

Romans 2:1–16 "The Surprising Fairness and Kindness of God"

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer. Father, you know that on one hand, every single one of us, in fact, everybody we meet, would like to know themselves better. And on the other hand, Father, you know how we often, in fact, turn away from that and act contrary to that. So we ask, Father, that you would do a kind and gracious work in our midst this morning, and that your Holy Spirit will so bring your word to us, that through your word we might see and know ourselves better. And that at the same time, Father, you will help us to see ourselves better in a way that does not cause us to despair, but gives us hope, as we also, Father, know you better, your heart, and what you have done for us in the person of your Son. So we ask, Father, that you would do this gentle but powerful and important work in each of our lives. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So many years ago, when I was young, and in my early 20s, I worked at a natural food store here in Ottawa. And at the time, I think there were about three of these natural food, I mean, the same guy owned about, I think it was three different natural food stores. And I worked on one on Elgin Street. And there was a time, about the six months or eight months or whatever, before I ended up leaving the store. I left the store, you know, not because of this issue, just more to take a different type of job. But it was actually quite frustrating and problematic, because what would happen is the manager of the store was there most of the time, and he was a, these are, they're both nice guys, by the way. And he would tell me, you know, this is how you set up the produce section, this is how you set up the display, this is how you do this, this is how you do that.

[3:14] And then the hot, the, the manager would maybe go away for a day or two or a whole week, and the owner would come. And as soon as the owner came in, and he saw me, he'd say, look at this produce section, that's not the way you set up a produce section, you have to do it this way. And don't set this, that area up, like they have to do it this way. And I'd say, well, the manager told me to set it up this way. And he said, the manager doesn't know what he's doing. And I'm the owner, do it the way I said. So I would do it the way he said. The manager would come back from his days off, or holiday, and say, George, look at how that produce section is set up. That's not the way you set up a produce section, you got to do it this way. And I'd say, well, the owner told me to do it this

way. He said, the owner's an idiot, he doesn't know anything, you do it the way I said.

And back and forth would go for about six months or nine months until I eventually left. But not because of that reason, but because I moved on to a different job. Now, I mention this because I think it's a good illustration of how a lot of people outside of the Christian faith view the whole idea of God judging you, or just even religious rules and spiritual rules. It seems to them a little bit like, okay, George, I don't know, they might say, I don't know, you know, Muslims have rules, and you know, you know, Anglicans have rules, or Protestants and Catholics have rules, and you know, the Sufi have rules, and I don't know, how on earth do you pick between them? And they all seem to contradict each other, and everybody seems to say that the other people don't know what they're talking about. And it's just way too complicated, and it just doesn't seem to make any sense, and it just seems to make more sense to be no religion. And even Christians are a little bit confused by it, because you know, Canada has certain types of rules, and the Bible has rules, and it can just be complicated trying to figure out how you fit the rules in, and whether they're as blunt as, you know, the manager was that the owner was an idiot, and don't listen to what he said.

That is, it's just very confusing, and all it does, and this is, I think, one of the reasons why many people are become either apatheists, they're apathetic about the whole question, or they would say that they're no religion, because they'd see that all you have seem to have are these rules, and the rules don't seem to be consistently applied, and there seems to be contradiction amongst the rules, and all they do is make you feel guilty and anxious. And then most people come to a point and say, the one thing I do not need more of in my life is guilt and anxiety. Like, I have enough guilt and anxiety just because of life. I don't need religion or spirituality to add to it. And so a lot of people move away from any type of Christian, or for that matter, other types of spiritual or religious commitment. Well, the text that we're going to look at today is actually very, very good answer to that type of dilemma or problem, and in fact, it's going to...it actually solves that issue in quite a beautiful way, and at the same time opens the door to how you can live the life that, in fact, most Canadians, I think, long to desire to live. And it does both of them in the same time as it goes through the text. So if it'd be very helpful to me, if you, and for yourselves, if you open your Bibles, or find a Bible on your phone or whatever, and try not to check your Instagram updates or TikTok updates or whatever, but just stick with the Bible. And we're looking at Romans 2, verses 1 to 16.

