

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, February 26th, 2023
Rev. Gerry Gallant

God's Plan
First Sunday in Lent
Romans 5:12-21

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Let us worship God, who has done great things.

**We rejoice in our God, who made a way
through the desert of this world.**

Let us worship God, who has caused streams of mercy
to flow in the wasteland.

**We are the people God has formed through Christ;
we worship him, and we rejoice!**

Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.

**We praise God for the grace that has saved us.
Alleluia! We rejoice!**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

O God, in creation you fashion us in your image,
in Christ you reveal to us your love,
through the Holy Spirit you welcome us into the fellowship of believers;
we bow in gratitude before you.

We constantly distort your image, but still you restore it.

We daily betray your love, but still you extend it.

We often disrupt fellowship, but still you bless it.

Come unto us at this time and in this place, O Lord,
that your image in us might be revealed, your love for us returned,
and our fellowship in Christ renewed. Amen.

Opening Hymn #500: "Open My Eyes, That I May See"

Open my eyes that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.

Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my eyes, illumine me,
 Spirit divine!

Open my ears that I may hear
 voices of truth thou sendest clear,
 and while the wave notes fall on my ear,
 ev'rything false will disappear.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my ears, illumine me,
 Spirit divine!

Open my mouth and let me bear
 gladly the warm truth ev'rywhere.
 Open my heart and let me prepare
 love with thy children thus to share.
 Silently now I wait for thee,
 ready, my God, thy will to see.
 Open my mouth, illumine me,
 Spirit divine!

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
 Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

Everlasting God,
 fountain of all life and the true home of every heart:
 our hearts are restless until they rest in you.
 Yet we confess that our hearts have been enslaved
 by selfish passion and base desire.
 We have sought after many things
 and have neglected the one thing needful.
 We have not loved you with our whole hearts;
 help us to turn to you and find forgiveness.
 Lead us home, that we may again find in you
 our life and joy and peace. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift
 of God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.

Music Ministry: "I Love the Lord" by Choir**Responsive Reading****Question 131. How should we pray?**

Jesus gave us a model prayer commonly called the "Lord's Prayer":

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
 Your kingdom come,
 Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:1-4.

Question 132. What is the structure of the Lord's Prayer?

The Lord's Prayer opens with an invocation, followed by three petitions relating to God and then three petitions relating to our human needs. The prayer concludes with a "doxology" or word of praise.

Children's Hymn #441: "Can A little Child Like me"

Can a little child like me
 thank the Father fittingly?
 Yes, O yes! be good and true,
 patient, kind in all you do;
 love the Lord and do your part;
 learn to say with all your heart,

Refrain:

Saviour, we thank you! Spirit, we thank you!
 Great God our Maker, we thank you!

For our playing, for our rest,
 for the earth in beauty dressed,
 for the moon and sun so bright,
 for the day and for the night,
 for your patient, loving care,
 for your bounty everywhere, [Refrain]

For the laughter, for the tear,,
 for the love that meets us here,
 for the lessons of our youth--
 honor, gratitude, and truth--
 for the great gift of your Son,
 for your work in us begun, [Refrain]

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Romans 5:12-21

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sermon

Some people view this section of Romans like a spiritual reset. Like the way that a circuit breaker works within your house. You know what I mean, like when you are in the kitchen and

you plug in one too many appliances, or you are in your workshop and then something needs just a little more juice and then suddenly you have no power, the tool or appliance stops work and your first instinct is to check it, then the cord, and then finally you make the long march all the way downstairs to the breaker box. Where you flip a little reset switch and voila, power is restored, and life can go on as it was. Sure, you have to go back up to where you were and unplug something, a minor change, but generally you can keep on working as you were.

Others see the passage like a reset button on your computer, phone, or tablet. When the screen freezes up, and the whole thing is not working. The first bit of tech advice you will get is try turning it off and on again, most devices have a way of doing this, on computers you just hold the power button, and like the circuit breaker, voila, you have power restored. Sure, you might have lost the last 15 minutes of work, or more if you do not save regularly, but once power is restored you can keep on working on whatever it was you were doing.

