

Genesis 3:1-21, Romans 5:12-19

Lent 1A

March 1, 2020

“Adam, Jesus, and Us”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today the calendar turns over ... and not just to a new month ... but a new season. Alas, it's not quite Spring yet. Today the church calendar turns over to the season of Lent. Gone is the “green” ... symbolic of the growth and life of Christ's church by the power of the Holy Spirit. Here now is “purple” ... symbolic of the abuse Jesus endured as soldiers made Him wear royal purple robes during His trial ... while at the same time, we worship Him as the true King of kings. Also gone are the “Gloria's” and “Alleluia's” of rejoicing and praise. We're on the journey from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week. We're stripping back our lives to focus as intently as possible on our Lord and the journey He took to save us from sin, transmitted into all creation from Adam's tragic decision to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil against God's Word. It's a journey to another tree, the broken tree of the cross. Jesus' journey from birth to death is like ours in every way, except one ... sin. He never sinned.

The tragic decision began to take shape as Eve came upon Satan, in the form of a serpent. He hissed at her, **(Genesis 3:1b-3)** *“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’* Eve replied, *‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”* At the foot of this tree, which God had forbidden His creatures to eat from, under penalty of death, sin entered the world, infecting all mankind.

Paul writes of this moment saying, **(Romans 5:12)** *“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.”*

Martin Luther picking up on this idea, characterizes sin as a disease. Like disease, it starts with one person, often called “Patient Zero.” In the current Coronavirus, or COVID-19, pandemic, Patient Zero was in China. From here, the virus has spread gradually throughout the world.

However, there’s a big difference between sin and any disease, even one as feared as COVID-19.

For example, according the World Health Organization update from February 25th, while the exposed population in China is around 1.5 billion people, 78,000 have been confirmed to have it ... significantly less than 1% of the population. Of the 78,000 infected, just over 2600, around 3.3%, have died. That’s not to minimize the serious threat this new virus poses. But, compared to sin, which instantly spread to all mankind with Adam’s fall for a 100% infection rate and a 100% mortality rate, as no creatures remain alive on earth forever ... COVID-19, or any other disease, pales in comparison. The good news, in both cases, God has given us a means of a cure. Doctors and healthcare workers on the one hand ... His Son, Jesus Christ, on the other.

Today, sandwiched between two very different temptation accounts, Adam and Eve in the lush Garden of Eden and Jesus in the barren desert wilderness of Judea is Paul’s comparison of Adam and Jesus ... and their singularly critical impacts on us. Adam, Jesus, and us ...

In these eight verses, Paul compares and contrasts how their actions had eternal consequences. At a tree, in each case, one man took action that impacted all mankind, every man, woman, and child who lives now, who ever lived, and who will ever live. Adam, Jesus, and us ...

Paul tells us Adam is “Patient Zero” for the sin pandemic. His evidence is death. God told Adam the consequence of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16-17) *“For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

With “death” as evidence, Paul tells us, (Romans 5:19) *“By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.”* “Disobedience” can be defined as *“hearing and knowing rules set by*

someone in authority and still refusing to follow them.” Adam heard God’s Word. He understood God’s command. Yet Adam ignored it and acted contrary to God’s will. Adam’s disobedience infected all mankind with sin. It brought condemnation of death upon all mankind. Through Adam, “death” began its reign over God’s creation. For example, **(Genesis 3:21)** *“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”* These skins came from animals who died to cloth Adam and Eve. Then Adam and Eve’s first-born son Cain his brother Abel meet. Jealous over Abel’s favored status, in cold blood Cain kills Abel. All who were born from the seed of Adam and Eve ... died ... some old, some young, the outcome was the same. And so, it goes ... the infection instantly spread from Adam, to all mankind, from those first days ... through today ... and right up to the day Jesus returns.

The fact that life on earth ends at some point for all creatures in God’s creation is clear evidence that the sin Adam brought into the world by disobeying God’s one command infected every human being from that tragic moment on. A pandemic of truly biblical proportions!