Romans 2, verses 1 to 16. If you're using these little journal Bibles, it's page 10. And this...and here's how this goes. And just before we get into what it actually says...so it's written as a letter, a book, obviously. And the way the book begins is some greetings, some, you know, historical, you know, in terms of his plans. And then it gives this big thesis about what the book is going to be all about. And then from verse...chapter 1, verse 18 to the chapter 3, verse 20, Paul is selling the problem. What...what is it...about why is it that human beings actually need to...verse 1, 16, 17 says, for I'm not ashamed of the gospel...okay, well, good for you, Paul, but here's...here's why. For it, the gospel, is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, that is, receives it. To the Jewish person first and also to the pagan. For in it, that's the gospel, this good news from God about God, the righteousness of God is revealed, that God is always righteous and he is the one who makes you right with him. And it's revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. So in a sense, what Paul is trying to do is saying, why is it that human beings need to hear this good news from God about what God has done? And he had...why do you need to have power that comes from him to receive it? So why is it? That's the section that we're in, what I call selling the problem. And here's how it goes. Chapter 2, verse 1, in the part we're looking at today.

[8:18] Therefore, you have no excuse, O man or O woman, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another, you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man, do you suppose, O woman, you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourselves, that you will escape the judgment of God? And we'll just pause there. Now, just a couple of things about this. First of all, just a couple of things about this. Actually, if you could put up the first point, this would be very handy. Here's the big

thing about this text, and it's going to be repeated later on towards the end of it. God is shockingly just and fair, good and kind. That's what's being revealed here, that the true and living God, the actual God who's created all things, sustains all things, is over all things, is sovereign over all things, who will one day bring all things to completion. The true and living God is shockingly just and fair, good and kind. So here's how we see this in the text. It's a very, very important insight. What he is saying is this, okay, okay, okay, that sounds fair enough. It sounds fair enough. You know, why is it fair? It's not fair, maybe. I can see your point. It's not fair if I judge every single human being by their knowledge of the Bible. That doesn't seem very fair. So here's the standard. Here's the criteria I'm going to use, because surely this is fair. Here's the thing about every single human being. Every single human being judges other people. Every single human being judges other people. And when I say this, if you're listening and you're thinking, you know, you're outside the Christian faith, or your faith is being deconstructed, you can't figure out whether you want to stay as a Christian.

When I say every person, I mean me, and I mean all the people right here. I mean Christians and those outside the Christian faith. Every single human being judges other human beings. And what we do is we find people lacking or wanting, bad, disgusting, horrible. And we also find certain types of things admirable. And so God says, that's a characteristic of human beings. That, George, by the way, that's a characteristic of you. It's a characteristic of Ross and Shirley. It's a characteristic of Louise. That's how you function. So I'm going to be completely fair. What I'm going to do is I'm just going to listen in to your thoughts about every time you make a judgment about another person, I'm going to write it down. And I'm going to make a judgment about, you know, every time you say, you know, this person, like, they suck, or this person's bad, or look at that person, they despise them, they should be ashamed, or this person's really good. I'm just going to write it down. And then all I'm going to do is at the end of the day, I'm going to reveal, we'll get a group of people like this, and they're going to have a show, not a show, like a, but it'd be a very sad time.

And I'm going to do two things. I'm going to show on one side of the screen how you judge other people, and then I'm going to show what you actually think in your inner life, and what you actually say, and what you actually do. And no human being lives up to their own judgments.

[11:46] None. And let me tell you, if you think yourself, I think I do. And you said that to your neighbor, they'd smirk. Because they know you're fooling yourself.

They'd say, oh boy, is that person ever clueless? What's that? That's a judgment, eh? Whoa, a moment, I just did a judgment. And so that's what God is saying here in this text.