In both situations that reset, or reboot is critical, without it you could not keep doing what it is you were doing, whether working, or enjoying a hobby. When you read through this verse in Romans it can seem like Paul is teaching us about some divine spiritual reset or reboot for humanity. Some look at this passage and see God looking down of His creation and seeing all of the ways in which it has decayed away from what it is that he designed. He sees the brokenness, the sin, the death and through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, he hits the reset button. Through the life of Jesus, his death upon the cross, his resurrection after three days, and his ascension into heaven, God has given mankind a spiritual reset, so that the world can be put back onto the path that God had originally planned.

This is made clear by the way that this passage contrasts the life of Adam against the works of Jesus. In Adam we see a life lived in disobedience which led to God's judgement and condemnation. In Adam we see a life that is ruled by sin, by separation from God and finally in death. By contrast in the life of Christ we see the opposite, we see obedience, grace, and justification. In Christ we see a different judgement, one that leads to a reign of life, not death, or righteousness, not selfishness, and oneness with God, not eternal separation.

This is all truth, there is a radically difference in Adam and Jesus. One is the end, and the other is the beginning. We need to be cautious if we simplify this passage to just Jesus 'good' and Adam 'bad' because if we do it too easily, we can end up with some form of 'Ying and Yang' theology. We can end up thinking that we live in a world that is black and white, where for every evil there is a good. A world in which holiness and wickedness are in some form of spiritual balance. This is not the theology of the Bible, this is not how the world works.

This passage of scripture is much deeper than a simple balance. It actually goes much deeper than a spiritual reset or reboot. This passage goes much deeper than Adam and sin. We all know the reality that Adam sinned, that all men have sinned, that all are sinners. This is not a new thought, in fact is probably a newer thought in our world today than it was to the audience that Paul was writing to in His letter to the Romans. Almost everyone who was a member of the early church knew the Torah, they knew the Old Testament well, and knew that sin entered the

world through Adam, and that sins reign in the hearts of man began when the serpent asked Eve ‘did God really say.....’ They knew that the lives of all mankind, the rulership of sin in the heart of all mankind, and that spiritual death and physical death because a reality when that very first sin was committed.

In the passage Paul explains that we can have a very different life than Adam if we are followers of Christ. The sin and death that came into the world for Jew and Gentile can be altered when we become believers in Christ. In Christ we can have a whole new life, A justified life, one where sin does not rule over our hearts, one in which we conquer spiritual and physical death and instead have eternal life.

Paul is explaining so much more than a simple hitting of the reset button, or the reboot. In the passage Paul is explaining that the Lord our God has done so much more than just set us back to the point of Adam, so much more than just removing our status of sin and self-centeredness. Life in Christ does not just reset us, it changes the path we walk on in this world.

If you recall the story of Christ’s temptation in the wilderness. Jesus was brought out into the desert immediately after his baptism by the Holy Spirit. While in the wilderness he was tempted in many different ways, right after he had been given the call to go into the world, the voice of the devil himself tried to get him to walk away from his call, to focus on himself, to focus on the power and prestige he could attain. The devil tried to get Jesus Christ to turn to the self-centered nature that was the default condition of the fleshly Body that he was born into.

The temptations that Christ faced in the desert, mirror many of the temptations that Adam faced. It comes very quickly after

Genesis 1:28

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

That Adam and Eve are tempted by Satan to become like God themselves, by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam had been living a genuine human life. His life was right, it was righteous, he was living in a relationship with God, with himself, with Eve and with the world that existed in the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree, they changed the way the world worked, they chose to make themselves the center of the world. Adam rebelled against God and God’s purpose for him, he had lost his right relationship with God. Adam had been defeated by sin, overpowered by sin and because of this first sin, sin began its reign on earth.

In Christ we see a very different story. Christ not only resists sin and evil, but he also stands up to sin and evil and defeats it. In each of the ways that Jesus is tempted to walk away from the Word of God and to become self-centered, and self-focused, he chooses to instead embrace

the Word of God, to rely on his relationship with His heavenly Father to turn aside temptation. Jesus is committed to living his life according to God's Word. He is committed to trusting in God completely. He is committed to being obedient in every situation.

