



Sunday, May 15, 2022

Sunday: Pastor Glenn Duncan

Theme: Representatives of Christ

Good morning. It's so good to be able to worship our Lord together today. Before we pray... before we start into considering God's Word, I just wanted to take the time to be able to say upfront how much I appreciate Pastor John and Renée for their ministry amongst us and for the wonderful way Pastor John opens God's Word to us. As a pastor, I can't imagine what it would be like doing D6 and having the whole pattern laid out for me of what I am supposed to be teaching each week. Not an easy one to do at all. He just does an amazing Holy Spirit directed job of opening God's Word to us. I want to say thank you. In fact, I want us to applaud. [Congregation and Pastor Glenn applaud.]

Let's join together in prayer. God our Father, we marvel at who you are. That you love us, that you care for us in every detail of life. Lord Jesus, we marvel at who you are, that you are willing to become a human being without ceasing to be God. To come and live amongst us, to be a servant rather than to be served. And to give your life as the ransom for many. We marvel at who you are because you've defeated the power of sin and death. you've given us your life. Not only have you carried our sin, but you've given us the righteousness that only you could accomplish. And now it is ours as well.

Holy Spirit, we marvel at who you are, that you're the one who has birthed new hearts in us. But more than that, you've made your home in us and you're here to draw all attention and praise to the Father and Son even as you have us walk with you and be the representatives of our Lord Jesus Christ in this broken world. As we consider your Word, Holy Spirit, we ask you to lead us so that we are protected by you. Not attempting to gain more knowledge, but instead to allow your Word to live in us so that we know the truth, but we also know it as living truth. And so that we walk with you as your family. Would you come lead us now? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The scripture reading today is taken from 2 Corinthians 5. I'm going to read through the entire chapter. The apostle Paul writes, **5:1** For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. **2** Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, **3** because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. **4** For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. **5** Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. **7** For we live by faith, not by sight. **8** We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. **9** So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. **10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. **12** We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. **13** If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. **15** And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

The passage is about worldview. Every one of us has a worldview. Some people have thought about it and nurtured it and other people are totally unaware of it. But worldview is how we live. It's how we make some sense or no sense at all of what's going on in the world all around us. It's what leads us to how we live and the things that we do. So worldview needs to be something that we take very seriously and don't just let it happen. But we start to think about it and process it and let it be how we direct our lives. With the right worldview, we can start to answer questions about what's really going on in the world around us. What is wrong with our world?

Well, it's filled with beauty, and wonder, amazing things in it. Good things in it. But we also know it's broken. We also know it doesn't work the way it should. COVID-19, the war in Ukraine. I don't know whether you heard about the mass shooting yesterday in Buffalo. Our world is broken. Our worldview allows us to understand what's going on and why. But us... people who are a new creation in Christ. When you first come to new life in Jesus, it's so exciting.

If you've come to Christ as an adult, the world starts to look different. You start to see things with greater clarity. You realize you've become a brand new person. And yet at the same time as a brand new person, it feels like some of the things you were stuck with before, you're still stuck. Some of the things don't seem to work the way they should. Prayer. How does that work? Does it work? Worldview lets you know if the worldview is accurate. What's going on, not only with our broken world, but allows us to see who we are truly in Christ. And that's what Paul's presenting for us in this passage.

The first one really has to do with home. Paul wants us to know that this world is where God wants us to be - we're not here by accident - but it's not home. Home actually is a person. Home actually is Jesus. And when we come to know him and live with him, we have come home. This world is broken. This world doesn't work the way it's supposed to. We're right back to Adam and Eve, and God warned them, "If you don't keep me as the center of your life, then you will die." And in fact, that's what happened. That's why our world is in such brokenness, such strife. Paul wants us to know... and we'll get into more of what God has for us to do... but he wants us to know that if we have relationship with Jesus, we are home. And in that relationship with Jesus, he wants his kingdom to come here. He wants people to be set free, but this world is not our home.

If you stop and think about it, you realize that's the case because it's temporary. No matter how long we're here, it's still not our home. We're made for an eternal home. A home not made by human hands, but the one that Abraham was looking for. He knew that as he was traveling, as he came from the Chaldees, as he moved into what is now Israel, that that still was not his home. He was in fact traveling to a home that's made by God that lasts forever. And we're made for that.

We live in a very strange time. The last century has been unlike any other time in the history of the world. But just in Western Europe and North America. Everywhere else is just the way it's always been. Somehow we have grown up believing that we can live our lives free from pain. Somehow we have grown up having things so good that we almost think this is heaven until of course, things start to fall apart like a pandemic or something else that gets out of our control. People talk about their dream home. People talk about the things that they want to see done.

