Peace to you in the name of Christ.

*Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.
Serve the Lord with gladness;
Come before Him with joyful singing.
Know that the Lord Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.*

 Psalm 100:1-3

This Psalm calls us to worship God and gives us a couple reasons why we ought to do so. We often worship God and praise Him for the things He has done for us and that is good; there is every reason to give thanks for His good gifts.

But the Psalm points out a couple things it is easy for us to miss. It reminds us that the LORD is God. One of the primary reasons to worship God is because of who He is. He is God. By His very being and existing He is worthy of and deserving of worship. There is no one like Him in beauty and purity and holiness; He is unique in self-existence and in having life in Himself. We must worship Him for who He is.

Also, He made us. Without Him we simply would not exist. He is worthy of worship simply because we exist. We owe Him our life itself and we actually belong to Him. Just as anything we create belongs to us; we belong to our Creator.

How blessed we are that through Jesus Christ, we become, in a special way, “His people”. In Christ, we are the sheep of His pasture. His sheep, His pasture; He owns all and provides all.

Blessed be God forever.

In Christ’s love

John

 6-12-22

Genesis 6:1-8

Two very clear themes in the Bible are man’s sinfulness and God’s redemption. Throughout, we see people’s continuing bent toward evil. But God is merciful, and so, the Bible reveals to us God’s plan of redemption, culminating in Jesus Christ. The Almighty was not taken by surprise when mankind sinned. He had a way to save us worked out even before He spoke creation into existence. This is demonstrated by the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. The tree wasn’t needed then because there was no death. But it foreshadowed Jesus, our tree of life, because now there is death, and we need Him.

The powerful passage of Genesis 3:15 lets us know that the serpent, satan, will cause much pain. But also, that the seed of the woman, again, Jesus, will bring about the destruction of satan. We who trust in Jesus Christ for salvation have the promise of living in a new garden, a new creation; a place no longer under the influence of evil and sin.

But for now, we live here on this earth, in the midst of darkness. It is necessary for the followers of Christ to have an understanding of God’s plan; so that we may reflect the light of Jesus into the darkness which will bring God glory. God will be glorified by those who accept the Gospel we share and become citizens of His Kingdom, because of His mercy and grace. God will also be glorified by those who refuse the Gospel offer, by eternally demonstrating His absolute rejection of evil.

The Holy Spirit used Moses to write this book of Genesis. He is making it very clear that mankind sins and is responsible for his own sin. Satan is involved in temptation and fallen angels are involved in temptation; and we can see by the crushing of the head of the serpent, that they will be judged for their disobedience and malice toward God. But He also makes it clear that we are not off the hook. We are responsible for yielding to temptation and we will see that God will deal with that sin.

The account goes back and forth between hope and hopelessness. God sees His creation and declares it to be very good. But Adam and Eve rebel against God and are expelled from the Garden. Furthermore, because Adam was the head of the human race, all the following generations have been endowed with a sin nature. Our nature, our desire, our default mode is to sin.

We see this in the murder of Abel by Cain; then we see its prevalence in the line of Cain. But we also see hope in the line of Seth who tended to follow God. We also know that this is the line that would bring to us Jesus Christ. Beginning with chapter 6, we are back to hopelessness again. We looked in depth at the possibilities for who the sons of God are and who the Nephilim are. But the main point is the great evil that has become the norm in God’s good creation.

In verse 3, we see that although the Lord God is patient beyond what we can imagine, that patience will come to an end. ‘*Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”*’ We are warned in the New Testament not to resist or grieve the Holy Spirit. Yet that is exactly what the human race was doing. They were determined to be their own gods and reject their Creator. So, God said that He had had enough and He would no longer put up with them.

However, because He is merciful God, He gave 120 more years for the people to repent. He also gave that time for Noah to prepare the ark; because this was to be part of His plan of redemption. The LORD would not strive with this miserable population, yet He would still make a way for His creation to be redeemed.

In verse 5, we come back to what the LORD sees: “*Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” Notice that, “*the LORD saw*”. This is the same idea used earlier when God *saw* His creation and that it was very good. God saw; He rendered a judgement. Now He renders another judgement: that mankind is fallen. God did not create mankind as evil; when God created us, we were His good creation. We turned to evil ourselves.

Look at how encompassing verse 5 is regarding the sinful nature of mankind. The wickedness was great; every intent, the thoughts of the heart; only evil; continuously. Understand that the heart in Hebrew encompassed the emotions and the mind. We tend to think of the heart as the seat of just emotions. So, this expression covers every dimension of a person.

This verse is the foundational verse that describes the Christian doctrine of “the total depravity of man”. There are others. Romans 3:9-12*, [F]or we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written,*

*“There is none righteous, not even one;
There is none who understands,
There is none who seeks for God;*

*All have turned aside, together they have become useless;
There is none who does good,
There is not even one.”*

Or Jeremiah 17:9, “*The heart is more deceitful than all else; And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?*”

The total depravity of man is a good doctrine to understand, it explains a lot about why we are like we are and why we desperately need a Saviour. First, what total depravity is not: Total depravity does not mean that every single thing about us is evil. It does not mean that we are all as evil as we can possibly be. All of us could be worse than we are. Even those people who are considered very bad are occasionally caught doing something nice.

