

Saving the World One Person at a Time

Romans 7: 7-25

Children's Message

I'm very sad to tell you that I used to be a pretty bad boy.

I tell you this but I want you to know

that God changed me and helped me be different.

And if you ever struggle with things you do or feel wrong, he can help you too.

When I was in grade four, I saw a boy who had a really nice mechanical pencil.

I had a regular pencil that you have to sharpen with a machine.

When I saw his pencil I became jealous and envious.

I wanted his pencil.

So, when he was out at recess, I took his pencil.

At first I was happy because I had his pencil.

But soon I began to feel bad.

I felt bad because I knew it was wrong.

I knew Jesus said we shouldn't steal from other people.

I knew I made Jesus sad.

I also know I made the other boy sad because now he didn't have a pencil.

What do you think I should do?

1. Give the pencil back.
2. Say sorry to the other boy.
3. Say sorry to God.
4. Ask God to help me not be greedy and selfish.

It is hard to do all those things.

Because it hurts to feel guilty or ashamed.

But when you keep a secret like that, it hurts you even more.

It is better to tell someone and be free.

I am glad I can share this with you.

It makes me feel sad when I remember it helps to tell you.

Jesus can free us all from our sin.

Dear Jesus,

Help us not to be afraid to do what is right.

Help us to have the courage to say sorry and make things right.

Help us to tell others the truth about ourselves.

Thank you for your love and forgiveness.

Free us from our selfishness and sin. Amen.

Saving the World One Person at a Time

Romans 7: 7-25

Why does God allow evil to happen?

If he is good, why doesn't he wipe evil out?

Why isn't he doing anything about the disasters, human trafficking, and war?

Why does he allow betrayal, oppression, lies and selfishness?

The questions are categorized under the philosophical term "Theodicy."

It is the attempt to understand how God, *Theos*, is just, *Dike*.

The book or Romans has been called the "Christian's Constitution"

This is because it not only addresses the question of God's Justice,

But in doing so it also articulates the fundamental truths about the Gospel

And as we have often repeated in our church,

The gospel is not merely "say the prayer and be saved,"

But it is that the Kingdom of God is among us.

God's justice is close and operating even now.

In other words, God is addressing all the evils of the world presently

The problem is that we are not omniscient

and can only see a little past our own noses.

With our limited vision, because we can only see the surface of things

we sometimes embark with futility in theodicy.

The first half of the book or Romans addresses how all humanity

is under God's just wrath, divine law and sin.

It does not allow antinomianism,

which is the position that there is no such thing as sin.

Nor does it allow for legalism,

which is the position that just following the rules is enough.

It does not allow for a simplistic view of sin.

So what is sin?

Often sin is seen as merely doing wrong.

But Jesus teaches us that thought precedes action.

"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of." Luke 6:45

But what shapes the heart of a person?

Their parents, society, culture, ethnicity, history
experience, ancestry, personality, DNA, education
relationships, hopes, fears, coping mechanisms, habits, addictions

No good doctor in their right mind will treat merely the symptoms of an illness.
How much more the Great Physician not ignore the root cause of sin?
But what if the root cause is buried deep in our psyches, our bodies, our past
beyond even our birth?

What if the seed of sin was planted a thousand generations ago?

Ephesians 6:12 states clearly: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but
against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and
against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Sin is systemic.

It is around us in our world, our culture and our families.

It is in us.

Multiply this by seven billion.

But this isn't about everyone else.

There is a reason why the good news is about a kingdom and a king
But this kingdom is not subjugated by force like all other kingdoms of the world
It's foundation is that of love.

And King Jesus calls every subject one at a time.

Inasmuch as the war to address evil and sin is global and universal,
this war is fought on the soil of every single heart.

I often quote Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who wrote in his Nobel winning book,
Gulag Archipelago:

"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it
were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line
dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing
to destroy a piece of his own heart."

Solzhenitsyn, who suffered in the gulags of Stalin for a decade understood what
St. Paul articulates about the fundamentals of the gospel.

In fact he became a believer when faced with the reality of sin and God.

The war we wage against sin and evil is inside us.

Jesus' teachings and divine law reveal our sin.

But we cannot deny it like atheists or triumphalists or antinomians.

Nor can we save ourselves as demanded by legalists.

We can only cry out as Paul did,

"Who will save us from this body of death!" (v.24)

It is only then when we come to grip with the darkness around us and within us that we can meet Jesus as our saviour.

Struggle with Sin

Exposure to pornography

What do we need for this or any other addiction

be it pride, greed, gluttony, anger, impatience, unforgiveness, selfishness

1. Confess it to God - find love, grace and strength

2. Confess it to others - find mutual confessors and accountability, restitution and reconciliation

3. Confess it as often as possible - know that the battle is ongoing but freedom is also real.

We conclude, with hope, faith and indomitable love that washes us clean.

With freedom in our hearts even though the battle continues within us.

"Thanks be to God who delivers us through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v.25)

The world is transformed one heart at a time.

Let Jesus start with you and then go from there.

You are the salt and light of the world.

Reflection, Prayer and Confession