The story of Jesus's temptation is filled with places in which Satan tempts Jesus with physical satisfaction, with his pride and ego, with fame and prestige and power, and over and over Jesus turns to the Word of God. Jesus puts down his worldly flesh and temptations and he surrenders himself to God, he worships God with all of his heart, mind, and soul. Jesus did what Adam had been called to do, Jesus did what the people of Israel had been called to do, over and over throughout the Old Testament, but had failed to do. In every book of the Gospel, we see Jesus turn to God, in the garden of Gethsemane and on even to the Cross of Calvary, Jesus continually turns to God in faith and obedience.

Paul is teaching all of us that in Christ, through the Holy Spirit in us, we too have the ability to resist sin, to resist evil in our lives and with his help both sin and evil in our life can be defeated, they can lose their ability to reign over us. We are not condemned to live in the shadow of Adam's sin for the eternity of our existence. Sin can be defeated through Jesus Christ, Sin can only be defeated through our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

We need to know and understand that Adam's sin does not need to have dominion over us and our lives. Sin does not need to rule our lives or rule in this world. Christians can experience victory over sin in their lives right now, we can have victory over temptation in our live when we live a life in Christ. It does not mean that we will never be tempted, it just means that when we learn to turn to God that we will not have to surrender into that temptation and that sin in our lives.

The main reason that Paul can share this so confidently is that he knows that Christ has risen from the dead. When Adam brought sin into the world, through his disobedience death was brought into the world, an animal had to die to provide him with the coverings he needed after eating of the fruit of the tree. Jesus through his obedience and death had brought life into the world. Jesus had conquered death at his resurrection and as a result of this, we are able to experience spiritual life, being reborn, here on earth and eternal life in God's kingdom.

We all know and understand death, we have seen it all around us in this world. Death is not something we get, it is in fact a negative, death in its purest understanding is the absence of life, death is nothingness, death is the loss of all that God is trying to Give to his children.

Paul wants all Christians to know and understand that Jesus came not only to die as a sacrifice for our sins, but to give us victory over death. On the cross of Calvary Jesus defeated death, hell, and the grave. Jesus took upon himself all of the sins of the world, and when he walked out of the Tomb after three days, He had defeated the power of sin and death.

In Christ we begin to understand that death is not the end of our existence, death is not our final destination. God has a plan, to give his children a resurrected body, in Christ we are going to become something much greater that we are today.

After his resurrection Jesus physically walked on this earth, he ate, he drank. Jesus touched, spoke, heard, and tasted after the resurrection. While he did some amazing things, like appearing and disappearing at moment's notice, we need to know that this was all done in a body that greatly resembled the body in which he had died upon the cross, in fact it bore the marks of the cross upon the hands and feet and the wound of the spear in his side. This is important for us to know and understand, Jesus did not die so that we could be whisked off to some mystical spiritual place called heaven. From the very beginning of the Bible humans were created as beings with a mind, a body, and a soul. When sin entered the world it brought the penalty of death, physical and spiritual, and our minds lived under the dominion of sin. Jesus defeated sin, he defeated it in our minds, our bodies and in our souls.

This means that at the resurrection that is described in the book of Revelation we will receive a body which is to be our resurrected body, one that is so much greater than the one we have now. The only way in which Paul could think of describing these new bodies was,

1 Corinthians 15:51-53

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

Jesus destroyed the reign of sin over mankind and showed us all in a very physical and real way that death too has been overcome. He showed us how we will be given a new and resurrected and eternal body in his kingdom.

Our current bodies are subject to the sin of Adam, it is why we experience physical death. It is why no matter how much you work out, how healthy you eat, what vitamins you take, what supplement you absorb, what hair and body creams and lotions you apply, or even how much sleep and sun you get, your body gets old. There is nothing we can do to stop from aging, to stop from deteriorating, all of our bodies have an expiration date that God has determined.

Our resurrected bodies will be so different. Instead of sin we will have justification, regeneration, and sanctification. Our spiritual body will have a newly resurrected body that is imperishable and immortal. We will never again know of pain or of suffering, no more headaches, heartaches, or backaches. Jesus showed us through his resurrection the victory he has over death and sin, and it is our to take part in as His chosen people. When we are his true follower, we are redeemed, renewed, and filled with the Holy Spirit.

