

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

From dust you came and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). This is the phrase we normally say over you placing the sign on the cross on your forehead. We are unable to do so tonight for obvious reasons. I shall try to give meaning to that phrase so we will understand it better and be marked with the knowledge of the significance of the cross inside of you, onto your very soul.

The Bible clearly tells us where life comes from. God is the originator of life. There is no life source other than God. There is no source of life outside of God. God is the source of life. The Bible clearly tells us who were the first two human beings on the face of the earth. Jesus Himself affirms the literal existence of Adam and Eve when he speaks of the first couple as God’s model for marriage (Mark 10:6-9). Life on this earth did not come from aliens as some think, what utter nonsense. It is amazing how far people will go to deny God’s existence. There will always be atheistic and humanistic theories of the origin of the universe doing its best to deny the existence of God and reject the Intelligent Designer Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The entire Godhead participated in the creation. For those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, the universe speaks of God and shows His glory.

Genesis 2:7(ESV) ⁷then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. Only God knows how He did this but from the dust of the earth, from the dirt found on the ground, God took it and formed the first man. The Spirit of God breathed life into the man and Adam became a living soul, a living being. And yes, from the rib of the first man God formed the first woman, Eve, and the Holy Spirit breathed life into her and she became a living soul. Life comes from God and God alone. Sinful man will always try to come up with some excuse for life other than God. The Bible says, “Only a fool says there is no God.”

On Ash Wednesday we come face to face with our mortality. 100 years from now none of us are going to be here no not one. We are mere mortals. We all face the reality of death. In my family I have always taken getting the oil changed in our cars with utter seriousness. My station wagon lasted for 310,000 miles due to proper oil changes. When the children moved away I harped on them to get their oils changed. I harp on this so much that after they get their oils changed they call. I pretend to have a heart attack when they tell me because I was shocked they took the time to do it without me telling them. I have told all 4. This is what I want on my tombstone, "Change Your Oil." It kills me when they forget to have it changed. And I have been told I can't keep harping on this, but I still do.

We are all mere mortals. Our days are numbered, and God knows the number of our days. Adam and Eve are the reason our days are numbered. Adam and Eve's sin infected all of us with this incurable disease that we carry from the moment we are born to the moment we breath our last. Adam and Eve are the reason our bodies will one day return to dust. "From dust you came." Yes, God formed the first man out of dust, the dirt on the ground. "And to dust you shall return." Death entered the world through the sin of Adam and Eve. Their lives came from God and one day their lives would return to dust because of their sin against God. Death came about due to sin. Because we are sinners one day we will all return to the earth. You cannot escape death. It is something we all have in common. "From dust you came to dust you shall return."

Often we as Christians use Christian lingo, Christian talk so often that the very words we use lose their meaning. I am going to focus on one word for a moment and then close the sermon with the best news ever. Please listen while I give the bad news. The Good News will make it all worth it.

Here is the question I now wish to answer. What is sin? Dr Wayne Grudem writes, "*Sin disrupts everything. We don't live the lives we were originally designed to live, and we don't live*

in the world we were originally designed to live in" (Dr Wayne A Grudem, Christian Beliefs, pg. 62. Edited by Elliot Grudem). Friends Adam and Eve had everything perfect until they rebelled against God. Conversations I have had these last few months often go like this. "Pastor, things are not the way they should be." Inside of Christians, who have sensitive spirits towards God, is the deep feeling that something has gone terribly wrong with this world, and they are right. What they are feeling is the weight of sin, those things happening all around us that should not be happening. Sin is a disrupter. To those who know God ever so deeply, sin brings with it a sense of sadness, the sense that what is occurring is grieving God Himself. That is why I think it dangerous to our health to watch too much news. We see things we never thought we would see in this life. It's like a dam has broken and sin is rushing everywhere and gaining momentum. Friendships, family relationships, neighbors, coworkers, marriages church gatherings and more are being torn asunder. Sin is wreaking havoc. Our insides feel it even before we see it.

"Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature" (ibid. pg.62). God has given to us the 10 commandments for our good. Falling short of God's commands is sin. Sin is not only action that God forbids, there are attitudes inside of us that grieves God. Looking down on another race because they are different is a direct assault on God for every human being is made in the image of God. Due to sin the image of God inside of every human being has been marred and damaged. But there is enough of that image still present in every human being that deserves to be respected and treated with dignity. May the Holy Spirit cause in all of us a repentance of the racism that exists, known and unknown. Sin is the destructive force that separates people, destroying human relationships that were meant to be uplifting. Yes, something is terribly wrong.

