

Sermon for July 13, 2014 - 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Romans 5:12-15 (NIV84)

Theme: Because of One Man . . .

- 1) . . . sin and death has been passed on to all.
- 2) . . . the gift of forgiveness, life and salvation is offered to all.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-- <sup>13</sup> for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. <sup>15</sup> But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! (Rom 5:12-15 NIV84)

Every so often we come across a news report of some crime that leaves us totally disgusted and asking: "How could anyone ever do something like that? How could someone be so cruel, selfish, heartless, etc."

The world claims that human nature is basically good, and therefore sees the problem of evil stemming from outside influences or circumstances. "Criminals are made, not born," people say. "If you give people a chance, they will turn out good."

But this is not the way God sees things. No, He who searches every human heart – from the worst criminal to the most caring grandmother - sees the true cause of evil. And what is it? In the words of Genesis chapter 6, it's *that every inclination of the thoughts of [man's] heart [is] only evil all the time.*<sup>1</sup>

Human nature, while it may seem caring and good, is really selfish, corrupt and full of evil. The only reason people don't commit even more evil on this earth is that God has let his law remain in man's heart so much so that man is afraid of what might happen if he does commit certain gross sins. But when the heart is hardened and that fear is removed, the monster of man's sinful selfishness is revealed.

And how did human nature become so corrupt? Our sermon text answers that question for us, as well as offering us the cure for human corruption. Let us consider these two things under the theme: **Because of one man** 1) . . . *sin and death has been passed on to all.* 2) . . . *the gift of forgiveness, life and salvation has been offered to all.*

Part One: Because of one man. . .sin and death has been passed on to all.

Our sermon text is part of a wonderful section of Romans which speaks about how we are saved: all because of God's amazing grace, exhibited in the sacrifice Jesus made for the sins of the entire world.

And why did Jesus have to die for the sins of the world? Because, as the first verse of our text explains, all mankind is hopelessly corrupted with sin.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 6:5 NIV84

*Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*

If I were to pour highly toxic, radioactive waste into a mountain spring, what would happen to all the brooks, creeks and streams flowing from that mountain source? They would all become polluted.

In a similar way, Satan polluted the source of the entire human race: Adam. When he fell into sin, the well of all humanity was corrupted. Through Adam's rebellion – his eating fruit from of the very tree God told him not to eat from – human nature has been spiritually corrupted worse than any genetic defect could ever make it.

And because Adam's sin has been passed on from generation, to generation the consequence of sin (death) has also been passed on. And the death Paul talks about here is not just physical. He is talking about spiritual death, that all mankind is spiritually separated from God and – as a result of this separation – deserving of hell.

“But what about innocent babies?” someone might protest. “They haven't had a chance to sin, so how can they be deserving of hell?” The truth is that it doesn't matter whether or not they have had the chance to sin. The fact remains that they have been corrupted with sin – and this is why even babies die.

The apostle Paul uses the following example to explain this concept. He writes: *before the law was given, sin was in the world.* The “Law” Paul is referring to are the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai. Before God verbally gave these Laws to the people of Israel there was still “sin” in the world; a truth clearly illustrated by many Bible stories like: Cain and Abel, the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. .

“*But,*” Paul says, *“sin is not taken into account when there is no law.”* In other words, if there is no “law” telling you something is wrong, how can you sin against it? For example, if I saw a freshly made chocolate cake sitting in my refrigerator, and no one told me I could not eat it, would I be sinning by eating it? Technically no – because no one said I couldn't.

So someone might claim: “The people who lived from Adam until Moses were not given a specific command as to what was right or wrong – so how could they be considered sinful if they had no law to sin against?”

Aside from the fact that God wrote His law on the hearts of all people,<sup>2</sup> they were still guilty of being sinful because they inherited a corrupted nature from Adam.

This is why, *death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.*

The fact that every person (with Enoch being the only exception) from Adam to Moses died shows that “sin” was in the world, even though not a single one of those people sinned in the same way Adam sinned. It's true: the people from Adam to Moses did not “choose” to specifically break a commandment God verbally gave them as Adam did, but they were still guilty of sin because of the corrupt nature they inherited from Adam.

