

*Father, make us all into a new humanity according to the pattern of Your Son that we may live into the fullness of His eternal life. In the Name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

The war in Ukraine has gone into its 8<sup>th</sup> month of conflict since the Russians invaded earlier this year. So far, almost 30,000 people have been killed—soldiers, civilians, and children. Around 14 million Ukrainians have been displaced from their homes. And accounts of human rights violations and war crimes are still being reported in the areas of conflict. Around the world, markets, trades, and political relationships have been unduly strained.

As atrocious and complex the situation is, one can argue that all this death, displacement, and destruction can be traced back to one man's unilateral act of power. Because of the decision of one man who sits as head of state of an entire nation to wage war against another, all this evil has been unleashed, its repercussions still rippling across the world ...

Ages ago, one act of rebellion from one man who stood as head of the human race sent the universe spiralling down into its mortal coil. He opened up a way for death to besiege the realms of creation and it sat down as creation's unrightful ruler. At death's right hand is sin, and at its left is entropy. Together, they attend to their master's biddings, serving up everything into its gaping mouth, never to be satisfied. Since then, life has been an endless trail of dust and corpses, marked by the constancy of pain, the futility of work, the corruption of the land, and the dying of all flesh ...

What does all this have to do with discipleship?

What does this have to do with being followers of Jesus? ...

If you make travel plans, you always first ask the question, *where do I want to go?* It matters entirely to your plans where you want to end up. *But* it matters *equally* where you're starting out. If you plan to fly to Paris, France from Pearson and the plane to Paris is at gate 12, you need to board the plane at gate 12. But if you boarded the plane at gate 13, you will end up somewhere else and not in Paris. *It matters entirely where you're starting out.*

Philosophically, if we are to tackle the questions of what is the destiny of our humanity or what is the meaning and purpose of life, we need to first figure out where we're starting out, to tackle first the questions of how did we get here, where did we come from, *who are we?* **Our destiny is determined by our origin.** Our destiny is determined by our origin.

Say, if we believe that life was a by-product of chance, we can look to a future of cosmic oblivion, when everything eventually dissipates into a cold and dark uniformity, and our behaviour today may be guided by some level of cognitive dissonance, eking out whatever meaning we can in the blip of our life span in an ultimately meaningless existence.

If we believe that life is controlled by good and evil spirits, we can look to a future of some kind of afterlife, but our behaviour today may be guided by a sense of terror over the capriciousness of these spirits. We can live in a constant state of appeasing the unknown and the unpredictable.

If we believe that life is designed by a benevolent and loving God, we can look to a future of some kind of afterlife that is also designed by the same God, and our behaviour today may be guided by a hope and prospect that this God is also fixing everything out of His goodness and love, and will undo what is not good right now ...

**How we start out in our story will impact how we think the story will end.** As Tim said last Sunday, we are not just good people that could use a spiritual shot in the arm every once in a while, or we are not just a little misguided and needing some more ethical teaching. Who we are—the story of our humanity—is much bleaker and darker than we could comprehend. But then, our destiny can be all the more glorious and brighter than we would ever conceive for ourselves. *Our destiny is determined by our origin.*

*So, what does this have to do with discipleship?*

What we as Christians believe about the origin story of humanity impacts where we believe we are headed and where we will end up. And our belief about the beginning and ending of our story will guide how we will travel along the way, how we will behave and relate to others along the way.

We read from St. Paul in Romans that how we started out was the cosmic vandalism of God's creation because of the sin of the first man. In v. 12, because of Adam's rebellion, sin infected the world and death became the ruler over life. Whether he was an historical or typological figure, Adam represented the whole human race, and he implicated us all—every person who is now dead, everyone who is alive today, and everyone who is yet to be born.

*Now, that seems unfair to us.* We feel it's unjust that many should suffer the consequences for an individual's mistake. We feel we cannot be charged or convicted for another person's crimes. Each person should be responsible for their own ... *In principle, that's ideal.* But nothing is ideal in this world. And we do not and cannot actually live like this even in our globalized democratic society, or else we cannot even function as a civilization.

We still affirm the legitimacy, the legality, and the need for representation: like someone with the power of attorney representing their family in court, an ambassador representing their nation in the UN assembly, or a sports team representing their city or country in the arena. A significant and trendy line these days is that *representation matters*—that it matters for someone from a segment of society to represent them in the big screens.

On top of that, we tolerate and still have to live with the reality of vicarious penalties. We all have to pay taxes for the upkeep of infrastructures, services, and policies we don't necessarily agree with. We must bear the social and economic costs of war abroad, famine and natural disasters abroad. Churches, communities, and legacies suffer because of the scandals and moral failings of their leaders and members.

Adam represented all of us as our federal head, and regardless of our feelings and opinions, we were all caught up in his act of defiance. Doing so, he officially declared enmity between us and God ... When Putin launched the invasion into Ukraine, regardless of the feelings and opinions of the Russian people, all of Russia is officially at war with Ukraine. And even here, we suffer the economic impact of his decision. And Russians all over the world bear some social burden.

But, at the end of the day, regardless even of the debate about original sin, *we are guilty*, not just because of Adam's sin, but **because we ourselves sin according to the pattern of Adam**. Like it or not, intend it or not, we sin according to the pattern of Adam. Sin has bound us contractually to death, each of us under its payroll, earning the fair wage of our bodies expiring and our withering into dust. All have sinned and so, all die, according to the pattern of Adam.

**This is how we've started out ... and it looks like we only have one destiny—death ... Or so, it *was* the case.** Unto us was given another destiny. For us came another future. What we had broken, God has now fixed.

God sent another representative for humanity, Jesus, not according to the pattern of Adam but according to his likeness. God the Son took on Adam's flesh, and for the entirety of His human life, He fulfilled what Adam could not. Jesus obeyed where Adam defied. Jesus triumphed where Adam failed. Therefore, God appointed Jesus as the other federal head for humanity, so that anyone who is found in Him *by faith*, upon them is bestowed another destiny, upon them is given another story different from what they had inherited from Adam.

And how God did this was He hijacked the same mechanism that brought guilt and death to the world to bring about justification and life to the world. In the same way that Adam ruined everything by his rebellion, Jesus renews the world by His obedience. So then, there are now two realities co-existing together in time and space, each at odds against the other—**the reality of Adam and the reality of Jesus**. But the two are not equal.

In vs. 15-17, Paul differentiates the two. Each has a different *origin*, each a different *destiny*, each a different *mechanism*. I'll go through them quickly. **First, their origin:** Adam's reality started from his selfishness—his lust to take it all and become God. But Jesus' reality started from His self-sacrifice—volunteering His life for everyone. **Second, their destiny:** Adam's reality leads to death, but Jesus' reality leads to life. **Third, their mechanism:** Adam's reality is condemnation by guilt, but Jesus' reality is justification by faith.

There's a lot in that list that needs unpacking, but this is Paul's main point in these verses: **Jesus' reality is far superior than Adam's reality**. Why? *Simply by its effects*. It's super easy to destroy, demolish, and dismantle. It doesn't take much to ruin something, to kill, and to take away life. But it takes so much more to rebuild out of the rubble, to renovate on top of the old, to repair what is broken, to clean up the mess, to love and cherish someone who's been through trauma and abuse.

God has done the impossible and filled up the bottomless pit that we and our forefather Adam had left in creation. And God built an unshakeable foundation upon it, His only Son, Jesus Christ. And upon this foundation, God is reconstructing a new world, a new humanity—people in the likeness of Adam but who no longer follow the pattern of Adam but the pattern of His Son, so that anyone who believes in Him, their contract with death is torn up, that they should not perish but have everlasting life ...

So then, there are really only two kinds of people in the world today: **people who are in Adam and people who are in Jesus**. It's sort of like in the dystopian world of the Matrix where machines took over the world and used humans as their energy source, and the machines created a simulated world called the Matrix to trap people's minds in it while their bodies were used as batteries. In that world, you're either a slave to the machines, hooked up to the Matrix, or you've been set free to take part in the human rebellion against the machines, led by Neo, the Messiah figure of the story.

People trapped in the Matrix or who choose to stay in the Matrix have their own dreamworld stories, their own dreamworld lives, their own dreamworld destinies, but all of them slaves to the machines.

But people who have been freed from the Matrix, who follow Neo and his band of rebels are given a different story, a different destiny: people set free from their bondage to the machines, given a mission to liberate the rest of humanity, and to rebuild a new world.

### **Are you in Adam? Or are you in Jesus?**

So, what do we do with all this heady, theological stuff? Again, what does this have to do with discipleship?

**First, as Christians, we are entrusted with this good news to let others know about Jesus.** We need to tell people who are in Adam about Jesus. Later in the same letter, Paul argues that people need to believe this stuff. But how will people believe unless they hear about it? And how will they hear unless someone tells them? And how will someone tell anyone unless they were entrusted with it and sent?

If we Christians believe this stuff (as difficult and culturally unpalatable and offensive this stuff is), we should be telling others about Jesus. *Again, how we start out determines where we are headed.* Anyone starting out in Adam is heading towards death. But people can start out again in Jesus by faith, which leads to life. If we seriously believe this, we need to tell others.

**Second (and it's related to the first), we can't be arrogant or be superior about any of this.** Paul wrote earlier in the letter: "Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded." If you're Christian, how you got to be in Jesus was not because you were smarter or holier or wiser than others. You got to be in Jesus only by grace. You got to believe in Jesus only by grace.

So, when we tell others about Jesus, we shouldn't shame them, guilt them, pounce on them, force it down on them, or gaslight them. They can decide. It's not on any of us anyway whether or not people believe. We share in love and humility. We cannot be arrogant.

### **Last, we treat ourselves and others with sober esteem.**

There's a vast difference between seeing people as sinful vs. seeing them as evil. Just because someone is in Adam and not in Jesus doesn't mean they're *evil* or that there's nothing good in them or from them. Everyone has God's image. In other words, you don't need to be Christian to do good or be good. People who aren't Christians are sometimes even better than Christians. **It's just that being in Adam still leads to death, no matter how good or bad you are.** The worst person who is in Jesus will not die but will have life. And the most awesome person who is in Adam will still die. *Why?* Because there's nothing we can do or not do to deserve or earn life. The difference is Jesus.

Regardless, as we tell others about Jesus, as we do so in love and humility, let's treat others and ourselves with respect and with sober esteem ...

**Are you in Adam, or are you in Jesus?** If you want to be in Jesus, you can trust Him. Put your faith in who He is and in what He has done for you on the cross. Place your whole life and your future into His hands. If you're not really sure how to do that, I'd be happy to chat after the service. You can also chat with Tim or with James afterwards.

**Be in Jesus Christ.** Believe in Him. For in Him, we have a new story, a new origin, a new humanity remade according to His pattern, towards a new destiny of a life and a world reborn, to the glory of God forever and ever. Amen.