

Romans 5:12-15

¹² So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, so also death spread to all people because all sinned. ¹³ For even before the law was given, sin was in the world. Now, sin is not charged to one's account if there is no law, ¹⁴ and yet death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those whose sin was not like the transgression of Adam, who is a pattern of the one who was to come. ¹⁵ But the gracious gift is not like Adam's trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of this one man, it is even more certain that God's grace, and the gift given by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, overflowed to the many!

Sermon for Pentecost 5, July 5, 2020; St. Paul's Green Garden

Text: Romans 5:12-15

Theme: "God Has A Message for the Whole World"

World-wide communication in human terms is something rather recent in world history. For centuries, long distance communication was done by line of sight such as native American smoke signals, Semaphore or the African tribesman sending messages by way of beating a drum. Even with the advent of telegraph and telephone communicating around the world was no small feat and needed to be developed by laying trans-Atlantic cable between the U.S. and Europe.

Today we don't even need to pick up a telephone connected to a wire in order to communicate with someone in the next state or even a half a world away. We pick up our smart phone or tablet download the communication app of our choosing and not only talk with but we are able to see the person we are talking to. And if it is a major event such as the recent riots across the country, or a more common event such as a child's birthday party we can see it in real time or as it is recorded by someone who witnessed the event. And it doesn't matter whether it happened a block away or a thousand miles. If someone recorded it, you can see it thanks to a whole constellation of satellites orbiting the earth.

But when you think about it, world-wide communication is nothing new. God has always been interested in communicating all around the world. As soon as our first parents decided they no longer wanted to communicate with

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God, He found a way to communicate with them. He came back to them with a message he wanted to send out to cover the earth like a blanket. Two thousand years ago God completed the promise he mercifully gave to us rebellious human beings. Now he wants this message to be flashed across every computer screen, into every home and hut and hovel in every village, town and megacity. It is literally a message FOR the whole world. This message has only two main points, but every person needs to take both parts of the message to heart or none of it will make sense. 1. Death comes to all people through one man—Adam; 2. Life comes to all people through one man—Jesus Christ.

Ever wonder what life would be like with absolutely no worries, no hurts, no sadness and no death. That is what life was like for the first two people who lived on this earth. For a short time they had a perfect relationship with their heavenly Father, with each other, and everything in the world of nature worked perfectly just as God designed it. What a world that must have been—Until Adam and Eve threw mud in God’s face when they ate the forbidden fruit. Can you imagine what a burden of sadness it must have been for to realize they personally, had destroyed the perfection of God’s world. From that point on they would always have to face the truth not only that they were sinners, but they would never have a perfect, holy life again. It is a truth you and I face each day as well. And what really ought to terrify us about our sins is that God does not tolerate them. He threatens to punish each of us with damnation in hell for even one single sin we commit.

From that day forward God has always held people accountable for sin. Even before God gave the people of Israel his laws at Mt. Sinai, God would not tolerate sin and its evil. He sent a world-wide flood upon the earth as a communication to all people for all times that the soul who sins is the one who will die. Later God also destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wicked sins against him. What Paul says is true: “**For even before the law was given, sin was in the world.**”

Even before He gave his laws to his people on Mount Sinai, people still knew his laws. When you sin are you thinking about which of God’s commands you have broken? But when you think about your sin and know it is wrong, it plainly shows one thing—God wrote his laws in people’s hearts. Even a young child knows the basics of God’s commands before he

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learns them from his parents and in Sunday School and confirmation class. He knows what guilt is when his parents discipline him and show him his disobedience.

But then, even the sin in our hearts does a number on God's law written in our hearts. The sinful nature we inherit from our parents darkens, throws a shroud over the law God writes in our hearts so that we don't always respond to the instruction of the law that God wrote in our hearts. Paul writes about this truth to the Ephesians: "**They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.**" Our conscience may tell us when we have done wrong but we don't always listen to it. My sinful nature is always working against God's commands. And make no mistake. God is just.

Every sin we commit, no matter how small we think it may be, is a violation of God's will: LOVE God and LOVE your neighbor—perfectly. When I love my job or my home or my money or possessions more than God I have sinned against him. When I hurt my family member or a neighbor with words I have sinned against God's command. And remember, we sin not only with deeds and words, but also when in my thoughts I hope in some way my neighbor will be hurt. God's justice demands punishment for each of my sins and yours. If God did not require punishment for our sins, he would not be God.

And this message from God causes us even more dismay when we understand where our sins come from. Before I even say a spiteful, vengeful word or hold an unforgiving attitude, God condemns me. Not only do I commit sin or fail to do what is good. I have inherited a sinful nature from my parents and so have you. That means right from the moment we come into being, God rightly condemns us. Paul says here: "**and yet death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those whose sin was not like the transgression of Adam.**" Every honest parent knows you don't have to teach your children to sin. We spend our lives teaching our children not to sin. And even we adults don't have to practice sinning do we? Gossiping, hateful thoughts and all sorts of other sins come pretty naturally to us don't they?

