

Romans 8:18-35

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Preacher: Rev. Chris Ley

[0:00] Lord of all power and might, you are the author and giver of all good things. And so I pray you connect us to Jesus as we hear his gospel and graft into our hearts the love of your name.

And we pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. Well, it's lovely to be here. I'm so keen to be here. I nearly didn't let Erica do the reading.

But I'm glad we all got to hear Genesis 2 and 3. You'd have no idea what I was talking about. We are looking at four big questions. If you were at Bible camp at the beginning of the summer, we called these the four colossal questions that the children learned a few weeks ago.

And the first question was, where did the universe come from? And you may remember, Aaron talked about it two weeks ago. The memory verse tells us where the universe came from.

We started our service with it. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things. The universe came from God. God is our creator. He made everything.

[1:15] Last week, we had Bishop Mike here. And he answered the question, what were we made for? And Mike showed us from Genesis chapter 1 that we were made for three things.

And they all start with the letter R. And I've taken it upon myself to turn them into three emoticons, which I don't think Mike... I don't know if Mike speaks emoticon. So here we go.

The first R we are created for is relationship. We are created for relationship with God and relationship with one another. So God made us for relationship.

The second R, if you were here, you might remember, is we were made to reflect God. We were made to reflect God in how we live. So that when people see us, they're seeing a picture of God. And the last thing we learned from Mike is we are made to rule over creation in God's name. So God has given us the call, the command, to care for creation in his name, to rule over it.

[2:19] So those are our three R's. Relationship, reflect, rule. The three emoticons. We'll come back to those in a minute. God has made us to know him, to reflect him, and to care for his world.

So those are the two questions we have so far. Where did the universe come from, and what's our job? And today our question is a hard one. What is wrong with the world? Why is there sickness? Why is there death in God's creation, if it's good? Why are people mean and cruel to one another? Why are there wars? Why are families sometimes broken?

Why do we sin? Well, we're going to see the answer to these questions by looking at Genesis chapter 2. And before we do, have you noticed we have a new piece of furniture up here?

Does anyone know what this is? Has anyone seen one of these before? I brought it from home. It's not a trick question. But no one said an answer, I don't think.

[3:28] It's a lamp. It's a lamp. Very good. Imagine this lamp is us, okay? God made us. God keeps us alive every second.

And just like this lamp needs electricity, we need God. So we aren't just people who believe in God. We're people who depend on God every moment.

God is our source of life. God is our source of light. But as long as this lamp is connected to its power source, it shines, right?

So if I take the lamp and take it to its power source, using the wonders of the modern world, it turned on. Look at that. This is what life in the Garden of Eden was like.

Adam and Eve lived with God, and everything was good. We're told they're in relationship with God, they reflected God, and they ruled over creation, caring for it in God's name.

[4:34] Everything was beautiful. There's one little detail we're given today in Genesis 2, verse 9 that I love. It says, Out of the ground, the Lord God made to spring up every tree that was pleasing to the eye and good for food.

Isn't that wonderful? God didn't just make food that tasted good. You know, the Garden of Eden wasn't like a cafeteria where you just show up and food is given to you. It was a world that was beautiful.

God made us a home that would bring joy to our hearts. He could have made a world that just simply worked, but instead he chose to give us one that had sunsets, mountains, flowers, butterflies, birds that sing.

God wanted Adam and Eve to enjoy his creation, and through it to see that there is a wonderful creator who has given us this wonderful world.

Now, once in the garden, God did give them a command. He said in Genesis 2, verse 16, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

[5:48] For in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die. God said, Every tree here, every beautiful tree, I give you to eat from and enjoy, except one.

One tree is a deadly tree, and if you eat from that tree, you will die. Now, that does not sound unfair to me. That does not sound unreasonable. Imagine your kids, your parents, took you to the biggest candy store in the world, and they said, Look at all this candy.

You can eat anything you want. Any candy in this whole store. Except that one candy you see on the counter right there, don't eat that one. Because if you eat that candy, you'll die.

Is that unreasonable? No. It's loving of your parents to warn you. God was incredibly generous. But then the serpent arrives, and he says in Genesis 3, Did God really say you can't eat from any tree? Well, it's not what God said at all, is it? God said you can eat from every tree, except this one. But the serpent twists God's words. He wants Adam and Eve to believe that God is not good.

[7:06] That God cannot be trusted. Then the snake tells us the biggest lie. He says, You don't need God. You can be like God yourself. Adam and Eve choose to believe the lie.

