

Sermon for August 10, 2025 – Friendship Sunday

Romans 5:12, 18-19 EHV

Theme: The Tale of Two Men

- 1) Death came to all through Adam's sin.
- 2) Life is offered to all through Jesus' obedience.

¹²So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned...¹⁸So then, just as one trespass led to a verdict of condemnation for all people, so also one righteous verdict led to life-giving justification for all people. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of one man the many became sinners, so also through the obedience of one man the many will become righteous.

Why is there hatred, war, suffering, and death in the world? Where does human cruelty come from? How can it be resolved? Why do people fear God — and how can that fear be replaced with peace?

Our brief sermon text addresses these questions by providing a clear and concise summary of the Christian faith and the genuine hope it offers.

Let us use it to consider what the Bible says about our sin and salvation, under the theme: **The Tale of Two Men.** 1) Death came to all through Adam's sin. 2) Life is offered to all through Jesus' obedience.

Part One: Death came to all through Adam's sin.

At the beginning of our sermon, we asked why things like hatred, war, suffering, and death exist. The answer to that question is quite simple: they are all a result of sin, as the first verse of our sermon text indicates:

¹²So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned

The “one man” mentioned in this verse is Adam, who we read about in our first lesson. God created Adam in His imageⁱ - perfect and holy - and blessed him richly. He told Adam to eat fruit from any tree in His grand Garden of Eden except one: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If Adam ate that fruit, he would die.ⁱⁱ

Having experienced nothing but good from God, Adam had every reason to believe and obey Him, but he didn't. Even though Adam was present with Eve the entire time she was temptedⁱⁱⁱ and had a moral obligation to prevent her from falling into sin, he didn't. Instead, he willingly participated in her sin by eating with her in defiance of God's command.

This invites the question: Why would God consider eating fruit so horrible that he would threaten death over it? The act of eating the fruit wasn't the problem in itself. The real issue was unbelief. If Adam and Eve had trusted God's word, they would have obeyed it. But by disobeying, they revealed they no longer believed Him — trading His truth for the devil's lies. Yes, their sin was much more than just eating bad fruit; it was wilful unbelief and rebellion against God!

And that brings me to a point we all need to understand regarding sin: what makes it serious in God's eyes is not primarily how it affects others, but how it affects our relationship with Him. That is why all sin, even things that seem insignificant to us, is serious to God — because it reveals a heart that has selfishly turned away from God.

Since that is the case, even our smallest sins shatter our relationship with God. How so? Because He created us in His image and, therefore, expects our trust and love in Him to be as perfect as His. ^{iv} Sin, however, shatters that perfect love and trust, destroying our relationship with God.

I want to switch gears for a moment and talk about cancer. It is not a disease caused by viruses or bacteria but by genetic mutations. When the good DNA of a single cell gets corrupted, that cell becomes cancerous. Whenever that cell reproduces, its incurably corrupt DNA reproduces with it, being passed down from generation to generation.

Similarly, Adam passed on his corruption to all his descendants. Everyone on this earth is born with a corrupt nature that is selfish and self-serving, which is why there is so much suffering, hatred, and evil in the world.

“But,” you might be thinking, “I thought humans are basically good? How can you say all people are selfish and sinful?”

Think of it this way: A cancerous bone cell does not cease to be a bone cell because it still has the DNA of a bone cell, albeit corrupt.

What is true regarding cancer cells is also true regarding humanity. God wrote His moral code in every human heart, proof of which is the fact that even the vilest tyrant will probably still do outwardly good things (like send his mother a birthday card). But “expressions of good” don't change the fact that sin has corrupted his nature. And just as the corruption of a cancerous cell makes it bad even though it still resembles good DNA, so also our sinfulness corrupts us even though God's law remains written in our hearts.

So how do we get rid of the sinfulness we inherited from Adam that corrupts our nature and separates us from God? The same way we make a cancerous cell uncancerous: we can't. But God can, which is why we need to learn about the second man in our sermon text: Jesus.

Part Two: Life is offered to all through Jesus' obedience.

Here's the dilemma God faced: on the one hand, His perfect justice demanded humanity's sin to be paid for in full. On the other hand, God loved us so dearly that He didn't want us to be separated from Him forever in hell.

So, what did God do? He promised an offspring of Eve who would crush the serpent's head – that is, take away the devil's power to condemn us.^v That promised Saviour is Jesus.