You want fair? I'm going to be shockingly just and fair. You'll see in a moment why he's also good and kind, but it's very kind as well. He said, I'm not going to judge you by my really high standards, I'll just judge you by your standards.

And if I do that, you won't actually be able to live up to them. Now, some of you might say, George, okay, well, maybe, oh, okay, George, I hadn't been seeing that coming. But, you know, it goes on to say in verse two, look at verse two, we know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. I don't think that's true, George, or maybe it's, I just don't think that's true. But, well, actually, you do. It's an argument. Paul is using an argument from the lower to the greater.

And he says, basically, one moment, if you think it's all right for you to judge, why is it not all right for God to judge? What can you say? Well, a lot of us actually feel offended when that comes to their attention and don't like that idea. Now there's a whole other problem.

Okay, you actually think that it's all right for you to judge and you to judge God, but it's not all right for God to judge you. Who made you God? That all of a sudden, the profound truth of Genesis chapter two and Genesis chapter three, that it's a fundamental part of human nature, that we want to be like God, which actually means be more God-ish than God and over God. And all of a sudden, you see that that's actually psychologically, existentially, ontologically, I went to college, I have to use big words occasionally, true. We do get offended by these ideas. Why? Because we have a God complex.

[13:58] Every single human being has a God complex, unless by grace it gets removed. So, what do we do?

Well, we do judge others, and we do judge ourselves. And one of the problems with how... Well, so here's one of the problems for people when they think of moral rules. And...

Sorry, I've lost my note. Sometimes I lose my notes because I talk and I don't have a written text, I just do an outline. Here's the next thing about this text, which is actually pretty shocking, but profoundly true. Let's just read verses four to five. I had a good analogy, which I can't read in my notes about how to make it. Remember I said my first point is that God is shockingly just and fair, but also shockingly just and kind. Look what he says next in verse four.

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? Just read that again. Do you not... Or do you presume...

That is that, you know, the idea... You're unhappy with God's judgment and anything to do with that. And by the way, just... I'm not going to... Later on in Romans, I'm going to talk more about God's wrath and everything like that. Oh, sorry, I didn't read that. So, four and five. Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance, but because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. Now, later on in the book, we're going to talk more about the wrath of God, the anger of God. All I want to say about it here is this, that most of the time my anger is sort of based on my own judgments and I don't live up to them myself.

[16:13] But God is always an only good. He never does one... judges other people one way and gives himself a pass. He's always good. He's always just. And unlike me, he never is addicted to anger. He never holds on to anger.

He's never overwhelmed by anger. His anger is always appropriate, an appropriate response to human evil. To give you a bit of an example, this is a bit of an historical example, but some of you might or might not know that the Soviet Union, the communist government in the 30s, by their... sent troops in to starve Ukrainians to death. And there's a number anywhere from five to 20 million Ukrainians actually starved to death because the soldiers, the communist soldiers actually came in and hunted and found all of the food because they wanted it for their own reasons and they wanted to quell those troublesome Ukrainians. And millions and millions of people died. And I mean, we have to be a little bit careful. Stalin, who was the person responsible for it, he has a very famous line, the death of one person is a tragedy, the death of a million people is a statistic.

Very cynical, but very psychologically astute. But if we were to be around at that time and hear that that that was happening and we did not have anger at it, it would not be a sign of our moral superiority, but a sign of our evil and moral incoherence. Now, you could get overwhelmed with it, but God never get overwhelmed. There's a proper response of anger to real evil. And that's really just what this text is trying to say. But here's the bigger... here's the bigger point. If you could put up the second point, Claire, that would be very helpful. In God's mercy, in his mercy, justice is delayed, not forgotten or denied. Excuse me. In his mercy, justice is delayed, not forgotten or denied. And that's what it means here in verse 4. Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? See, God's kindness is seen in common grace, where he restrains the full effect of our evil.