Sin is deliberately turning against God and carrying out your own desires that God abhors. God hates sin. We have these sinful natures inside of us that is at war with our new

nature and at war with God. I quote, *“God is eternally good in His character; all that He is conforms perfectly to His moral law. Therefore, anything contrary to His moral law is contrary to His character, that is contrary to God Himself. God hates sin because it directly contradicts everything He is”* (Ibid pg. 62).

God is holy, pure, perfect, good, and can only do right. God is never responsible for sin. God cannot sin. Sin did exist before Adam and Eve existed in Satan and his demons. There is mystery here. God works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph.1:11). Somehow God ordained that sin would enter the world (ibid. pg. 63). God gave to us humans a will that could choose to sin against God though God is not the originator of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden neither the serpent nor God made them eat it. It was their own personal choice. They ate of the fruit willingly, and therefore willingly sinned against God. Since that moment all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. It is in our nature to sin. And ever since that moment God’s work has been to put broken lives back together.

Dr. Grudem writes, *“Every part of our being is affected [infected] by sin – our intellects, our emotions, our desires, our hearts, our goals, our motives, and even our physical bodies. All are subject to the decay and destruction caused by sin. Our actions, our attitudes, and our very natures all make us guilty of sin”* (Ibid. pg. 64).

Enough of the bad news and now onto the Good News. There will come a day when Ash Wednesday will no longer be part of the church year. There will come a day when we will no longer have any sins to confess. There will come a day when we will never again seek God’s forgiveness. There is coming a day when sin will be no more. That horrible feeling that something is terribly wrong will no longer exist for everything will be terribly right. The Good News goes something like this.

Romans 5:15-18(NLT) ¹⁵But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is

God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁶And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. ¹⁷For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

Adam and Eve were caught naked in their sin and deserved to die. What did God do? God was gracious and merciful. An animal or animals had to die, had to be sacrificed so the skins of the animals could provide clothing for Adam and Eve that pleased God. The first couples' sin had to be covered. The days of their innocence was over, and God provided exactly that they needed. Instead of judgment, instead of condemnation, God gave them grace as seen in the brand-new clothing God provided.

Romans 6:23,"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." My friends, sin and death do not have the final word. God has the final word. **2 Corinthians 5:21(ESV)** ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We are saved from our sins by the completed work of Jesus on the cross, his death and resurrection. God placed on Christ the sin of us all. Jesus never sinned once. On the cross Jesus became sin on our behalf. Jesus bore the weight, the guilt, the shame, the grief of all our sin. The pain on Christ was the most pain anyone will ever suffer. Jesus was brutally whipped before he went to the cross. The whipping was similar to being skinned alive. Jesus took on all of God's condemnation. Jesus bore the full judgment we deserve. Jesus did all the work, and we receive God's clothing that makes us acceptable to God, the robe of righteousness the very

righteousness of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross makes us acceptable to God. Jesus, the spotless, perfect Lamb of God, poured out his righteous blood to cover all of our sins. Jesus stunk to high heaven with the stench of our sin and we are given the fragrant aroma of Jesus. All of our sins are gone forever. God has saved us from our sins. God has rescued us from our sins. God has redeemed us from our sins. Salvation has come directly to us through Jesus Christ. Sin loses for Christ won! Satan lost for Christ gave him the lethal blow to his head. Death has been given way to victory for Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Hell cannot touch us for Jesus descended into hell with the full weight of our sins on the cross. Friends, the Good News just keeps getting better and better and better.

I close with these words. 1. No matter how far you sink in this life, no matter how low you get, Jesus has been lower and understands exactly what you are going through. He knows it because He felt it on the cross. 2. There is no sin too great that Jesus will not forgive. I have known of Christians that sank into a huge pit of guilt and shame brought on by their own personal struggles with life and with sin. They could no longer live with themselves and ended their own lives. Jesus died for our sins. Jesus is the only one who had to die for our sins. No matter how low we get, we can place all of our struggles with life and sins on Jesus and rise up from the pit and be completely restored. By Adam came sin and by Christ came the resurrection. Jesus died so that we might live, not only forever in heaven, but stay living here until God brings us home. There is absolutely no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. God's perfect love for you is stronger than your sin. God's grace covers all. The Good News just keeps getting better and better and better. One day Ash Wednesday will be no more, and Easter will be celebrated every day when we live completely in the Light, the Light of Christ. Amen and Amen.