



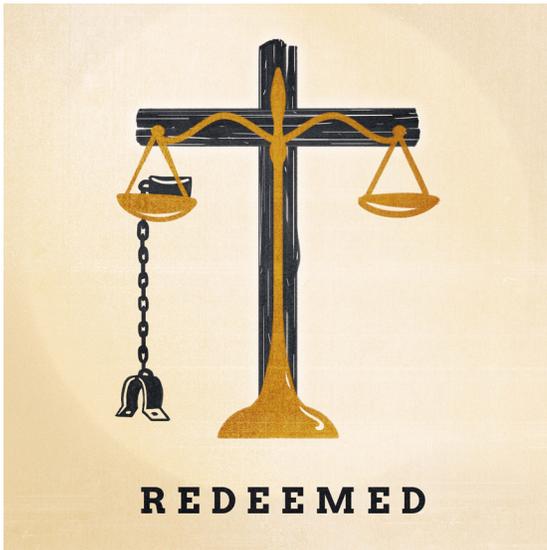
REDEEMED

Sermon Growth Guide

April 3, 2022

Redeemed - From Injustice

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Romans 8:18-28

Key Verse: Romans 8:28 “And we know that in all things God works for good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

Big Idea: Forgiven people can forgive people.

Foundations

What is unjust around you? How does it make you feel? In Romans 3:26, God is known as Just and the Justifier. So what about injustice?

Pastor Tim preaches this week, “a world of injustice produces an endless cycle of perpetual revenge until someone steps in and pays a price.” We need outside help.

Redemption requires proper payment; redemption requires defrauded parties to be made whole. It's not enough for a thief to say “sorry” for justice to occur. But how is justice established if repayment is not possible? When we sin against one another, we create wounds that we will never be able to fully heal ourselves.

The Good News is that God enters humanity in Christ from the outside and lives a perfectly just life. His punishment on the cross is not for His wrongdoing, for He did no wrong. On the cross, Jesus bears the weight of the world's injustice, opening the way for Kingdom forgiveness.

“How many times must I forgive?” we ask God. “Every time,” God responds (Matthew 18:21-22). In Christ, the injustices done against you and the injustices you have carried out are redeemed. The remaining work is forgiveness. The remaining law is love. The remaining empowerment is from the Kingdom of God by the Spirit of God.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Romans 8:18-28.

What is the “glory” mentioned in verse 18? How is verse 18 real comfort?

What do we learn about hope in verses 24 and 25?

Discuss what verse 28 actually means, set within the context of Romans 8.

Applying God's Word

Pastor Tim offers several points of application this week in light of injustice and the resulting pain:

- 1) we groan (verse 22) with creation (we don't sugarcoat reality).
- 2) we participate in reconciliation by being willing to sacrifice much.
- 3) we forgive.

Forgiven people can forgive people. How can you become ever quicker to forgive those who have carried out wrong against you?

Witnessing God's Word

Looking at the three points of application above, identify a tangible way for you to love the yet-believing community around you.

My friend from college was raised by a Presbyterian pastor. What parent is more fun than a Presbyterian pastor parent? Come on! Talk about the fun dad. For example, my buddy's dad always liked to blame sin for whatever had gone wrong, down to the little things. "My burger is cold. Why do I have to eat a cold burger?" Answer, "Because of sin, my boy." "Why does this light bulb always go out right when I need it." "That's sin." "Why can't I get my car started?" "Sin, and you ran the battery down." He meant it as a joke, but also to make a point. Sin isn't just a list of things we did wrong. Sin is a force at work in the world. When we—I mean humanity, men and women, Adam and Eve—when we sinned, as the pinnacle of creation, as the beings God set above with influence over all creation, the whole world fell into disrepair under us. Now it longs and groans, as much as we long and groan, for all things to be set right. Not only do we need to be **Redeemed** and set right with God, but the whole world, the whole creation, from the mountains and skies to the grass and bugs and beasts—even cats, especially cats—it's all messed up and longing to be put right again. Every soul, every society, every city and every system, it all needs and groans to be put right.