There's an ad on TV right now that makes me laugh in cynicism. Ewan McGregor is walking around through all of these different scenes and he's talking about what people do to try to find some sort of contentment and purpose in what they're looking for. "So you can buy a bigger TV or the flatter screen. There's all kinds of stuff you can get. There's all kinds of things that you can strive for in life and you can have them, but when you get to the end of your life, what's going to really matter?" His answer is, "What's really going to matter is where you went." [Laughing.] "Oh yah, I'm sick on my deathbed. I'm so glad that I went to whatever and saw that."

Our home is with our Lord. The home that's coming is beyond anything we can possibly imagine. So dream big. Start to think about the wonder of being with our God. We're not good at imagining it. I've heard people say, "What's the big deal about heaven? Who really wants to go there? You're gonna sit on a cloud with a harp in your hand and you're gonna do that forever."

Blah. Let's start to think about what it's really going to be. You're with him. His arms are around you and he's showing you all the vastness of everything that's flowing from the heart of God. He's a Creator. He's a life giver. He bursts forth with life. He wants us to join him in whatever those purposes will be and seeing all of his creation become what it can be.

He'll put some things in motion and let us join him in nurturing those things. He'll allow us to spend all of eternity with him, but also with each other. We'll start to discover the wonder of who God is, but also the wonder of who you are. You'll spend eternity discovering that person next to you who belongs to Jesus is a reflection of who God is. And it's going to take you eternity to discover that person, as well as the billions of others who are going to be with him.

Worship will flow from your heart. You'll be free from thinking about yourself. You'll be so alive that it won't even occur to you whether or not you're happy. It'll just be flowing from you, as you're busy caring for everyone else around you and the creation of our God which is limitless. Heaven, because of who Jesus is, because of him, is our home.

So Paul wants us to really think about this home by looking at who Jesus is. He says in verse 16... "We no longer regard people the way we used to. Though we once looked at Christ in this way, we do so no longer." What he's saying is when Jesus came to this earth, people who were around him thought he was just like you and me. Until of course, they got to know him and they got to see him in action. So they listened to what he said and they saw how he lived and the way he cared for people.

Then they started to think, "Well, okay, so he's not like you and me. He's a whole lot nicer, he does a lot more stuff, he heals the sick, and he can even raise the dead. So, he's not quite like you and me, but he's still just one of us. He's a holy guy. Maybe he's one of the prophets." After a while, they started to think, "Maybe he's the Messiah." But they still didn't know what that meant. They still thought of him as an ordinary but holy person. Then he died to pay for the sin of the world. He carried the weight of the wrong of the world on himself and paid for our every selfish act by his good life. He sacrificed for us. Still, they didn't know exactly who he was.

But then he rose from the dead. The Father raised him and then he sent his Spirit. And then he put new hearts in people who put their trust in him and he gave his righteousness to everyone who belongs to him. And we could never look at him in the same way again because we realize he's God. That's a mind blower that he's God. But there's more to the mind blowing because he's also one of us. At the same time, fully God and fully human. We can never look at him in the same way again.

This God who has created us and whom we have sort of a love/hate relationship with him... this God chooses to become one of us and live amongst us and put up with us. He chooses to bring holiness right to where we are and to live amongst us. And he doesn't condemn us. Instead, what he does is he lives amongst us and gives us himself so that we can live. So if that's who he is, who are we? Why would he do that? Why would he choose to come and become one of us and live amongst us? I mean, he's complete in himself. He's holy. He's self-sustaining. He's the creator of everything. He's not created. He's the one who maintains everything.

He doesn't need anybody else. Why does he choose to come and live amongst us and become one of us for eternity to come? Fully God and fully human. Why would he do that? Who are we that he would do that? Paul says, "We no longer regard people the way that we used to." We no longer see them the way we used to. We used to see Christ like that. But we do so no longer and since we do so no longer, we can't see each other like that anymore. If Jesus did all this for us, there's got to be something really special about us. Do you get that? He paid the price for us. He sacrificed everything for us. He's God and He gave everything for us. So who are we? The people around us... we can no longer look at them in the same way.

C.S. Lewis got this idea. He understood. In a message that he gave called, "The Weight of Glory, he said, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." He goes on in that message and he says, "If any of us could see someone in their resurrected glory, we will be tempted to fall at their feet and worship them. If any one of us could see someone who is separate from God, we would see a horror so terrible that we would have to turn away from it. But there are no ordinary people."

What does that mean? It means that when we're out on the street and we start to see the people around us... the people who are successful, rich, powerful, no matter how old or how young, no matter how broken, obviously broken, or broken in ways that you can't see... every single one of those people is precious to God beyond measure. Every single one.