And this text is revealing that deep truth that's three times spoken of in the book of Ezekiel. And if you follow the ancient Anglican practice of morning and evening prayer, you would hear it said on a regular basis that God takes no delight in the death of a sinner, but rather that they will turn from their wickedness and live. That expresses the heart of God. The heart of God is for every single person that we will come to realize that God's justice is never delayed. I mean, it's delayed, but it's delayed, not forgotten, not denied. His justice will eventually come. And this period of time, when you're not under God's judgment, is meant for you to turn to him, turn to him in repentance, to recognize your great need for his mercy and his kindness and his grace. And it's also a great warning. This great text is a great warning. We see this in other people, and it's very hard to see it in ourselves. We can see people's hearts becoming hardened. It might be in a marriage, and you see how one person, or maybe both people, their hearts are hardened towards each other. You can see it in the workplace, where people start to get corrected by the things that they're not doing as they

should in their job. And you can see some people taking it to heart and trying to change. And you can see other people people getting hardened in it and not listening to it. And you can see it in the world when people have things pointed out to them. And rather than saying, gosh, that's right, I need to do something about it, their hearts get hardened. And so even this very, very seemingly hard text about God's judgment, on one hand, it's a great promise. When we see that Stalin died without ever facing any type of human justice, we know that he did not evade justice. Because all that happened is God delayed justice for Stalin. It was not, is not, denied or forgotten, and he will be judged, has been judged, for his profound evil of killing tens of millions of his own citizens. That justice will come. And it will come to us just as to him. But there is this season where we have a time to understand that God's deepest heart for every human being is not that their hearts will become hard and impenitent and their ears closed, but that we will recognize our great need for his mercy and grace.

In his mercy, justice is delayed, not forgotten or denied. Now, some people might say, George, I'm not quite sure where to go with this. Here's the thing about me, George. You need to understand a couple of things about me. I'm a good person. I'm a good person. And I want to do good. Like, that's me, George. I want to do good. And I don't know, George, like, you know the Bible better than me. And I don't know, one of the things that just seems to get me, like, I'm not a type of person who thinks about philosophical ideas or reads complicated books. Like, I'll be honest, like, I, you know, I like listening to some simple music or, you know, maybe looking at a couple of TikTok videos. And I don't, I don't have all these complicated ideas. And sometimes I just think, George, you know, that, I don't know, like, how does this fit in with me being a good person? How does it fit in with the fact that there just seems to be people who are, you know, like, I work with people and they always have opinions on everything. And they're always very convinced they're right. And they always have read books and articles. And I just, I can't match them. And I don't, George, does the Bible have anything to say to somebody like me? Well, it does, actually. Now, we're going to skip ahead. We're going to come back to verses 6 to 11. But let's just skip ahead to verse 12. And here, God is, in a sense, understanding that dilemma that a lot of us have. And listen to what it says in verse 12 and following.

[22:58] For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law. And all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. Now, there's a couple of things. First of all, the word sin is a word that generally will be used by comics, comedians, to make fun of, right? But it's actually a word that every person should long for. It's the first time in the Book of Romans that the word is introduced. It will become an important word. But it's actually a really, really precious word.

It's actually a word that every single person should desire is true. Because what it's telling us is that at the end of the day, good and evil, justice and injustice, aren't just abstract or universal, impersonal laws. But because there really is a God that does exist who's a personal being, right and wrong, justice and injustice is personal.

And if it's personal, there's hope. Simple illustration. The law of gravity is impersonal. You climb up to a 10-story building and you step off the edge, you fall. It's impersonal. Karma is impersonal. Most moral systems are impersonal. You just betray them, they're completely impersonal, you suffer the consequences. Sin introduces the idea that there is a God. And that when I do something wrong, I'm not just doing something to hurt you. I'm not just transgressing some abstract law. I'm actually doing something against a person. And if I'm doing something against a person, there can be the hope that a person will show me mercy.

So it's actually a really important word that you, that Christians should not be embarrassed about, but actually say, actually everybody wish, should wish that sin is true, ironically. Because if it's personal, there's hope. If it's personal, there's hope. So just read this again, verse 12. For all who have sinned without the law, here he's referring to the Old Testament, will also perish without the law.