Finally in this passage Paul share that we can live our lives here on earth with righteousness. We know that God's original plan for creation and blessing through Adam was corrupted. God's plan for Adam and his family was to be partners in a world where man and God would dwell together. That plan and purpose was marred by Adam's rebellion and sin, after which God and Adam could no longer live in relationship with one another.

Yet, that is not the end of the story. God did not destroy his creation; in fact, he did not even abandon his creation. In fact, later in Genesis we see God call Abraham and pass on to him and his children the relationship that God wanted with Adam. It is through the Abrahamic covenant that humanity and all of creation would be restored in their relationship with God. It would be through his children that the original purpose creation and promises of God would be fulfilled. It would be through Abraham's Children that a new humanity would come forth, one that was empowered with the grace and mercy and love of God, one that would bring restoration in this world, one that would share the message of God's ultimate rescue and salvation of all of mankind and all of creation.

The promise was that Abraham's children would live in a land that they would recreate in God's image. A land of milk and honey. A land filled with God's promises, God's people, God's priests. A place from where the good news of God's righteousness and holiness would spread forth to the rest of the world. It would be through His people that mankind would understand a right relationship with God, they would be his agents of restoration and redemption in the world.

Yet as we know from the Old Testament, Abraham's Children never fulfilled the covenant or their call. Over and over again they abandoned the Lord their God and choose to create their own idols and followed them instead. They abandoned their call to be priests to the world and instead singled out their own nation as the only ones called to receive the good news of God's salvation. They saw themselves as the only ones who were worthy to be recipients of God's covenant and God's salvation.

Like Adam they had sinned and they had lost their land, their kingdom, and their ability to live in oneness with God. Like Adam they were driven from their land, exiled to foreign lands. But also, like Adam they were not destroyed or abandoned.

God did not give up on his people, he never broke his promises, or his covenant, even when the people he loved so dearly turned against him. In the fullness of time, he sent his one and only Son to live a life for us as an example of what it means to be a genuine human being. A life faced with pain and suffering, a life filled with temptations, but a life that was obedient to God, even to the point of death on the cross at calvary. Jesus lived out the perfect human life in which he experienced a right relationship with God, with himself, with others in the world and with all of creation. Jesus lived the life that God had wanted with Adam and with Abraham and with the life he wants to live with all of His children.

It would be through God's only Son that a way was made for all of mankind to experience justification and begin their regeneration, their positional sanctification and progressive

sanctification. It would be through Jesus that man would once again be in right relationship with God, mankind would once again be empowered to live with genuine righteousness, a life filled with oneness with God, with self and with others. It is into that life that you are invited when you have Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

Like Adam, like Abraham and all of his descendants, you and I are damaged, you and I are sinner who are dead in our sin without the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. Like all of mankind we are sinners, we are not flawed people who one day will figure out their flaws and change. We are not people who will find their way out of their failing instantly like someone hit a reset or reboot on us. We are broken people who are damaged beyond our own ability to repair, without Jesus in our lives there is no hope.

Humans lie to themselves. Humans thinks that with more education, more consoling, better jobs, ted talks or self-help programs, of government policies that we can fix all the problems with humanity. It's like they believe there is a magical reset button that once they figure it out all of mankind will fall in line and live in peace and harmony in the perfect utopia. They think we can solve the problems caused by sin in this world on our own, without God. You would think humanity would have figured this out by now, that after all these years we would have learned our lesson, there is no government, no law, no policy, no education, no job, no amount of money, no talk, no self-help program that can heal sin in our lives.

A sad reality is that this thinking has infected the Church as well. There are many churches today that spend their time in the Bible like it is some sort of Self-help book for Christians. They preach about how to have a great life, how to have a great marriage, how to serve your fellow man; but they skip over the parts about the cross, the resurrection and the presence to the Holy Spirit, they skip over the call to repent and be reborn. They preach sermons that tell people if you do this, or if you do that you will have a better life, one that is richer, more fulfilling, better. Some even tell their people if you give to A or B or C that God will do A or B or C for you. Their focus is completely on man and what man can get rather than what we can become when we are in right relationship with Christ.

The truth is that in Christ we are invited to live a life better than any life we could ever have without him here on this planet. We are invited to be justified, in a right relationship with our God and to experience a life of newness and a life in which we are experiencing the process of be sanctified, being made into the image of Jesus.

