

The Rev. Michael J. Bridge
Sermon- Romans 5:12-22
Sunday, March 5, 2017

Sin through one man

1. Paul's letter to the Romans is an incredible letter. If it was the only book of the bible that we had, we would have the entire gospel message, including the parts that describe the need for a savior, starting with Adam.
2. In our reading for today, Paul is going all the way back to the beginning with Adam. While Romans is great, and while Paul is a very important theologian, he isn't always easy to read. I am not going to go over all the nuances of the difference of when the law came and what happened before the law and the difference between sin prior to Moses versus after Moses. All of that is mentioned by Paul, but there is one overarching point that is important here: all have sinned, beginning with Adam.
3. Adam sinned and brought sin and death into the world for the rest of us. As Paul says, "One trespass led to condemnation for all men."
 - a. The great church Father Augustine outlines that there is a fourfold state of man:
 - i. Pre-fall: Able to sin; able to not sin.
 - ii. Post-fall: Able to sin; unable to not sin.
 - iii. Regenerate: Able to sin; able to not sin.
 - iv. Glorified: Able to not sin; unable to sin.
4. Adam's sin obviously took place in the pre-fall state, and now we live in between the post-fall and the regenerate state. Everyone is in the post-fall state; able to sin, but so mired in our sin that we are unable to be righteous. This is what makes the argument that Paul is putting forth here in Romans 5 so important. He is pointing us to the regenerate state, where we are able to sin, but we are also able to not sin.

The free gift

1. All of this is because of the free gift. In verses 15-17, Paul repeats the phrase "free gift" five times. Each time he is pointing to the fact that we received sin and death through Adam, but in Christ, God has freely given us his grace, mercy, and forgiveness. He has given us life where previously death reigned.
2. In Christ, God enacts his rescue plan to deliver us from death. The free gift that he gives us is the needed atonement for our sins and the accompanying righteousness of the one who was slain. We swap- Jesus gets our sin and we get his righteousness. Additionally, we get the Holy Spirit to indwell us and to empower us to wrestle with sin in our lives.
3. Regeneration is having a heart renewed by the Spirit of God so that it is now inclined towards the things of God. While the regenerate state, according to Augustine, is a state where we are both able to sin and able to not sin, it is a completely different state than the previous states. In both the pre-fall and post-fall states, our sin needs punished, and we are the ones who face that punishment. In the regenerate state (when we are Christians), we still sin, because we are not yet made perfect. But our sin is already atoned for. It is already paid for. We are regenerated in order to do good and follow God, and we are covered when we fail to do so.
 - a. This is the state in which all Christians live. We are forgiven, yet we don't desire to continue in sin, because being washed in the blood of Christ, we understand

that it was our sin that shed that blood. We fight against sin in our bodies and hearts; but it has already been conquered on our behalf.

4. All of this is present in Romans, and in these brief few verses. It is incredible news, and it shows how much our Father loves us.

Forgiveness only through one man

1. There is one more thing though. Just as sin came through one man, so the free gift of forgiveness comes through one man. It isn't just that it comes through the one man-Christ. But it *only* comes through the one man- Christ.
2. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For 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. ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
3. If there is anything that is clear from these verses, it is the uniqueness of where the free gift comes from. There is no other god; no other man; no other name than that of Jesus Christ our Lord by which we can be saved. No matter how noble it seems to be on your own spiritual journey, if it is a journey that doesn't lead you to Jesus, then you have rejected the free gift, and therefore the life and the righteousness that comes through it.