And all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. Verse 13. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be made right with God. We'll just pause there. This is a really important idea. This is getting at my person saying, you know, I watch TikTok videos. I'm not a philosophical person. I don't read lots of books. I don't know the

Bible like you do. And I have a feeling that people who know all these things, they look down on me. And what God is saying here is this. You need to understand that from my perspective, this is not a contradiction. George could say that person, these two people, Bob and Sue, they know the Bible better than any human being on the planet. And they are both deeply evil.

[25:58] And that is not a contradiction. You can be the best Bible scholar, theology scholar, philosopher in the world, and be a person who is very wrong and evil. It's not a matter of knowing it. It's not a matter of being able to hear it.

It's what you do. And then it goes on, verse 14. And this explains why the fact is, you know, that some people will say, George, I mean, one of the, you see, one of the things about that opening example is that God, in a sense, uses whatever stage of life you're in, the judgments you make. And so even if he was just to say, well, I'm only going to look at those times when you were between the ages of four and 10, before you learned other things, or I'm only going to look at those things, you know, between, I'm not going to count your teenage years, good grief, I'll give everybody a pass on that, because whoa, we all know we'd fail if we're looking at 14 to 18 or 19. We'll go after that. And whatever stage of life you're in, you're still going to fail, right? But we also have a sense of moral growth and improvement, and that's one of the reasons we think we're good people, that we know more about right and wrong than we did before.

But we don't understand why that is. And the Bible here explains it. Look at verse 14. For when the pagans, who do not have the law, that is the Old Testament law, by nature do what the law requires. And here he's doing a little bit of play on words. He's talking about moral law, not the written Bible, but the moral law. When pagans do what the moral law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. What that means is there's something inside of themselves that is bearing testimony to what's right and wrong. Why? Verse 15, they show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bear witness in their conflicting thoughts, accuse or even excuse them. So what the Bible is saying is this.

You live in a moral universe. This is exactly why some people say, you know, I used to think that slavery was all right. Now I see that it's wrong. And it's not just because you actually realize that there's something, you know, I used to think that it was all right if my party did this. And now I realize I can't say it's all right if my party does this. And it's not right if the other party does the same thing.

[28:19] I need to realize that my party is wrong. And when we have that type of moral development, moral development only works if there really are morals. You can't have moral development if there's no type of standard. It's impossible.

And the Bible here is saying that the way God, in fact, designed human beings, part of the human condition is that on every single human being, in a sense, every human being is made in the image of God, the likeness of God. And what that means is that at some level, even though because of our hardness and penitent heart, that there are parts of that moral right and wrong inside of us that we've tried to scrub out, and they've gotten bent, and they've gotten twisted, and all those other types of things, there's still this, there's a moral universe, and the creation is made in the context of a moral universe. And there is some sense of a real morality which is transcendent over time and place that's actually written in our heart. And that's why we can say, I don't care if for most of human history slavery was thought to be all right, it's wrong.

Perfect example. One of the things that we're now doing is light from the past or wisdom from the past. The thing that we have for this month that's right there beside the books and everything like that is by Gregory of Nyssa, the first thing, I think the Bible deconstructs slavery, both the Old Testament and New Testament. It's the first thing ever written by a human being outside the Bible that condemns slavery by Gregory of Nyssa. That's, if you want, if you're curious to read it, you can read it.

Unbelievable, this insight that it's wrong. And you can go on and on and on about things. I I don't care if it was the elite in Rome, it was understood that it was completely fine, that they could take young boys or young girls and sexually do whatever they wanted with them, that any Roman senator could be another Jeffrey Epstein or Snoop Dogg. I don't care about that. They, it is wrong. There's a standard. It's wrong. And what the Bible is saying, we say that because there really is a moral standard and God's actually written this in our heart, is confused and, and broken and, and

covered up and clouded as it seems to be.

[30:41] And then it continues. I'll read verse, we'll read verse 15 again. They show that that work of the law, the writing is written on their hearts. And then verse 16, on that day when according to my gospel, God judges the secret of men, the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. And once again, you see, here's now where this wonderful word sin opens the door to hope and mercy.

If I step off a building, I'll fall. If I transgress a moral law that ultimately it's not just an impersonal law, but reflects who God is and how he designed me in the entire world.

And if I transgress his law, maybe he can have mercy. Let's look back at verses 6 and 6 to 10. And this is going to talk now a little bit about why it is that every human being, I think, wants to think that they've lived a good life and they want to live a good life. And just look at what it says, verse 6 and following. It's, this part here, it's sort of a, it's really like, almost like a koan or a puzzle. It operates on three different levels. And we'll look at the first level first. It's a very deep and profound and insightful section about not only what human beings are like, but what God is like. And it sets up what I'm going to describe in a moment as the George dilemma. I'll explain to you what I mean by that in a second. Look at verse 6.

He will render to each one according to his works. In other words, according to what they do. A lot of Christians read this and say, one moment, this all sounds like you're not saved by God's mercy, but there's maybe just by what you do. We'll continue on. Verse 6 again, he will render to each one according to his works to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality.

He will give eternal life. Yes, that's me. That's what I want. But for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. That, once again, George, I want to obey the truth. I try to never obey unrighteousness, not when I know about it.

[32:53] And then, and then it goes on in verse 9. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the pagan. But glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the pagan, for God shows no partiality. And we say, George, this is completely and utterly fantastic. Here's, listen, think about this for a second. If you could put up the point A, you long for a life of well-doing that leads to honor and glory and immortality.

And that's what human beings long for. We long for a life of well-doing, patient well-doing that leads to honor and glory and immortality. And that's, would say, George, that's exactly the type of life I want to live. And to the best of my ability, that's what I'm trying to do. I try to be patient in well-doing and I'm patient in well-doing and I reject, I always want to obey the truth and I want to reject anything which is unrighteous. And I try to reject evil and I'm glad that God's impartial and I'm glad that if he just looks at my life, I think that's going to be how he'll see that this is how he should understand and relate to me because this describes the longings of my heart, that I long for a life of patient well-doing that leads to honor and glory and immortality. But the problem is it sets up the George dilemma. And here's the George dilemma. In grade eight, not just in grade eight, I was a lazy student. The motto of my life was, why work today when I can play today and work tomorrow? And that's what I'd say in the next tomorrow. Why on earth should I work today when I can play today and work tomorrow? Procrastination was my middle name. George Procrastinator Sinclair, that was George.

And so in grade eight, I think it was grade eight, doesn't matter if it was grade eight or grade seven, we had towards the end of the year, the end of May, beginning of June, we had a very major French project that we had to do in one of my classes. And that French project was that we had to each give a three-minute speech in French. I can't remember what the topic was about. And we were told well in advance when it was going to be. We were given lots of notice, completely fair. And I think there were 25 students in the class and she, the teacher said that we'd do five students a day from Monday to Friday.

And that's how it was going to work. And we knew the week it was going to start. And I did absolutely zero amount of work to prepare for this. Now, I wasn't realizing unconsciously why I did absolutely no work, but I did no work. And then on Monday, it came time in the afternoon, and the

teacher with that chirpy young teacher smile and enthusiasm said, I've been thinking over the weekend that often the way I do these types of things isn't fair.

[35:56] We should all be fair. Everybody in the class says, we should be fair. And I said, what I realized about us not being fair is this. Usually when we do class presentations, we do it in alphabetical order, either from the beginning to the end. And I don't know if that's fair. And all the people whose last names were Adams and Abramovich and Billings, they all said, yes, that's not fair. And I said, sometimes I do the opposite. We begin at the end and then go backwards. And I don't know if that's fair.