Today, as I was driving down to church, driving along a two lane road that had a speed limit of 80 kilometers, somebody dared to be in front of me driving slower than the speed limit. "I've got important stuff to do today. I'm supposed to go to church and I'm supposed to preach. Don't they know that?" Have you ever been in this in Toronto? "I've got places to be, important things to do. And you're holding me back from it." "I'm going to a Blue Jay game and it's going to start in about 45 minutes and if you don't get out of my way, I'm going to be late and you're going to make me miss the opening pitch." "What's wrong with you? Get out of my way! You're holding me back."

Yet the people that are in those cars are precious beyond belief... or at the supermarket or pharmacy. "I've got things to do. Don't they know that? They should step out of line and let me get right up to the cash register so that I can pay for my stuff and get out of there, so I can get on with my important life. We've been in this line so long, some of them have been there for a very long time and I'm at the back of it." Are these people precious?

Well, when I start to think about Jesus and I start to think about the people in the line, my perspective starts to change. If I no longer can look at people the way I used to - because now I understand who Jesus is - then I can start to look at the people and start to see a difference - I can start to see with new eyes. I can start to treasure the people who are around me. Paul is saying it. Now that we know who Jesus is, we can no longer look at people in the same way.

But also beyond that, once we start to know who Jesus is, then we start to see some new things about ourselves. When we see what he has done, Paul then tells us, "Look at yourself to see who you are in him." And there is powerful information, a powerful life that God wants us to have as we look at this. So Paul says, "We can no longer look at people in the same way. Though we once regarded Christ in this way. But if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old is gone." It's gone. "The new has come." It's still connected to the home, it's still connected to worldview, but the new has come.

We're a new creation. We're not the people we used to be. Don't let the worldview around you tell you that you're... okay, so you're a nice person. You go to church and you try to do some of the things you're supposed to do... that's just so inadequate. It's laughable. Oh, no, you're not just a nice person trying to do good things and stumbling along. You're new. You're a brand new creation. You're not the person you used to be. "We've been crucified with Christ and we no longer live, but Christ lives in us and the life we now live, we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us." We are brand new, born again people. We're not the people that we used to be.

In verse 21 of that passage, Paul says something almost unbelievable. Jesus, who is fully God, Paul says, "became sin for us." We don't even know what that means. Jesus took the sin of the world and so carried it on himself that he took the penalty of all people for all time, past, present and whatever is still to come. He took it on himself.

It wasn't just sort of a casual thing. It says, "He became sin for us so that it would be paid for in full, not just in part, so that we would become the righteousness of God." Jesus is perfect. And everyone who is in him has been made perfect. If we can see who we are, that requires Holy Spirit's strength, there has to be revelation that takes place to know it, but it's available if you want it. If you want God to show you what he thinks of you and who you really are, you'll begin on a journey where he starts to show you who you really are, and you will begin to live. That is the truth, living, powerful. But then you'll also begin to live with purpose because he's inviting you to who he is and to join him in what he is doing in this broken world.

So from Ephesians 2:10 from the New Living Translation, "We are God's masterpiece." You maybe can't see how beautiful you are, but maybe you can if you look at other people. You're God's masterpiece made new in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. And here's what he planned for us. He planned for us that we would join him in his ministry of reconciliation. He's restored us to himself and he wants that restoring to himself to start to permeate what we do. He wants to give us peace. He wants us to be people who are filled with joy. So much that we can hardly contain it. He wants us to see our relationships with others restored and made healthy and he wants us to then be people who share that with others.

We are called to be God's ambassador as though God were making his appeal to people, "Come home." Live. Really live as though God were making his appeal through us and that is precisely what he's doing. God is at work. Right here, right now, all around us. If we're not aware of it, it's only because we're missing it. Not because it's not there.

He's at work, and he's at work in every single person. So God has some things that he does in this reconciliation. And here's some of them.

Jesus says it from John 5, "My Father is always at his work to this very day" and that is precisely what he's doing. We read about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus teaches about that and in John 16 he says, "The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin." He awakens them to recognize what they try to push out all the time - that things aren't right. There needs to be some new work done in people's lives, to bring them to the place like in a pandemic where they know they're not in control and they need help.

He also convicts of righteousness - that there is a way to live that is right and healthy. That holiness is not something that is out there. It's not something that you go into a cathedral and see something that's awe inspiring and say, "That's holiness." It is that but holiness is for living, it's practical, it's everyday stuff. And to let people know this world isn't our home. There is a coming judgment, either for good or for bad, as Paul says in the passage we read. And that his work is to change people's hearts, to refine them and to shape them. But there's also a part for us in this reconciling.