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Paul summarizes this truth in Romans 6 with words that ought to terrify us, “**The wages of sin is death.**” Physical separation of body and soul as well as complete separation from God in hell is the only destination we have any right to look forward to because we have sinned against God.

And we know it happened through one man—Adam, the first man God created. The Lord gave Adam only one command—He said, I have written all my will in your heart; Here is just one thing outside of everything else for you to show your love to me. Don’t eat any fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But when Satan faced Adam and Eve with a choice they listened to the lies of Satan. Adam did not stop Eve from taking the fruit. He joined Eve. Their sinful desires became sinful actions. What a sad and rebellious heritage we have received from our parents. This is the first part of God’s world-wide communication to all people. This message is critical for every human being to know.

Why? The evidence is in us and all around us. We are guilty both of sins of omission and commission. Greed, selfish hoarding of God’s earthly gifts, badmouthing a person’s reputation, loving our earthly toys more than God, using people and loving things are all sins of commission. Neglecting to make plans to carry the name of Jesus into our community; failing to discipline our children when they need it are sins of omission. Those all deserve God’s condemnation. And if we doubt it all we need to do is read the apostle Paul’s quote from the Psalms: “**There is no one who does good, not even one.**” Death comes to all of us through Adam.

But here is where God now adds something to a message of doom. This same Adam who brought sin into the world is now also a pattern or type of the one to come. This suggests that the first part of God’s world-wide message is not the final word. There is more, Satan was not going to have the last laugh. Adam sinned, yes. But he is the pattern of ONE to come—the one who brings life to all.

Paul has already made our sinfulness and our sins very plain to us. And Adam’s sin is the cause of it all. But now he draws the contrast. He says, “**The gift is not like the trespass.**” There is something that is far and away, better than the gloom and doom we deserve for sin. It is a gift and it is as different from the punishment we deserve for sin, as a clear mountain stream is different from a muddy pig’s wallow. “**But the gracious gift is not like**

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Adam's trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of this one man, it is even more certain that God's grace, and the gift given by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, overflowed to the many!" And Paul summarizes it all in this short sentence. **"Where sin increased, grace increased all the more."**

God's gift to us is exactly the opposite of the condemnation we deserve for our sins. God washes every person clean from every sin. You are right with God. You are his beloved child because He gives you all the perfection and holiness of Jesus. Instead of being banished from God's presence we are welcomed into his throne room by our loving Father.

And Paul does not want us to start thinking, there's got to be a catch. Free doesn't really mean free does it? We have been taught, "If it sounds too good to be true it probably is." But the gift is NOT like the trespass. God's forgiveness IS FREE to every person. But that does not mean it was cheap. Jesus suffered the terrible torment of knowing what he would face on the cross, the condemnation by his Father for our sins. How can we ever imagine what Jesus suffered for us? Paul says as we grow in faith we will learn how high and deep and wide Jesus' love for us really is. Yet, we can barely understand the depths of the oceans at three or four hundred feet, and most of the ocean is far deeper than that. How can we ever understand how deep Jesus' love for us really is?

Now someone may say, "That probably sounds good to most people, but most people haven't sinned the way I have. I have really brought God's name down with my sins. How can he forgive me?" Paul says, the gift IS NOT like the trespass. "The many" died by the trespass of Adam, But the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, overflows to "the many." Jesus' gift of forgiveness and living in God's presence forever is a gift for every person, everywhere. Jesus washes you in his innocent, holy blood that takes away every sin. Paul says, **"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men."** THIS IS the world-wide communication from God's Word—and it is for you. The people who send the weather warnings over the television or radio to warn you when severe weather is coming to your area, do not think of you. They just think of the general public. But God knows you, God was thinking of YOU when he sent

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Christ. He wants you to know his world-wide message is a message for you personally.

This message has changed people's lives all over the world. Let this message change your life too. Instead of running away from God, deciding what you think is best for you, place our complete dependence on him to guide you and lead you in life. When we sin daily and wonder whether God has cast us aside we have the full assurance that we are God's friends through the death of his Son. There is no where you can go, nothing that can happen to you that God's merciful, forgiving, life-giving love cannot reach you.

There have been many world-wide messages that have brought varied reactions from people. November 22, 1963 brought the news our president had been shot. July 20, 1969 told the news that men had landed on the moon for the first time. January `5, 1990 brought the news that our country had entered the first Gulf War. Those world-wide messages had impact all over the world. But none will ever have the eternal impact in YOUR life as this message about Jesus Christ has for you. Jesus Christ paid a price you could not pay. Jesus Christ gave you the heaven you could not earn. You are God's child forever to live in his presence forever. From now on, live your life in that joy, and spread that joyful message to others so that it truly is world-wide. Amen.