

WELCOME 19th June 2022 – 2 Pentecost '22 C

Romans 2:1-11 & 3:20-28

Welcome! I'm back! Maybe even in the proper time zone too. We can talk about my trip later but I can't fully describe the blessing of being here...Mom was great. Sister & her family were great. **THIS**...is just where God has the gospel flourishing & I'm excited we get to share that as a community & w/ the wider community. **Bible Study Qs** are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom** Bible Study Catch-ups which are back Friday @ 1p.m. Thank you to everyone who filled in & picked up any loose ends while I was away.

As we move into this week...It's as plain as the nose on your face. Blind Freddy could've seen that. Some things are just obvious...or they're supposed to be.

As Paul writes to the church in Rome that's his point...Some things are just obvious: or they should be...There are things about God we should see/know from looking at the world around us...just our experience of life: **"For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth & sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power & divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God."** We should know, acknowledge, honour & worship the God who made all things so that all life, in relationship to him, might flourish to the full...

But sin twists us away from what we **CAN** see toward what we **cannot**...our own fulfillment – our own satisfaction – our self-justification - our desire to be God... master of fate – author of destiny...Sin blinds us to the fact that all those are beyond our grasp. It's equally obvious we're all guilty...**For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.** Sin creates bondage we can't escape...chains we can't break...debt we can't pay: **"No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them. The ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough..."** – Ps 49:7-8

But Jesus comes to pay that ransom...to reopen for us access to the loving presence of God & the domain of heaven...to give his life he **said** "as a ransom for many." - Mk 10:45 Paul rejoices: **God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sin.**

We'll explore & experience that together...Let's pray & then hear God's Word.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

All:

Holy Spirit of life, enflame me with passion for the good news. Let my voice ring with the hope & promise of Christ.

Holy Spirit of Love, immerse me in compassion & kindness. May my words bring comfort to those in need of consolation & relief.

Holy Spirit of grace, enlighten my mind & heart. Fill my speech with expressions of peace & understanding. Fill us today with the mind, heart & life of Jesus Christ. Amen

Romans 2

FAITH CHAT:

1. What do you think is the most dangerous way to view someone else's sin? Why?
2. What's the most dangerous way to view your own sin? Why?
3. How do today's readings help you avoid those twin dangers?

2 PENTECOST '22 C – OPERATION GOSPEL: GOSPEL RANSOM

Stop me if you've heard this one...A man walks into a bar...I was sure he'd duck! I'm sorry. Give me a 2 weeks in the US, add in jet lag...anything could happen. And I know if you have to draw pictures to explain...it was never funny in the 1st place. But some of you chuckled. Being polite perhaps but perhaps also a sign of what psychologists & hostage negotiators call "Stockholm Syndrome." Ever heard of that? What is it?

Well it's the not-uncommon phenomenon of a hostage taking the side of their captor even against their own best interests. It happens sometimes when someone is in a can't-escape situation & they begin to form a psychological bond w/ & find common ground/agreement w/ the person they can't get away from. It's that moment when someone who is trapped by another (held hostage) begins to adopt the worldview, ideology, perspective of their "keeper" & will at times even resist being set free... fight against being rescued...believe their captor is right to hold them & everyone out there is bad, wrong, or to blame...Seems weird...right?

Not really...We all have it. Sin creates just that sort of response in each of us. Sin is that captivating power that turns us against even our own best interests...life in its fullest flourishing best in relationship w/ God toward self-fulfillment = death...How? Well as we dig deeper in Paul's letter to the church in Rome...remember he begins w/ the understanding that we should know, acknowledge, honour & worship the God who made all things so that all of life, in relationship to him, might flourish to the full.

But we also know how that played out...**Gen 3** tells the story. God creates man & woman *in his image to live in his presence & exercise his dominion rule administration* over all God has made...ensure it thrives & flourishes - is cared for sustained, & nurtured. No sooner does God say, "**All** this is yours! Name the animals. Make heaps of babies. Take care of this place as if it were your very own. **AND** stay away from that one tree over there..." than the question is asked, "**Does** God really have your best interest in mind? Can you really trust God for all of this? Wouldn't you really rather be like God & call the shots yourself?"

You know what's next...but what matters is the *next* bit...Of course the relationships fracture & God shows up to hear, "**It** was the woman thou gavest me!" "**It** was the serpent who beguilest me!" Shame, blame, fear at having been found out...Anyone here ever experience that? **You** may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, & you have no excuse! Paul tells us what we hate to admit...sin is not some way back then thing...it's as real & as destructive & as deadly as us sitting here today. But I want us to understand something about sin...Please no one miss this. This is crucial Lots of Xns get this wrong...even Lutherans.

If you've hung out near the church long enough you've heard some pastor use the common **Gk** word for "sin": *ἡμαρτία* - archery word...means "miss the mark." That part is right...most of us get the rest wrong...we think it means "by *this* much." Ground instead of target – tree instead of target – edge instead of bullseye. Wrong. That "*this much*" thinking means I can trivialize or rationalize or blame my sin away. Most of us were taught to think of sin as a moral lapse: violated a moral taboo or transgressed an ethical boundary...broke a commandment or 3. *Not near big enough.*

Sin according to the Bible is a more fundamental & deadly error. Sin means we aim at a target of our own choosing & end up shooting ourselves to death. Gen 3 again: "**Does** God really have your best interest in mind? Can you really trust God for all of this? Wouldn't you really rather be like God & call the shots yourself?" Scripture says sin is a fundamental betrayal of & rebellion against our God-given role as image-bearers & dominion-sharers. Sin means we aim at a target of our own choosing & end up shooting ourselves to death. **God** will pour out his anger & wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth & instead live lives of wickedness. "*wickedness*" better translated "*going off apart from God's way.*" There is nothing but death at the end of that journey of rebellion – sin – self-as-God.

Sin twists us away from trusting God for all things to trusting in ourselves for our own fulfillment – our own satisfaction – our self-worth & value before the world... Sin lies me into believing that I am the master of my fate & the author of my destiny. Sin blinds us to the fact that all those are beyond our grasp. The harder we strive grapple & clamour...the farther we fall into its grip & the emptier our hearts & lives become. Jesus said it, "**What** does it profit someone to gain the whole world but lose their soul?" Eventually...Stockholm Syndrome. We believe/cling to the lies as our own: God can't – won't – doesn't – isn't – I'm not... We adopt the ideology, worldview, & perspective of the broken world. We embrace its fears, anxieties, morality, values, attitudes, hopes & aspirations. Then sin says, "You are absolutely forsaken & forgotten ...a victim of everything bad in life & have no hope ever...alone on this great sea of life in your little boat & that's all there is." Our strivings exhaust us. Shame guilt & anxieties devour us. Fears debilitate us. And we resist that which would free us.

I know that's true because it has a hold on all of us...**You** may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, & you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked & should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. --- **For** everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard

Jeremiah 2:13...Don't ever write off the OT: "*For my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me — the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!*"

Sin creates bondage we can't escape... chains we can't break...debt we can't pay:
"No one can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for them. The ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough..." – Ps 49:7-8

But Jesus comes to pay that ransom...to give his life he said "as a ransom for many." - Mk 10:45 Paul says it...*But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses & the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. This is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. Christ reopens for us access to the loving presence of God & the domain of heaven...restores in us the image sin distorted, gives back the dominion sin stole & welcomes us into life in the Father's presence forever...For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave. You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence & the pleasures of living with you forever.* – Ps 16:10-11. Christ lifts our burdened exhaustion, forgives our shame & guilt, relieves our anxious troubled fearful hearts & grants life peace hope joy love...in the arms of the Father.

Some things are just obvious...or they're supposed to be. As obvious as the revelation of God's glory, majesty, goodness & graciousness, wisdom & power...in all things created, **NOW IN CHRIST** crucified & risen, it should be obvious God has brought the world back to himself...once & for **all**...*God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.*

In Jesus, God comes to us personally to rescue & recreate all things through his life, death, resurrection & rule...to fulfil all the promises to Abraham & God's people...to restore what was destroyed by sin in the garden & bring to fullness God's intention of a people all to himself in joy & life without limit or end at the last day.

TAKE IT HOME:

What does it mean to you to "have faith in Jesus"?

Let's close praying together

Heavenly Father, I am powerless. You take me into the power of your love. I am sinful & broken. In Christ you make me whole. Lead me deeper in trusting you for all things, and in trusting Christ to finish his new creation in me. By your Spirit give me opportunity and obedience in sharing the gospel with those I love who still live distant from you. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.