Our part is to be done always, always, always in the strength of the Holy Spirit. It's not us drumming up our courage to go out and do something to convince people of things. It's us to walk with God and enjoy his presence, to know that we've been reconciled to God and so we have a treasure to share with other people that they can get in on. So our part - oh, man, this is this is evangelism, isn't it? [Congregation laughing.] This is telling other people about who Jesus is and inviting them to him. May I say that we as Living Hope have a bit of a problem with evangelism? Here's the problem. We're Canadians. [Laughing] As Canadians, we don't want to offend people. And we know there is sometimes some offense in the gospel. We are to live it but we have to explain it.

We have to have conversations with people and talk to them. God has never intended this to be a pain. He has intended it to be a joy. Because this is a life for people to set them free. So our part is to love people the way that God loves us. So we know we're to love God with all our beings and to love people in the same way. But Jesus actually ups it. He says, "In the same way that I have loved you, that's how you're to love one another."

Not trying to control people. Not trying to fix them, but loving them. So that requires that we cross divides. We have a lot of divides. Probably where you live, people live in their little cell. If you're in an apartment building, you hardly ever talk to the people even though you pass them in the halls. If you live in a neighborhood with housing, you hardly ever talk to people. Unless you have a dog, and then you talk to people about dogs. There are divides and our task simply is to cross them. To step across an informal line and just say, "Hi, I'm Glenn. Do you have a name?" Simply start to talk to people. Our part is seeing people with God's eyes so we can no longer look at Christ in the same way that we used to and we can no longer look at people in the same way that we used to.

Our part is to refuse to judge or condemn. Boy, we've got to get this one down. We are not here to judge people. It's not our job. Jesus says, "Don't judge one another. The same standard that you use to judge others is the standard that will be used for you." So how do we tell them they're doing things wrong? It's not our job. It is our job to talk with them and to invite them to better things, but mostly to invite them to Jesus. And we can trust him to work in their hearts. We can trust him to deal with the things that need to be dealt with. He wants them to turn from sin because it kills them. He wants us to live life to the full. And when we're not loaded with the task of having to judge or condemn other people, it's an easier load.

John Burke in his book, "Imagine Heaven" talks about the home that we're going to go to. In another book he talks about what happens in our attitudes toward people. He says, "At the maximum, only about 10% of what is communicated to people comes through words. But 90% or more comes through our attitudes, our posture, facial expressions, or gestures. And people know what you think of them. Without words, they know. If you really love them, they know it. And if you're really condemning them, they know it even if you don't say it. "You're a mess. You need to get things fixed." Or, "You're precious beyond belief. Precious to my God who has set me free and precious to me." You can't fake this one. They know it.

So, in crossing divides, ask some good questions. Ask something like, "We've been neighbors for a long time. How long have you lived here? Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your family. What's important to you? What's precious in your life?" And do a whole lot more listening than asking. And then in listening, encourage people to trust God. Encourage them to know that he is good. Just as you're not judging or condemning but you're loving, you're representing your Father. You're letting them see what you've got. The sort of amazing, priceless treasure into which you have stumbled.

So I'm going to leave you with a homework assignment. Today, I want you to go to one person and try to find them doing something good. And accuse them of it. Tell them, "I saw you being kind. That is so good. Thank you for doing that." "I saw you exercising creative ability. What you just drew, the thing that you built and put together, the garden that you're raising. That's amazing! That brings refreshment to everybody else around us."

I want you to do that for one person today. And then for the rest of this week, do it for at least one person. Until you come back here next Sunday again. Don't witness to them. Just look for the image of God in them and when you see it, tell them. That is a baby step into us joining our God in the ministry and the message of reconciliation. If you cross those divides and look for life in people, then the conversations of how to share Jesus with them will start to develop.

We're going to share now around the table of communion. The same breathtaking stuff that we read about in 2 Corinthians 5 is the same breathtaking stuff that our Jesus has done for us. He became sin for us, that we might become his righteousness. He gave his life and he called on us to remember that sacrifice, not just as something that we do because we've always done it. It's something that we do because it is our very life. Because our worldview allows us to see who Jesus is, what we have been taken from, and what we have become in Christ.

He welcomes us to worship him but much more than that, to share his sacrifice, to receive the nourishment of his life given for us and his blood shed for us, and to share it together as family. In a moment, I'm just going to break the bread and see the sacrifice of Jesus' blood for us. After I do that, you are welcome to come up while the worship team is leading in worship. There is bread and juice for those who are comfortable with bread and juice but there are also sealed packets for those who would prefer to use those.

And you're welcome to come up in your own time to take the bread and the juice to worship and then to go back to your seats. Jesus has given his life for us. On the very night that he was betrayed, he took bread and asked the blessing of God the Father on it and broke it and gave it to his disciples. He said, "Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, he took the cup and he said, "This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you. Do this in remembrance of me." The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, takes that up and he says, "As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes again."

So come. Take. Eat. Drink. And remember anew the life giving sacrifice of Jesus for us. Amen.

Transcribed by: *Liza Perry*