But if Jesus is a human like us, how could He save us from our sins? Wouldn't He have inherited a corrupt nature from Adam, like the rest of us? No. Why not? Because Jesus isn't just a mere man, He is also, together with the Father and Holy Spirit, true God from eternity.^{vi}

God's plan was for His Son to take on human flesh and blood so He could be like us in every way, with one exception: He would have no sin.^{vii} As the perfect man, He would keep God's law for us. Then, taking all our sins upon Himself, He would suffer the punishment our sins had earned – thereby satisfying God's perfect justice and His desire to save us in one redemptive act!

To accomplish all this, Jesus had to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin - a historic event we Christians commemorate every Christmas! This is how Jesus avoided Adam's corruption but retained the pure, sinless nature God created humanity to have. He did this so that He could keep God's law perfectly in our place and pay the punishment our sins had earned.

Let me use an illustration to explain how Jesus saved us: imagine you and another student are in a room, taking a test. You need a perfect score to pass, or you will be punished severely.

The student next to you is the teacher's son. He studies all the time and is super smart. You, on the other hand, did not study and don't know the answers to any of the questions.

Time is running out, and it looks like all is lost when, suddenly, the teacher's son taps you on the shoulder. He says, "Here, take my test and put your name on it. I'm positive I got the answers right. It's yours." Then he grabs your test, puts his name on it, and hands it in – knowing exactly what would happen next: the teacher would see his name on your failing test and punish him instead of you. What would possess your classmate to do such a thing? Only his undeserved mercy and love.

This story illustrates what Jesus did for us. God the Father gave us His commandments for our good. If we could keep them perfectly, we would earn the right to be with Him forever in heaven. But we haven't and can't keep God's commandments perfectly.

Jesus, however, kept God's commandments perfectly. The Bible says He *was tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.*^{viii}

And what did Jesus do with His perfect righteousness? He offered it to us in exchange for our sin, just like the teacher's son exchanged his perfect test for yours in the story.^{ix}

Jesus went to the cross with our sins – taking them to God as if they were his own. God punished Jesus to such a degree that He cried out from the cross: "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken*

me?’^x To be forsaken by God means to be in hell, which is exactly what Jesus’ soul suffered on the cross.

Why did He do this? So that His record of keeping the Law could be credited to all who believe in Him.

Remember in the story how the son gave you his test so you could put your name on it? That is what faith is like when it comes to Jesus’ work. Realizing that there is no way we can save ourselves, we trust Jesus did what He said He did and go to God with Jesus’ work.

We don’t go to God saying, “Look at what I did, Lord,” pretending we wrote the test. Rather, we go to God saying, “I freely confess that I have sinned against You and deserve Your wrath and punishment. But look at what Your Son has done for me: He paid for my sins in full and gave me His righteousness as a gift. Trusting in Him, I present the record of righteousness Your Son earned for me.”

Because Jesus did what He promised to do, God the Father now says, “My Son has paid everything you owed me in full. You are forgiven and welcomed to heaven.”

¹⁸So then, just as one trespass led to a verdict of condemnation for all people, so also one righteous verdict led to life-giving justification for all people. ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of one man the many became sinners, so also through the obedience of one man the many will become righteous.

That, dear friends, is the sum and substance of our Christian faith. It is the reason we meet together before God at church, confessing our sins and trusting in His forgiveness. It is our motivation to live our lives to God’s glory – loving both Him and each other. How so? Because God’s forgiving love for us in Christ changes us – renewing His image in us. Instead of living selfishly, we want to live for Him, as the Apostle Paul encourages: *Therefore, be imitators of God as his dearly loved children. ²And walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*^{xi}

Therefore, we Christians live in hope, looking forward to the day when God will fulfil his promise to bring believers home to himself in heaven, all because Jesus undid what Adam had done. And that, dear friends, is the meaning of the true tale of two men. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Genesis 1:27

ⁱⁱ Cf. Genesis 2:15

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Genesis 3:6

^{iv} Cf. Matthew 5:48

^v Cf. Genesis 3:15

^{vi} Cf. 1 John 5:20c

^{vii} Cf. Hebrews 2:14-18

^{viii} Cf. Hebrew 4:15

^{ix} Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21

^x Matthew 27:46 EHV