Total depravity means that there is no part of our being that is not touched by evil. Our minds, our emotions, our bodies, our thoughts: all of these things are somehow affected by sin. For example, is there any time that we do something good that we can honestly say, that it was for us, entirely for the glory of God? Did pride try to come out? Did some small hope of recognition raise its head? Was there a thought of possible reward for the good deed? Even if we suppressed these things, they still showed up. We as Christians may be spiritually motivated for good; but the motivations of the flesh are still there.

How about while performing your God given ministry? Whether it is preaching or teaching or serving or giving; even while praying. Sometimes thoughts come into our minds that are anything but godly. Sometimes we are shocked by what passes through while we are engaged in good, God-given works. This is all part of the total depravity. It’s important to remember that we aren’t sinners because we sin, we sin because we are sinners. Put a slightly different way, we aren’t people who sin, we are sinners.

The importance of this doctrine is that it shows us how helpless we are in the face of sin. We cannot overcome it. And that is why we need the righteousness of Jesus Christ imparted to us.

In the Old Testament sacrifices, the blood of the animals covered the sins of the people. On a human level, this made it so that God couldn’t see the sins, and the people could come to Him. With the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by His blood, the sins were actually washed away, gone forever. Our sins no longer stand between us and God. However, we are still existing in sinful flesh, so, although our sin is gone, we are still not righteous. To solve that, we are covered in the righteousness of Jesus, so that from a human point of view, God can’t see our unrighteousness.

The righteousness of Jesus covers our unrighteousness in the same way the blood of animal sacrifices covered the sins of the Old Testament saints. When the time comes for us to meet Jesus and we are made like Him, then we will be made righteous ourselves and not need a covering.

Because of being covered in the righteousness of Christ, we are able to boldly perform our ministries, even though we are still sinners, and have no righteousness of our own.

Verse 6 considers the effects of all this sin on the Lord God. *The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.* Some Bibles use words like repented; the LORD repented of having made man. This kind of language requires some explanation. As we read verses like this, we get the impression that God changed His mind. Yet, elsewhere the Bible is clear that God knows everything that is coming and that He does not change; in other words, He does not change His mind, ever.

This kind of language is called anthropomorphism. It comes about because God is beyond our ability to understand. He exists and works in ways that we have no ideas or terms for. We live in a physical reality and that is our point of reference. God is spirit and we really don’t have a good grasp of that.

In Scripture, God will use language that we can understand; He will express things so that we can at least have some idea of what is going on. One area this takes place is using physical descriptions of God. God is often depicted using His strong arm and outstretched hand to save His people. This gives us a picture that we can understand. However, God is spirit. He saves His people but doesn’t use an arm or hand to do it.

It is the same with the idea of God repenting or changing His mind. These terms are used so that we can gain an understanding of what is going on. God does not repent; He is perfect and He has nothing to repent of. Repentance also requires change and God is unchanging. Understanding anthropomorphic language helps us to get the point of what the Bible is saying, without blurring our understanding of the characteristics of God.

We must also be careful not to apply anthropomorphic ideas to everything we read in the Bible or use it to simply write off anything we don’t understand. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can compare Scripture with Scripture to determine when wording is used that helps us to understand a concept.

So, verse 6 tries to convey emotions that we can understand to describe God’s displeasure at the behavior of mankind. Again, God already knew that all this would happen before He formed creation; but it was all part of His plan to glorify Himself while bringing about a Kingdom of righteous followers of Christ.

As verse 6 displays God’s displeasure at sin, verse 7 explains what He is going to do about it. *The Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”* That the LORD is sorry He made His creation is the anthropomorphic part; that He is going to blot out creation is literal reality. It is critical for us to understand this also. God does not accept sin. He does not bring about retribution immediately because of His patience; because of His hope that people will turn to Him in repentance. But retribution will come. Both in Noah’s day and it is coming again at some point in the future.

At this point in Genesis, mankind will be wiped out because it sins and perpetuates evil; and it will not turn to God. It faces judgement and punishment for this evil. God had placed all of His earthly creation under man’s jurisdiction and he was given stewardship of it. Because of man’s fall, nature was subjected to fallenness also. That is why, even though nature is still beautiful, it groans and suffers violence. That is why the rest of life on earth was subject to God’s judgement in the flood.

We get a glimpse here of the far-reaching consequences of sin. Its effects don’t simply stay with the one who committed the sin, it reaches out and affects everything. We may not think this is fair, but that doesn’t matter; sin and evil are not fair. This is another reason for us to take any sin so seriously.

Once more it appears hopeless: God is about to bring the judgement of destruction upon the whole world. Suddenly, there appears hope.

*But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.*

Prayer

Lord God, Your precious word is full of calamity but also of sure hope. Calamity and harsh judgement are reserved for those who stubbornly refuse Your offer of salvation. But for those who turn to Christ in repentance and hope, there is Your promise of eternal life and joy; and the calamity is something we know is only temporal for us. Therefore, its grip on us will be broken and we will be free in the presence of Christ.

We worship You in awe, for You are pure and holy, yet You overlook sin for a time so that opportunity is given for us to repent and receive salvation. At the same time, Your justice is perfect; no sin will be left unpunished; again, because You are pure and holy. We praise You, Lord, that You have made a way in Jesus Christ for Your justice to be satisfied while You can extend mercy to us.

Thank You for the covering of the righteousness of Jesus. With that, we pray that You would use us to increase Your Kingdom, so that we may bring glory to You, and to Your Son and our Saviour, Jesus. May we bring in a harvest; may we edify the saints; may we love as You have loved us; may we reflect the light of Christ to the world; and may we persevere in faithfulness to You until Your glorious return.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen