

“Letting Hope Out of the Box” • Romans 5:12-19

INTRODUCTION. There’s a video that’s gone viral - two young boys throwing flour all over the living room... a microcosm of our world, personal lives — a mess!

And it has always been that way — The ancient Greeks, led by the poets Homer and Hesiod, came up with a system of myths that were to explain why the world was the way it was —> one of these myths involved the first created woman, Pandora... given a box (actually a jar), but not to open it.. she does, and all the evils in the world escape and spread over all the earth— when she finally gets the box closed, there is only one item that remains — HOPE.

Do you ever feel that way — everything is a mess, and there is no hope (marriage, extended family, parenting... the dark side)

CHRISTMAS is about God letting hope out of the box and into the world... in the person of Jesus.

In our passage, Paul talks about 2 historical people, and we discover that actions have consequences:

I. **THE CONSEQUENCES OF ADAM’S DISOBEDIENCE**

1. Adam was our representative
2. How did he do? **TOTAL FAILURE**
3. His disobedience —> condemnation
4. **Now, I know what you are thinking**, “I would not have done that. If only I could have been in the garden!” Really? :) Where is the evidence? Like criticizing an NFL quarterback
5. Now we know where the evil really came from
 - (1) We are not sinners because we sin
 - (2) We sin because we are sinners — our nature; it is what is “natural”
 - (3) We are not only condemned, we are contaminated within
 - (4) THIS EXPLAINS A LOT!

II. **THE CONSEQUENCE OF JESUS’ OBEDIENCE**

1. Jesus also is a representative
 - (1) If Adam is known for his act of disobedience; Jesus is known for his act of obedience
 - (2) Adam’s disobedience took place **AT a tree**; Jesus’ obedience took place **ON a tree**
 - (3) The **consequence** of Adam’s disobedience was **condemnation**; the **consequence** of Jesus’ obedience was **justification (NEW LEGAL STATUS)**

2. **Now, we know why we have Christmas** — Jesus had to be condemned so that we could be justified
 - (1) This is a free gift
 - (2) An “abundance of grace”
 - (3) Yesterday at the wrapping service project at Wal Mart we explained to folks WHY we were wrapping gifts for free... “a practical demonstration of grace - don’t deserve it and can’t earn it - receive it”
 - (4) But the only **people who get excited** about this are the ones who know they need it; *they don’t need just a BETTER life - they need a NEW life*

CONCLUSION. One evening this week, Krsity arrived home and heard a hissing sound coming from the van... a nail pierced the tire and it was going flat... I put some fix a flat in it... called AAA to come and plug it... when we took off the tire, we noticed that the rubber was worn off badly and the steel threads were totally exposed on the inside of the tire -- couldn’t see it

That flat was a gift - it could have been so much worse! We didn’t just need a plugged tire; we needed a new tire

- Some of us are **trying to plug** the problem
- Remarkably, the gospel allows us to **see our flats as gifts** — to alert us to a bigger problem
- **The gospel tells us** that on the cross, **Jesus was pierced** for us. *He doesn’t just plug the problem — he gives us a new life.*

Hope has been let out of the box!

Now, **according to v. 17**, “*the free gift of righteousness is able to reign in life*”

And so now we have a **decision** to make, with **eternal consequences**...

- I will either try to **undo** the work of the Adam - *plug the problem*
- Or will I **rest** in the work of Jesus — will I **receive** the gift and let grace REIGN in my life?
- Not just be a part of my life, but REIGN over everything -- let grace influence every nook and cranny of my life

* **As grace begins to reign and “abound,” we begin to change** (*not in order to be saved, but because we already are saved -- more in Jan.*)

* **So let this Christmas be the year that grace begins to reign** in our lives as the **hope** of the gospel spreads throughout our hearts --- and as it spreads **IN** us, may it spread **THROUGH** us, and all over the world, so that others might know that **HOPE HAS BEEN LET OUT OF THE BOX!**