

Pastor Ben Libby
 Sermon
 7/19/2019

To Jesus Christ, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification, be glory forever Amen.

The Word of the Lord which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes to us from Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 11, starting at verse 32:

Romans 8:18-25[EHV] For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in the hope ²¹ that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time. ²³ And not only creation, but also we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ Indeed, it was for this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he already sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for something we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patient endurance. This is the Word of God. Congregation may be seated.

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

What do you consider to be a "fair trade"? We really don't trade as much as we used to. Nowadays, everything has a price, and there isn't much wiggle room. Can you imagine going to the dentist and getting a tooth pulled and then instead of billing your insurance you would simply pay with a beaver pelt and go on your way? That seems a little bit ridiculous, but that was more or less the way things were done in the country only a while back.

I think since we lost the barter system, we have lost our ability to evaluate what a good trade is nowadays. I feel like the most trading I have ever done was at the cafeteria table in grade school. I would have a hot pocket and I would trade it to my friend for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Trades like these are the ones that we probably do most of in our lives, trivial trades. Yet in any trade, we need to balance "what am I giving up" with "what am I

gaining" in order to evaluate whether or not it is a good trade. What was the best trade you ever made? What was the worst?

Well, of all the trades that were ever made, the 2nd biggest and #1 worst trade ever made was made when Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden. They had a perfect knowledge of God, who had made them in His Holy image. Their bodies were perfect. Yet, they traded it all for what they thought would be a good thing, knowing good and evil. After this sin, they did know good and evil, but it wasn't a good thing. It was foolish and disobedient, and they were not only exiled from the garden, they also were sentenced to death.

While this trade was the worst trade ever, was only the 2nd biggest trade. The #1 biggest and best trade of all time was made by Jesus Christ. It is known as the "great exchange". Jesus traded His

holiness and righteousness to take upon Himself our sinfulness. He took that sinfulness to the cross, died for it there, and gave us His righteousness. 2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

It is because of both of these trades that we are where we are today. Because of that first “worst trade ever”, we are left on this earth, GROANING FOR NOW in this life. But because of that best trade ever, that great exchange, we will surely have GLORY FOREVER. We and all creation groan under sin, but we and all creation now wait in hope! MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDIATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR MAKER AND REDEEMER, AMEN.

²²For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time.

I am told that birth pangs are the worst kind of pain that someone can experience. Of course, I am a man, and I cannot know that specific type of pain. Yet, that pain has been constant throughout this world. Women have always labored to bring children into this world. That's how it's always been.

Yet, it was not always that way. The pain of childbirth was part of that first and worst trade ever. It was a consequence of Adam and Eve's fall into sin. This was God's evaluation of the trade that we made: Genesis 3:16-19 ¹⁶To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall

bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

It is strange to think that at one point, bringing children into this world wasn't labor at all. I'm not sure how that would have worked though, it's is all we have ever known. And that goes for much of the state that Adam and Eve inhabited before the fall. Adam walked and talked to His creator without any hesitation. There was no death. There was no pain. Yet, we traded away all of that. While it was Adam and Eve that fell, we are all responsible for it. That sin has passed to us, and we inherit all of that curse that was pronounced in Genesis 3.

And not only do we bear that curse, so does our environment. Originally, God created this earth and it was good. Plants were created to thrive, the waters teemed with life as did the land. All of it was good, all of it was perfect.

And we traded it. We still see glimpses of that goodness. We can see it here in our own state. There are many wonderful works of creation here in Washington. We can go out into God's beautiful creation and see great wonders made by Him. But it really isn't comparable to what it was originally. The earth is now full of weeds, physically and spiritually. Everything now dies. Death is so widespread, again because of our original trade, that now death is deemed to be natural, part of anything that lives. But it was not that way originally! We were not created to die, that was something that we brought upon ourselves.

¹⁹In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it

It was us that brought this dreadfulness upon our own heads. It is, of course, still in force today as it was back then. The whole earth, the people and the land, bear the load of sin.

Paul describes it here as “groaning”. It is what to do to express our painfulness. Just like a woman who is undergoing child labor, so to do we groan. We become sick. We have trials. We cry, we bleed. We see examples of this groaning everywhere we go. And one day we will die. We may have years upon years of suffering and failing health. Or, we may die suddenly, evaluated as “taking before our time”. So constant is this groaning, this pain that goes hand-in-hand with life, that we may even hesitate to get out of bed. We groan, and we see others groaning as well. Whatever it is that brings tears or pain to your body or soul, it is all a part of that groaning under sin!

But it all does not compare! **For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.**

That word that Paul uses here, “comparing”, isn’t in actual Greek. It comes from a word which means “weighing, having weight, having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much”. The picture is that of a scale, which determines whether or not two different things weigh the same or not.