We are asking, what did Jesus buy with the price that Jesus paid. Redemption is marketplace language. Somebody paid. Jesus knew what he was buying with what he paid when he died on the cross for us. Today we talk about injustice. Right away, that word injustice fires off all kinds of images and connotations for us. We had better define it. "Justice" is a word people often use to mean what seems fair and right to them. But what seems fair to you may be different from what seems fair to me. In Scripture, "justice" means the world as God intended it to be; things set right. Jesus paid a price to guarantee that the whole world would be set right, freed and **Redeemed from Injustice**.

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18) There is the way it is, and there is the way it is going to be. And the difference is stark. Right now, there is suffering.

There is no denying it, and no need to pretend otherwise. See the suffering, our present sufferings. Here they are. I am a middle-aged man. Some of you are older than I and some younger. How many wars have we seen? How many genocides? How many famines and natural disasters? How many ways have you seen people pervert God's good gifts? Things like the beauty of creation, love and sex, money and industry and power? How many unjust and racist systems have you witnessed? I was a teenager when Apartheid came to an end. Many in our church can remember the day Martin Luther King, Jr, was shot. We see the present sufferings. I'm overwhelmed by them to be honest. It's hard to find something going right. I consider our present sufferings. But, as bad as they are, they are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed.

"For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed" (Romans 8:19). Here is a famously difficult text: "For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:20–21). What do we know? We know that creation is "subject to frustration." Creation itself doesn't want to be the way it is; there is some tension in the created order itself. Creation is subjected to frustration "not by its own choice." Cats didn't decide to be horrific little terrorists, they just wound up that way. No. I'm kidding. I love cats. But the natural order, the animal kingdom, the very make-up of the material world; it is all experiencing a kind of tension. It isn't as it was meant to be. Why do natural disasters happen? Why would a loving God allow a tsunami to destroy a coastal city; a wildfire to ravage Boulder; an earthquake, a hurricane, a tornado, whatever. Why? Answer: because of sin. No, not one person's sin. It isn't that Joey committed a sin up in Boulder and God got mad and zapped the neighborhood. That's where this gets spun up and confused. When Jesus healed a blind man in John 9 his disciples said, "Who



sinned?” “His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him’” (John 9:2–3). You’ve got it wrong, Jesus said. It isn’t who sinned. It isn’t that this guy or that gal did it. Sin is running rampant. The whole world is twisted up by it. But we get to see it fixed from time to time and catch a glimpse of the coming Kingdom in the power of the Spirit to the glory of the name of Jesus!

The whole world is twisted up. “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” (Romans 8:22) The whole creation is groaning. The whole creation moans, cries out, laments in the pain of the way things presently are. And more so when it catches glimpses of what it always thought was true, that there is a way it is supposed to be and isn’t. See that? It’s one thing to suffer along in a world that just is as it is and always will be. It’s another thing when you get a glimpse of the way it is supposed to be. Now it really moans and groans. Oh, Lord! And we moan and groan with it: “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23). By the Spirit of God within us, we have tasted the firstfruits of the Kingdom. We know what right is; we know what justice is; we know, or at least can taste, what all things set right and life as God intended it to be really looks like. Oh, Lord! We groan. We groan and we long.

And we become people of hope. “For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (Romans 8:24–25). We hope for what is coming, but we can’t see it all clearly. So, the Spirit helps us pray. “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts

knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God” (Romans 8:26–27). We don’t even know what to pray for; we don’t know what to work for or hope for. Not fully. The Spirit prays it for us.

We are not at home in this world. If you are in Christ, you belong to a future world, a coming Kingdom. Like a time-traveler, here you sit, and you say, in effect, “I don’t really belong here. I come from another place. I come from another City. A place where these wrongs have been worked out already. A place where there is no injustice. A place where all people are cared for and respected and loved. A place where no one uses good things to do selfish evils.” In our hearts of faith, Christians, that’s who we are. That is who you are in Christ. You are a time-traveler from the future Kingdom, an emissary from the Kingdom of God. Those are the clothes you wear. Those are the colors you fly. Those are the foods and dances and songs and stories of your true culture. That’s where you belong. No wonder you feel such groaning frustration. You are not from around here. You are from the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ where all things are right. Jesus bought that for you. Jesus paid for that for you. Jesus knew what he was buying when he paid what he paid. When he died on the cross, and rose from the dead, he paid a price for all sin to guarantee the fulfillment of the coming Kingdom of God, and to gain your citizenship in it as you put your faith in him. What did Jesus buy with what Jesus paid? “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) A Kingdom is coming, and is already breaking out, where all things work for good.