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<sup>2</sup> cf. Romans 2:14,15

“But that’s not fair!” someone might say. Who said anything about sin being fair? Sin is evil and corrupting. Its effects often go beyond the person doing the sinning. The history of Adam’s fall shows that there is nothing “minor” about sin – even if that sin is merely eating food God told you not to eat! Adam’s one sin brought corruption and condemnation on us all. This is why there is evil in the world. This is why people are so unloving and act so selfishly.

“But I’m not that bad,” someone might protest. O really? You know what evil lies deep within your heart: for example, how quick you are to criticize people in your thoughts – thinking the worst and not the best about them. God knows what you think. He sees how you think. He knows the evil that lurks within your nature. This should lead us to cry out: <sup>24</sup> *What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

<sup>25</sup> *Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!*<sup>3</sup> Let us now learn how he saved us from our wretched state!

Part Two: Because of One Man . . . the gift of forgiveness, life and salvation is offered to all.

The apostle Paul calls Adam “*a pattern of the one to come*”. In other words, what was true regarding Adam and his effect on the human race, would be even more true regarding Jesus and his effect on the human race - only Jesus' effect would be infinitely more positive.

Paul writes: *But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!*

God did not like seeing humanity corrupted with sin. He pitied us. Why? Because He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone - wanting all to repent and live.<sup>4</sup> He knew how bad our situation was - that there was no hope for anyone to save himself. This is why He decided to work out our salvation for us. How? By sending one man who would be able to both suffer the punishment our sins had earned, and also pass on to us the righteousness that we need in order to stand before God.

*God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*<sup>5</sup> Jesus came to this earth to live the perfect life every human since Adam has failed to live. He did this in our place so that, after taking all our sins upon himself and dying for them on the cross, He might offer to us the very righteousness He won for us.

And this is exactly what God did, *reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.*<sup>6</sup> And how? *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*<sup>7</sup>

And Jesus didn’t just earn this gift of forgiveness for a select few people. He earned it for all. There is not a single person who has ever or will ever exist for whom Christ Jesus did not win salvation.

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 7:24-25 NIV84

<sup>4</sup> cf. Ezekiel 18:32

<sup>5</sup> John 3:16 NIV84

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19 NIV84

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV84

Just think of the magnitude of God's love: He did not spare His own Son for us, but gave Him up for us all.<sup>8</sup> If God did that (which history says He did) then I never have to doubt His love for me. And what Jesus accomplished, He offers to all through the Gospel. Everyone who believes in him will be saved and have eternal life.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: this world is a corrupt place full of corrupt people. Why? Because we are all descendants of Adam and have inherited sin from him. We are all bad off - not a single one of us deserving of heaven more than the other.

But God had pity on us. He revealed his gracious love for us in the most remarkable of ways: He sent His Son to win forgiveness and righteousness for all. Our sins are great, but His saving love is greater. He offers forgiveness to all through the Gospel. And everyone who receives the Gospel message in repentance and faith is changed. The Holy Spirit makes him a new person. His desire is no longer to live selfishly, but for the LORD. This is not to say that we don't retain our selfish, sinful nature. No, sadly it will remain clinging to us until the day we die. But that sinful nature is no longer who we are. God creates a new man inside of us, as St. Paul says later on in Romans: *you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*<sup>16</sup> *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*<sup>17</sup> *Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*<sup>9</sup>

*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are.*<sup>10</sup> We are God's children - clean and righteous - only because of Jesus' work for us. And what Jesus has done for us, he has done for all and offers it to all through the Gospel He has entrusted us to proclaim.

This world is a wicked place, filled with wicked people. But when you see depressing news reports about horrible crimes and how badly people treat each other, don't wonder how this can be. Rather, understand what God says about sin and the fact that all people are born enslaved to it. Also understand how Jesus saved us from our sins and be all the more zealous to proclaim the Gospel which offers forgiveness, life and salvation to all.

The effects of Adam's sin are certainly great. Praise God that the effects of Christ's sacrifice for our sin are even greater. Amen.

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<sup>8</sup> c.f. Romans 8:32

<sup>9</sup> Romans 8:15-17 NIV84

<sup>10</sup> 1 John 3:1 NIV84