

SERMON: “The Reason For Everything: A Satisfaction to God – Hope for us.”

Rev. Geoff Ross: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton, Sunday, March 22, 2020

As a result of COVID-19, the resulting confusion, cancellations, closures/new words: “self-isolation” and “social-distancing” – not to mention the financial markets crashing; it’s no wonder that we’re all a little overwhelmed/fearful/panicked/and feeling helpless – and, in our darker moments: hopeless. I get it; it is bad news. And, it’s everywhere: You see it in the media, you scroll past it on your news feed, it comes up in every conversation. You can’t get away from it: It’s too much – and it’s all doom and gloom, and feels dark and unknown. But COVID-19 – this pandemic/crisis – does not have to be/is not the final word – and fear does not have to win!

For Lent – remember Lent? We started Lent back when the world was ‘normal’, in what seems like a year ago! – we were talking about the “reason for everything”; how Jesus’s death/resurrection wasn’t a mistake/or something that went wrong: it was the reason why He came in the first place. This is the “*stumbling block*” for many/“*foolishness*” for others, says Paul, but this was God’s plan/was the “*Power [and] wisdom of God.*” (1 Corinthians 1:23-24) As we have heard, the cross was the whole point – it was part of God’s saving plan for you/me/all of humanity. This is why weeks ago, we talked about how the cross was the will of God – that it was God’s plan for Jesus to come to be-with us as Emmanuel, to live as one-of us; in order to die-as us/you/me: that He was to be a sacrifice offered to God’s will and justice, for us. But the cross wasn’t the last word! And the fear/despair/hopelessness the disciples felt didn’t win!

Last week – had nothing happened – we would have heard how Jesus’ achieved God’s plan because He substituted His life for ours and how, by taking our place before the God, God’s Law and received our punishment: death. But, this, for Paul/for us is Good News! The wonder of God’s plan was that Jesus didn’t die for His own sins; He died for ours! Meaning that in Christ we’re released from our bondage to sin/death. And this is the source of our hope. But it came at a cost: all sin – great/small – must be punished because justice requires a penalty, which leads us to the cross. Jesus died on the cross because a just penalty was required to satisfy divine justice, and He did it willingly.

[“Satisfaction,” in theological terms, means to ‘please or gratify’; it also means to ‘make amends, recompense, compensation, atonement’ or ‘payment of a debt.’]

In the Colossians reading Paul tells us that “*God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things on earth or in heaven*” through Jesus’ sacrifice – a death equal to the original sin of our disobedience. But it was also because Jesus’ submission/sacrifice was one of complete faith/trust/obedience – done in love and hope. Hope that God’s plan is true/God’s promises are steadfast/God’s grace was His to enjoy. Hope that His death was not the final word – Hope that by it we might be saved/delivered from eternity of suffering/from our own sins. And God fulfilled His promise; we know this because of Easter: satisfied, God raised Christ from the tomb, up into glory.

Yes, given what's happened over the past few weeks, it would be easy to feel helpless/discouraged/hopeless – but that's not what Paul calls us to be: though the earth should change, and we live in troubled times, God is our refuge and strength; we should be “securely established/fixed and steadfast in faith without shifting from the hope promised by the Gospel” – that in Jesus, we have an assurance/promise of hope. In the midst of trials, crisis, and uncertainty, in Christ we have hope – hope sure and steadfast – that this crisis/pandemic/troubled time/life/death/nothing in all creation is not the last word, for our hope is founded in our Lord Jesus Christ, the reason for everything.

Stay safe, remain hopeful; in Christ, you are not alone. Amen.