What do we do with today? Today there is injustice. Today there is suffering. What do we do with today? We consider the present sufferings. We don’t turn away from them. It is a horrible representation of Christianity when we ask people to fiddle while Rome burns, to whistle Dixie waiting for the great by and by. That’s not the Christian perspective. We consider



the present sufferings and we groan in them, and groan with those who groan in them. As those who have an inkling of the way things ought to be, we also work for repair, we participate in reconciliation, we sacrifice for works of redemption. We struggle for the Kingdom. We do it groaning and in frustration. We do it humbly, knowing that we can't see all that the Kingdom entails and can't always apply the principles of the Kingdom one-to-one to the situations we face. We consider the present sufferings, but we are also not overcome by them. We live as those who know that the present sufferings are nothing compared with the glory about to be revealed, a future Kingdom that is guaranteed, bought and paid for, and is already on the way. We can taste it. We struggle for that Kingdom filled with grace and gratitude, knowing that we never deserved to be called into that perfect life in Jesus. We do it forgiving others along the way.

See, one last point—the point, in fact, that I had thought would be the main point of the sermon today, but the text is all we really needed and it has a lot for us to digest. But one last point is this, a world of injustice produces an endless cycle of perpetual revenge until someone steps in and pays a price. In a world of injustice, we wrong and hurt one another. We create gaps and debts with one another that we cannot fully repay. If I wrong and hurt you, I can do a bit to make up for it, but never all. If you are resolved to forgive, that means you are willing to sacrifice to open up a gap in yourself to make up the difference. And, in a game like that, in a game of always creating more lack than supply, do you follow? The need is never ultimately met. It can produce an endless cycle until someone steps in to pay.

In 1994 we witnessed the Rwandan genocide. 800,000 were slaughtered in just a few months. Years later, Christians led reconciliation campaigns. Murderers and victims walked the streets together, see? Ten years later, they couldn't close the gap of the perpetual cycle of revenge and hatred. Those who did forgive found strength to do it in Jesus. Here is one story from Catherine Claire Larson's

book, *As We Forgive*. Two men named Innocent and Claude ran into each other 12 years after the genocide: "Innocent looked much older than Claude had remembered him. Malaria and residual guilt had bent his body like a strung bow. The old man's eyes widened as he saw Claude—he recognized the boy turned man. After all, he had been there when Claude was born. Claude's father, Thomas, had given Innocent the land he now lived on with his family. In return for Thomas's kindness, Innocent had led a band of killers who murdered Claude's aunt, uncle, and grandmother. Just seeing Claude, Innocent felt overwhelmed with guilt. Guilt hadn't come immediately. In fact, he had spent nearly six years in prison before he began to feel remorse for his actions. But he remembered the day clearly—April 26, 2004—that he had turned to God and begged for forgiveness. 'Claude?' asked the old man. 'Yes,' said Claude, 'it's me.' 'Why have you come back to this place?' 'I'm here to tell you that if you confess, I'm ready to forgive you.' Innocent stepped back and tried to catch his breath. If Claude had hit him, he would have been less surprised. 'I'm the one who should have come to you,' he said, still staggered. 'Can you possibly forgive the man who killed your own grandmother, your aunt, and your uncle? Please, Claude, I beg you to forgive me.' Tears streamed down the faces of both men by this time. 'With God's help, I forgive you,' said Claude, choking back the pain and relief of the moment." How can forgiveness overcome the perpetual cycle of injustice and revenge? Only because Jesus stepped in to fill the gap and pay the price. Claude knew he had himself been forgiven, and so he could, in Christ, forgive.

Jesus paid to break the endless cycles of injustice. Jesus paid to guarantee the coming of a Kingdom with no injustice, a Kingdom where all is set right. He died to buy your place in it. Because he paid what he paid, we are Redeemed from Injustice.

