sup>[1]</sup> *Praying Shapes Believing, A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer*. Leonel Mitchell, page 133.

because we are not ours in cringing but yours in communion. We are yours and find the truth before you makes us free for wonder, love, and praise – and new life.<sup>[2]</sup>

Brueggemann's words are sufficient and elegant in bursting that one phrase wide open. I pray that wherever you find yourself right now, you know that you are known and loved by God just as you are. Free yourself from the burden of secrets and shame and God's love will make you whole.

Grace and Peace, Stephanie+

1 *Praying Shapes Believing*, A Theological Commentary on the Book of Common Prayer. Leonel Mitchell, page 133.

2 Walter Brueggemann, *Prayers for a Privileged People*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, page 7.

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