They stop trusting God. They trust the serpent instead. And they decide they want to be in charge, and make their own rules, and live as if they are God. The Bible calls that sin.

Sin is not just doing bad things. Sin is replacing God with ourselves. We have an old friend, Mark Ashworth, who used to do our kids' talks, and he'd explain it like this.

He said, Sin is spelt S-I-N, and that stands for S. Shove off God. He was British, so when he said it, it was endearing and adorable. Shove off God.

I stood for I'm in charge, and N stands for no to you and your rules. Adam and Eve decided they wanted to be their own king and their own queen instead of trusting God.

[8:07] So what happens when Adam and Eve reject God? What happens when we reject the source of life and light? Well, it's a bit like if this lamp decided, you know, this power source is really holding me back from me living my truest, fullest self.

And so I'm going to disconnect myself, and I'm going to live my life my way over here. Oh, it's different.

It's still a lamp, but the light's gone. There's no power source. It's actually functionally pretty useless now. This is what happens to humanity.

We've disconnected ourselves from God, the source of all life and love and joy and truth and light.

And because of this, everything God designed to work together begins to fall apart.

Sin does not stay private. It always spreads. It infects the things around it. So remember those three R's? What happens to our relationship with God when we sin, when we reject him, when we live life as if we are God?

[9:28] It's broken. What happens to our ability now to reflect God in how we live? It doesn't work.

People look at us and they don't see God. They see our sin. Then lastly, are we able now to rule over creation in God's name? No, we're not. Creation is affected by our sin.

Creation is now cursed. And that means that creation and life here is going to be hard and frustrating and full of pain. This is why the world has sickness.

This is why we fight. This is why people die. This is why creation is full of suffering. Our world is broken because we have turned away from God.

Amazingly, God knew this would happen. And later in the story of the Bible, we're going to now hear from Paul what he says about this broken world and the hope that God gives us.

[10:35] So Erica is going to come and read our second reading. All right. Thank you, Erica. So in Romans, the passage we just heard, Paul says something amazing. First of all, in verse 22, he says

the whole creation has been groaning together.

Have you ever groaned? Maybe when you're sick or hurt, carrying something heavy, disappointed. Creation is groaning because something is wrong. Our world is not the way God first made it to be. We see it everywhere. In floods and fires. In diseases. In broken friendships. In loneliness. In death. Creation is waiting for God to make everything right again. And we're waiting too. But we're not waiting alone. God's Holy Spirit is with us as we wait, Paul tells us.

[11:44] And so Paul writes that we have hope. Back in Genesis, when Adam and Eve sinned, God made a promise. He told the serpent in Genesis 3, verse 15, one day a child will come, and the serpent will hurt this child.

But that child will crush the serpent forever. We know in God's story, that child who God promises is Jesus. And Jesus comes to earth to do what Adam failed to do.

Jesus trusted the Father perfectly. Jesus never sinned. Jesus died on the cross to take away our sin and our guilt and punishment. And when Jesus rose from the dead, he defeated sin.

Defeated death. He defeated the serpent. So when Jesus rises from the dead, having defeated the devil and crushed the serpent's power over us, he makes a way for us to once again be united with God.

So Jesus comes to us when we are disconnected from God. He saves us from our sin. And he brings us back to God. Jesus reconnects us to the source of all light and life.

[13:01] So it's like Jesus comes to us in our sorry state, and he saves us. And he brings us back, and he reconnects us with God so that we may know light and life forever.

Now notice something. The lamp could not reconnect itself. I have never seen a lamp plug itself in. It needed someone to reconnect it.

Well, that's what Jesus has done for all of us. None of us can save ourselves. None of us can reconnect ourselves to God. None of us can undo the mess of our sin.

But through Jesus, we can know God again. We can love God. We can reflect God. We can live as his children.

And one day, this is our wonderful hope, Jesus won't just make people new. Jesus is going to make everything new. One day, Jesus won't reconnect, won't just reconnect us.

[14:09] He's going to reconnect the whole creation to God. And this time, creation will never be disconnected from God again. The whole world will shine with the glory of God.

And in that day, there'll be no more sickness, no more crying, no more death, no more sin, no more darkness. God's light will fill the whole creation forever.

We're told we won't even need the sun anymore. So what's wrong with the world? We've turned away from God. We've disconnected ourselves from him.

But what is our hope? What's that Jesus has come to bring us back? And one day, he'll make all things new. The light went out in Genesis 3.

But because of Jesus, one day, the light will never go out again. Amen. Amen.