

Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent

The Text: Romans 5:12-19

Many of you will know the Genesis creation narrative very well. It goes something like this: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and everything in it. He made humanity – in his image! God saw all he made and said it was very good!

I can hardly imagine what it must have been like to have been the first people. Everything perfect! Everything good! Death did not even exist!

But then, sin entered the world through **one** man – when **one** man disobeyed God's command. Death came because of Sin. Since we have all sinned, death has come to all people.

In our modern world the average life expectancy is increasing. In 1966 we were living on average 70 years. In 2016 we were living on average of 82 and a half years. This may sound like an amazing human achievement! I wonder if one day our average life expectancy might even reach 100 years!

Regardless, our mortality rate will still be the same - 100% guaranteed. Death rules over all. It is highly probable that we will all die!

Even though death is a part of life, death and sin are two things today's society seems to want to avoid in a conversation! Many will want to ignore the fact that death has come into the world as a result of sin. Death is the consequence that is upon all because of sin.

So how will we prepare for the reality of death? How will we prepare our loved ones for the day we will die? What will we share with our children and grandchildren and special friends, so that they may know that when we are no longer with them, they still have a Heavenly Father who continues to love them and care for them forever?

In the Holy Scriptures God shares hope in the face of death and in so doing breaks the taboo that our society has placed on these sensitive subjects!

How does scripture break the taboo?

The scriptures show us that death does not get the last say. God's plan has been to demonstrate his love and kindness by taking away the sin of the world, defeating death and bringing resurrection life to all.

In baptism we celebrate that Jesus has made a way for us to pass through death and into eternal life. And Jesus has made this possible once and for all in his death and resurrection.

Sin and death are not matters to be treated lightly and ignored. They stop us from experiencing life to the full. And on our own we totally are powerless and unable to set ourselves free from the powers of sin and death. In fact, the wages of sin is death!

Yes **one** man Adam sinned and as a result death rules over all people. We all sin. We all fall short of the Glory of God. But now, through the right actions of one, God brings new life to all. And this one is Jesus! His Son.

If God had enacted the full force of judgement because our sin, who could stand? Who could live? Our sin would condemn us to die forever and there would be no hope.

But from the very early passages that describe how the first Adam sinned, God shows grace and mercy – he prepared the way for a sacrifice that would take away the sin of the world once and for all. A sacrifice that would make all people right with God.

And God, in his grace, has made this sacrifice himself. That is how much God loves us!

He came into this world in the Person of Jesus. He came in human flesh – He faced all the same temptations and challenges that we face. But he did not sin.

He died as the perfect sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world. In his death he took away our sin, defeated the devil and destroyed the power of death. He rose again so that all may have life.

Jesus' obedience to his Father in heaven was the one right act that now means we can have life to the full. As a result of the right action of Jesus, God is able to pour out a rich supply of grace on all. Romans 5 verse 17 says: and we will rule with Christ in his kingdom. We will live as members of God's family forever.

This is the central message of Christianity! Jesus is the one who died and rose again so that all may put their trust in him and have eternal life!

One of the key messages in today's Romans reading is the language of **one** and the effect that **one** has on **all**.

One sin made all people sinners and brought death to all. But now the one right act of Jesus brings life to all.

How amazing is God's grace! He makes all of us right with himself because of the right and obedient action of Jesus.

Jesus lived his life in perfect humility and obedience. No matter how hard we try we can never match his perfection.

Through faith in the right work of Jesus we can stare death in the face and say 'death where is your victory—where is your sting? We can give thanks to God! For He gives us the victory because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done.'

Every time we remember our baptism we celebrate what Christ has done for us. We remember the gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation we have personally received in his special washing. Together may we grow to love Jesus and all that Jesus has done for us.

Amen

And the peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus to life eternal. Amen