And especially the Yakubolskis and the Williams, they all said, yes, absolutely, that's not fair. But everybody in the room said, yeah, that's not fair that you always either begin at the A and go to the W, the Z, or begin at Z and go to the A. That's not fair. And she said, so I've had a real insight this weekend. I think I know how to make it really fair. And we all want it to be fair. Yes, we all want it to be fair. Here's what we're going to do. I have 25 pieces of paper, all identical, and I've written on them one to 25. And I folded them and I put them in a bag. And we're going to go around the room. We're going to take them randomly. And whatever number you get, that's the order you do it. Isn't that fair? Yes, that's fair. The tickets go around. I open mine up. One.

One. I was feeling really relaxed up until this point in time. Because why? She always started at A, or started at Z. And even when she said this was going to happen, I'm thinking to myself, the odds are four to one that I'm not going to be in the first group. No worry. Now, my legs are going like this under the table. Rivers are coming from my armpits. I have become immensely hot and immensely red. And she, with her chirpy smile, says, who's number one?

I'm number one. I'm number one. And I said, I can't do it. Oh, George, she's very chirpy and courager and all that. You know, Shirley, just come up and do a little bit. And I can't. I start to cry.

[38:02] 13-year-old boy crying in grade eight. Not a good look. And she says, George, we've all agreed it's fair. It would be unfair for me to let you skip it today.

Silence in the room. And she said, what? The only thing that might be fair, well, I'll tell you what might be fair in a moment. But here's the dilemma. So here, you know, the dilemma is this. We've all agreed that what we actually describes ourselves is that we're patient and well-doing. And if we're patient and well-doing and always doing what's right, never doing what's evil and always obeying the truth, surely there should be some type of glory and honor and recognition that's given to me. And we've all agreed on that. But here's the problem. Here's the problem. If you could put up B, Claire, you do not and cannot live that life.

How do you know? I tell you that all of your 15 co-workers, when they hear this sermon, they all think that they're doing it. And what would your first reaction be? That person's not.

I am not a liar. Pick any random group of 20 people, maybe your 20 best friends, and all 20 of them think they're doing this. And you will say, that person isn't. That person definitely isn't. And you know what else? Some of those other 19 are saying it about you.

And if you say, no, no, no, no, it's different for me than the other 19, it really is. They'll all smirk and think, whoa, is that person really clueless about themselves. We all agree. We can't do it. It's the George dilemma. So what hope do we have? Well, there was actually a human solution to the George dilemma. And it came like this. The teacher says, well, George, it wouldn't be fair if I was to just give you a pass. There's a long pregnant silent.

[40:09] And then she said, but maybe if someone traded places with you, that would be fair. Is there anybody in the room who would trade places with George?

George. This is a true story. Ricky of blessed memory, possessing sacred number 13.

And by the way, he stuttered. It really is a bit of a Christ figure. You know, you don't look on him and think that he would be the guy. He wasn't the best French student. He was just a guy who wanted to see mercy. And he put up his hand and said, I will trade places with George. And he literally walked from the back of the class, put his number 13 on my desk, took number one in his hand, and went up and did the speech. Now, if you could put up the C point, that would be good.

For your good and for God's glory, Jesus lived that life. You see, that story of solving the George dilemma, there is a true and greater Ricky.

All Ricky did is he took my place, but he still did his own speech, and I still had to do my speech. The fact of the matter is, is that the proper way to read these verses about being patient and well-doing, and seeking honor and glory and immortality, and always for just rejecting evil and always rejecting unrighteousness and always obeying the truth. There is only one person who has ever lived that life. And it's not me, and it's not you. Only one person has lived that life, and that is Jesus.

[42:01] When Jesus trades places with you, and it's not just the matter that you now go have to do this yourself, the wonder of the gospel is, you know, in the Old Testament law to our Jewish friends, there's this regular aspect of all sacrifices, is that the person, it puts their hands on an innocent animal, and that the idea behind it, which is being illustrated, is that the things in me that deserve punishment, and the things that I'm ashamed on, I put them on the innocent animal, and the innocence of the animal comes to me, and then that animal suffers the consequences that I should suffer.

