

SERMON: "SHAPED BY THE GOSPEL: *The Good News Affects Everything.*"

Rev. Geoff Ross, Sunday, November 14, 2021, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

[So far in our "SHAPED BY THE GOSPEL" series we've talked about how/why the Gospel is an announcement/proclamation of "Good News"/isn't what saves us; but to be honest, we haven't talked about what it really/truly is: God's Good News/The proclaims the unconditional/unilateral/unmerited lifesaving Gift we're given that changed everything/it declares the fulfillment of God's love/plan/Promise – for us/revealed/fulfilled in/through the birth/life/death – resurrection of Jesus – all to save us! But, before we go further, we need to back to Garden/the Fall/Adam+Eve.]

With a bite of that apple/forbidden fruit, Adam/Eve ushered in sin – shame/blame/pain/cycle – that drove a wedge between God/us/, leaving a chasm we are unable to cross. But rather than meting out our just/righteous punishment/(death), God relented/banished/sending them out of Eden with a promise we would be freed from sin/death. With this promise, God's saving plan began. Today/as Christians we believe that Jesus/His coming to be-with us/live-as us/dying-for us/His resurrection – that **all of this** was, from the beginning – and still is – God's plan for our salvation/redemption: before Jesus came, out of God's love, God had plan to – as the hymn 'Amazing Grace' says – save a wretch like me/you/us.

[2018/Lent series: "Like me" about God's "Amazing Grace" focused on the truth/reality that grace is the only thing that can "save a wretch like me/you/any of us"/because not able to save ourselves from ourselves Philip Yancey: grace "is the last best word" – reminds "us that good things come not from our own efforts, rather by the grace of God." Truth: Grace/God's forgiveness is beyond our deserving/gift no one deserves. Greater truth: God loves us/out of His great mercy/compassion toward/love for us God chose/promised/planned to extend grace to a graceless world/chose restore us/redeem our relationship with Him.]

Add to all this the fact that God's life changing/altering/saving grace is a "gift" God offers to us freely/unilaterally, and it's understandable why many don't believe/accept/respond to it! It's also why many find grace to be scandalous/offensive: we have trouble accepting the apparent injustice of God's magnanimous/extravagant, seemingly indiscriminate dispensation of grace. *[Happy/grateful when we receive it – angry/indignant when it's given to someone (we think) unworthy of forgiveness.]* This is the "scandalous mathematics of grace." (Phillip Yancey) Karl Barth, the great 20th Century theologian commented that 'Jesus' gift of forgiveness' – of God's grace – "broke (universe's) moral laws – it turns the world, and the ways we believe the world operates upside-down.' And it's true; there are few topics in the Gospels that are as "offensive" *[Latin: "offens" – "struck against"/OF: "offender" – "upset"]* to our/this world's sense/understanding of what is right/fair/just as grace: God's grace challenges us because it "upsets"/changes everything/turns things upside/down, inside/out, front/back.

["Not Fair!" – But, to be fair/fairness is a tricky thing: what's fair to one/not be fair to another! Results: anger/greed/pettiness. Grace: unfair – to us/our world. Thankfully, God/Kingdom of Heaven doesn't operate according to our rules!/what we think is fair! This is GN: if it did, none of us would get in! Be careful of what you wish for! If God "played fair" – we would each get what we deserve: is this what we/you/I want? Luckily Grace is about God not us.]

But why/would God offer us what we once willingly gave away/lost/rejected? Simple:while every sinner has a past, the deeper truth is that every sinner/one of us is a child of/loved by God who longs to give/gift us a/an future glory[*Romans reading*]/eternity in His presence. Seen this way, God's grace isn't about mere rehabilitation; it's about restoration/redemption – and God's plan/promise to save us. This is where reading comes in/why God came to us – first/unilaterally – in the form of His Son. While all Christ/Christian 'story' provides a "grace-lens" to look through/read scripture/to reveal/teach that the Gospel creates/recreates an entirely new way of life that transforms/changes/affects everything, the ancient "hymn" used by Paul in his Letter to the Philippians gives us its entire outline. Jesus/Son of God/emptied Himself – though rich/became poor; was King/servant; He triumphed over sin by dying sacrificially:won through losing everything; resurrection/renewed all of creation. Friends this is a complete reversal of this world's way of thinking – because of this the implications for/on us/the world of the Gospel are endless!

This is why Jesus came to be-with us:God loved/loves us so much that He sent His Son as a sign of His grace – [He was "*full of grace and truth*"] – so that we might know/experience what grace in our graceless world. Most/All of our problems in life/this world come from our failure to accept/grasp/think through the full/deep/wide implications of the Gospel/to believe the Gospel completely/entirely/wholly. We are saved by believing the Gospel, then/when this happens/we do this/allow ourselves to be full shaped by the Gospel, the Gospel transforms our hearts/thinking, changes our actions/behaviour, affects not just our present life/our eternal one as well. Amen.