Sin ... brought about because of the one man’s fall, is a force in God’s creation ... not just among mankind, but all of it. It exerts power over its subjects. We look around us today ... the jealousy of Cain still exists in the hearts of all of us who desire things we can’t have. The immorality and wickedness of mankind in the pre-flood days of Noah still exists in the hearts of all mankind who think they know best what they need to make the feel happy, in control, and satisfied. We continue to try to build towers of knowledge and power high enough to become God and replace Him just like those who tried building the Tower of Babel. Despite all our best efforts, sin remains ... we’ve been infected by Adam ... death reigns over Adam and us.

However, there’s an old adage to the effect that “Every king has a king.” Essentially, one may think they have definitive authority, but ultimately, they don’t. It’s true that due to sin, death

reigns. However, death, even though it might think so, is not the ultimate authority. God our Father, the creator of all things, is the ultimate authority over all things ... even death. (Genesis 3:14a-15) *“The Lord God said to the serpent ... ‘I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall crush your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’”* With this promise, God reveals to His creation that He will destroy Satan and his reign of death. Just as by one man, Adam, sin ... condemnation ... and death was ushered into God’s creation ... so also, by one man, all this will be reversed. A cure to the pandemic will be made available.

It’s indeed bad news that Adam’s disobedience caused many to be sinners ... but ... the good news, the gospel for all mankind is this, (Romans 5:19b) *“By the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”* “Obedience” is *“hearing and knowing rules set by an authority and then willingly following them.”* Jesus Christ, the Son of God, heard His Father’s Word. He followed His Father’s will perfectly. Jesus willingly left His eternal heavenly throne to enter into death’s kingdom as a helpless infant. His Father’s will for Him was to (Matthew 1:24) *“Save His people from their sins.”* Jesus was obedient to His Father’s will in all things ... denying Himself, in the face of temptation from the same face of evil Adam fell to. Unlike Adam, Jesus heard His Father’s Word perfectly and obeyed it perfectly. He would not fall at Satan’s feet to worship Him by following his evil temptations. Saying to our oppressor, (Matthew 4:10) *“Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.’”*

Jesus humbly served His Father’s will (Philippians 2:8) *“becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* Jesus had the power of God in Himself ... a power which could’ve, with a single swing of His mighty right arm, wiped out those coming to take him away to death on that cross. Instead, Jesus turned to His Father in prayer, (Luke 22:42) *“Father, if You*

are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours, be done.” Jesus, remaining sinless Himself, inflicted Himself with the disease of our sin. He submitted Himself to the reign of death on the broken tree we call the cross. This one man brought the judgment and condemnation of all Adam’s victims upon Himself. By His perfect death, God’s righteous justice was served. The price was paid. Jesus, the perfect man, died to pay the wages of all mankind’s, including Adam’s, sins. Not with gold or silver, but with His own blood. As a result, God can now offer, because of Jesus’ obedient sacrifice on the cross, the free gift of His righteousness to His creation.

God, by His mercy and grace, offers this gift to all mankind. Because of Jesus, His Father no longer sees us as we are... disobedient sinners all. Instead, He sees us through His Son’s obedience. Because of His perfect obedience, Jesus overthrew death’s reign, rising to new life. Therefore, all, like many of us here today, who’ve received and taken hold of God’s abundant gift of grace, through faith in Christ, are cured of sin. We are loosed from death’s reign. God, on account of Jesus and through His Word, forgives us for all our sins! He frees us to **(Romans 5:17)** *“reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.”*

Though Jesus crushed Satan’s head, sin’s effects are still being felt. Today, in His death throes he thrashes violently in the world, spewing his vile venom from his mortally wounded head. But, death’s reign – through the disobedience of one man ... Adam ... who fell at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – has ended. Now, by the obedience of one man ... Jesus, the Son of God ... we who have received from God the abundance of His grace and the free gift of His righteousness, through faith in Jesus, will live forever. We will gather around the tree of life as we reign in God’s new creation ... as He intended from the beginning ... Adam, Jesus, and us.

Glory be to God our Father forevermore ... through Jesus Christ. Amen.

James Kent