What Paul is saying here is that what we suffer here today in this world does not weigh the same as what we will one day experience. The weight of sin that we experience is tremendous. Sometimes, it feels like it is all too much. But, as heavy as it is, it does not even come close to what we will have one day!

Jesus told us as much, and He used that same picture of childbirth to describe the upcoming joy that we will one day experience. **John 16:20-22** ²⁰ **"Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.** ²¹ **"A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human**

being has been born into the world. ²² **"Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.**

What He did for us does not compare with what we did for ourselves. That is why the great exchange is bigger and better than anything! We are given the Holy Spirit, who has worked faith into our hearts. It is a faith that gives us knowledge that we sought when we first fell, “the knowledge between good and evil”. We know evil, we know it because we experience it all the time. We experience it when bad things happen to us, and we experience it when we do bad to others. But the knowledge of evil doesn’t compare to the knowledge of good!

Jesus exchanged His eternal glory and holiness to come down to this earth and be like us. Only, He was different. He was perfect, He never sinned once. He never knew evil, that is, He never knew it of Himself. He would know it from what others would do to Him! And then He would bear it. He would bear all the sin and evil ever committed, take it upon Himself, and suffer and die as a consequence! **2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

This was not a good trade for God. It doesn’t make sense. Why would the Holy Son of God bear my sin? He would do it because He loves us! And what is the result of His love for you? Well, before that trade all we ever had was sin, despair, and doom and death in hell. Now? It had all been exchanged. For what? HOPE!!!

²³ **And not only creation, but also we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.** ²⁴ **Indeed, it was for this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope, because who hopes for what he already sees?** ²⁵ **But if we hope for something we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patient endurance.**

God gave us a brand-new future, one that will be free from any pain or sadness. It is a future that will be free from any afterthought of groaning at all! God gives us this personal reassurance by us Himself! He gave up Jesus to die on the cross, and, in addition to that, He gives us His Holy Spirit inside of ourselves to be able to believe that this means we are forgiven and saved! This is the firstfruits, that we have God Himself as our payment and as our helper! We have been given **share in the glorious freedom of the children of God, the adoption as sons**, a part in the LORD'S Holy Family. Whereas before we had only a prospect of suffering, now we have a hope for a restoration of what God originally meant for us, a life with Him!

We saw an example of this just only yesterday. We had a funeral here at Ascension for Susan Rosamond. Funerals were never supposed to be a part of creation. People often say at funerals that death is natural, just another part of life. But that is not true! It was never supposed to be that way. They were something that we imposed upon ourselves. They are the ultimate examples of our groaning.

But we didn't have just a funeral yesterday. We had a victory service! It was a reminder of what Jesus Christ did for our sister Susan. He traded with her! Because He loved her, He died for her, and while she is not here anymore, right now she is clothed in eternal glory and perfect comfort. These events can be painful, a reminder of our groaning. But for the Christian believer, they are another reminder of HOPE! We too have that hope that one day we will be transported from this vale of tears into never-ending sadness. Because of what Jesus did, winning the victory over sin and death and giving that same victory to us, we have a hope of something much greater than our temporal pain. We have hope of glory which lasts forever!

And so, we wait. We, as Paul describes here in Romans chapter 8, **eagerly wait for (that hope) with patient endurance**. Hope that is seen is not hope. If the glory that we hope for is in heaven, then

it stands to reason that in this life we will not have that glory. If the joy and pain-free life with Christ in heaven is our hope, that is not going to be our reality while we're living in this groaning world. But, no matter what type of groaning we experience here, the HOPE stands SURE and SECURE, and that HOPE is STRONG!

Putting our confidence in God's promise of glory will not lead to shame or disappointment. It leads to your eternal glory with Him in heaven. Do we see it now? No, but such is the nature of hope! **Romans 5:3-5** ³ **And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;** ⁴ **and perseverance, character; and character, hope.** ⁵ **Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

In all earthly trades, one party might scoff at the proposal of a trade because the imbalance is so great. If you tried to trade your lunch for a car, the person whose car you are trying to trade for wouldn't take you seriously because that's not a serious trade offer. They would laugh you out of the room.

That is the thought that Paul conveys here. When we are in the misery, when we are groaning in this life, it is BIG, it is SORROWFUL, it is REAL. But no matter how deep that suffering may be, it cannot even compare in the slightest to the glory that waits for you! What confidence and joy this hope gives our lives! Yes, this world may be miserable. There may be times when we wonder, "How long is this misery going to last?" How long, we don't know. But we do know how long our glory will last! God promises that we will be with Him forever in Paradise, where there will be no more pain, no more sadness, where He will personally wipe away every tear from our eyes. All praise and thanks be to Your LORD, who exchanged all of our sin and pain for a hope of a glory with Him that will stand in all eternity! AMEN!!!