But really, there has to be, everybody knows that, on one hand, it doesn't make sense, unless it's a pointer to a true and greater sacrifice. And that's the good news of the gospel, that God has provided a true and greater sacrifice.

Who, when you put your hands in his, will not just trade places with you, but you enter into union with him, and the penalty that you could not pay, he paid, and the right standing with God that you could not accomplish, the life that you could not accomplish, is bestowed upon you as a gift. Only Jesus can be that sacrifice. For your good and for God's glory, Jesus lived that life. If you could put up the final point, that would be very helpful.

Jesus saves you, and saves you, and saves you. Amen. Alleluia. Jesus saves you, and saves you, and saves you. Amen. Alleluia. You see, this is what, see, the, what is the power of God from salvation?

[43:49] The gospel is this profound news of what God has done for us in the person of Jesus. It's this announcement of victory, and it comes to you with power, and that power is that when you put your hands in the hands of Christ, you enter into union with him, and he dies the death you deserve, you get the, in a sense, credited with the life that he lived that you didn't accomplish and don't deserve, and you get all of that in union with him, and that is how you were made right with God, and it doesn't just end there, because you are now in union with Christ. This is now the story by which you can understand how the world makes sense, and the truth about you, and the hope you have for the future, and now when you put your hands in him, he saves you in this second sense, that all of a sudden now you realize this is the story by which you should live your life, and this is the ground you can stand on. You can stand on what he's done for you on the cross, and when you stand on that and realize that he's done it for you, and you receive everything as a gift, then you have an emotionally and intellectually secure place that as it becomes more real to your heart, you realize you can look at the crap in your life and acknowledge your judgmentalism and all those things because you have a place that you can stand a solid rock, and you can look at your life, and you can start to realize that when he works in you and walks with you, he will start to move you to live a life of patient well-doing, obeying the truth and forsaking unrighteousness, and you've had a crappy week. You haven't done all of that, and we come here and we confess our sins and thank Jesus once again for what he's done for us, and we can pick ourselves up and pray for each other, but knowing that he pushes us in this direction, he draws us in this direction, we stand on what he's done in an emotionally secure way, and that's how he saves you. And a day will come, a glorious day, when we die and sleep in Jesus, and we wake on the last day, and we will live this life for all eternity. What is eternity going to be like in the new heaven and the new earth? Patient well-doing

and flourishing, and not self-seeking but seeking others.

And that glory that we desire, this is what's so precious. We discover that we desire for glory for ourselves, which is ultimately self-seeking, because the fact of the matter is, if I do a good thing for another person to expect to get a gift, I haven't actually done a good thing for that other person. All I've done is tried to figure out a way to give myself a gift.

But if I am like a mirror with no light or glory that comes from me, and by the gospel God is cleaning that mirror and helping me to point that mirror at his glory, that's the light. And it's like light. If you have a mirror pointed towards a light surface, the light, the mirror is filled with light. And as through the gospel our whole lives and beings are turned towards God's glory, we are filled with his glory for our good, our deep pleasure and joy, and the good of the world.

And that is why we need Jesus and the power that comes from him. I invite you to stand. Just bow our heads in prayer. Father, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you he lived the life that we long to live. We yearn to live. And we thank you, Father, that that yearning and longing has been met by your answer, that our yearnings and longings took flesh.

That those yearnings and longings were for something that is real, that only we can we can only receive as a gift from you. And so, Father, we ask that you would help the story of Jesus and what he has done for us, how he solved the George dilemma, that that would become more real to our hearts and would form us in company with him and in the power of the Holy Spirit, to have that emotionally and intellectually secure place to deal with the crap in our lives, and to try and begin to live with patient well-doing, truth-loving, evil-rejecting, justice-practicing.

[48:26] Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. Father, thank you that you call us to such deep moral and just beauty. And we ask and thank all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. And all God's people said, Amen.

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