We are called to live our lives with genuine humanness. A righteous life where we can begin to experience a oneness with God, a oneness with ourselves and a oneness with others in this world. A life in which all of our relationships are based on the same love, grace, and mercy which God had for each of us. This is the fruit of the spirit which lives in all Christians.

The problem many people have is they are eating the peels and not the fruit. They have settled into a spirit of commonality rather that a spirit of koinonia. To many Christians have become people who only live in Christ from an hour or two each Sunday, with people they hardly know,

and in some cases may not even know the name of. This is a reality in Churches all across the world, large or small, and of all denominations.

They have become a place that people go to like it is some form of communal penance or duty, not places of love, grace, mercy, and relationship with one another. This is not the type of life that Christ died for, Jesus died and rose again so we could live lives in oneness with him and in oneness with our brothers and sisters in him. He died so that we could be justified, regenerated and active in pouring out the blessings he has given us into the lives of those we interact with each and every day.

We cheat ourselves when we do not have koinonia, that connection that goes deeper than Bible study or a shared meal. Koinonia is that time when spirits of people meld together and join and support one another in their growth in Christ. It is where we encourage one another, build one another up, mentor one another into growing in the spirit. It is where we experience oneness in heart, mind, and soul.

This is the gift that all the faithful of Christ have been given. The ability to think and act like citizens of Heaven even while we are here journeying through this life on earth. A life where we are constantly growing in Christ, constantly in the presence of the Holy Spirit, constantly in oneness with God and with one another. Jesus said,

John 13:35

³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Jesus did not come to hit some reset or reboot, he came to show us how we can defeat sin in our own lives, how we can conquer death along side him and live a life of righteousness. Jesus came to fulfill God's plan for us to enjoy and share in an abundant life here on earth and one day in the new heaven and new earth. Jesus came so that we could be in a right relationship with him and with one another.

This morning as we close let the Lord take away your burdens, let the Lord take away your guilt, your shame, your sin. Allow Jesus Christ to make you a new creation in him, to be one who is baptized in the blood of the lamb and filled with the Holy Spirit. Find salvation in God, and during this season of Lent, find yourself in a right relationship with him, every day through prayer and meditation on his word, and in right relationship with one another through the love, grace, and mercy that Jesus Christ lived as an example for all of mankind.

Let us pray,

Give Us Highest Comfort in Your Grace

Lord God, heavenly Father,
in your fatherly grace you did not spare your only Son
but gave him up to death on the cross.
Pour your Holy Spirit into our hearts.
that we may find our highest comfort in your grace.

Protect us from temptations to sin more,
and help us patiently bear whatever hardships may come,
so that through him we may have eternal life.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Lent 6 / Palm Sunday

Hymn: "Rising Sun"

Praise Him all you sinners
Sing oh sing you weary
Oh praise Him all you children of God

We lift high His glory
Shown throughout our stories
We praise Him as the children of God

Chorus
Our great Redeemer glorious Savior
Your Name is higher than the rising sun
Light of the morning You shine forever
Your Name is higher than the rising sun
Your Name is higher than the rising sun

Praise His Name forever
Speak it loud and clear now
Oh praise Him all you children of God (Chorus)

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #461: "Be Thou My Vision" (V 1,2,5)

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
 naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
 Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
 waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
 I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
 Thou my great Father, thine own may I be;
 Thou in me dwelling, and I one with Thee.

High King of heaven, when the battle is done
 grant heaven's joy to me, O bright heaven's Sun!
 Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
 still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Pastoral Prayer

Maker of heaven and earth,
 you are our help; we lift our eyes to you.
 As we walk this Lenten journey,
 you watch over our coming and our going
 both now and forevermore.
 You are our shade and our protection;
 you keep us from all harm.
 We ask that you strengthen and guide us
 as we do your work in your world.
 Convict us of our disobedience,
 and enable us to obey your call in our lives.
 Open our ears to the cry of the poor.
 Teach us to seek and to do justice,
 to stay in the path of understanding,
 to pursue righteousness and love
 in the strong name of your Son, our Savior. Amen.

Benediction

Grace and peace to you
 from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,
 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age,
 according to the will of our God and Father,
 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.