

“Restored: Finding Redemption in Our Mess---This Is a Real Mess”

Romans 7:18-19 (NIV)

March 10, 2019

Rev. Dave Baldrige

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church, Palm Harbor, Florida

I want to give credit to United Methodist clergy Rev. Tom Berlin who has written the book that I'll be using as a resource during this Lenten Season. The sermon series is the title of his book, “Restored: Finding Redemption in Our Mess. His chapter 1 is entitled, “This Is a Real Mess.”

Berlin begins his Lenten study by referencing Michelangelo and his artwork. Now I got to be very honest. I am not an art connoisseur. Some say I'm missing out on culture. But I eat yogurt so I'm getting my culture. Actually, true story, when I was in elementary school, we would have art class. I was terrible. I was however good in English and spelling. I clearly remember one day sitting at those old school desks **(image)** when my teacher came and looked down at what I was drawing---or trying to draw. So, she stopped at my desk, looked down, and said, David...we have a spelling bee coming up...why don't you just put that away and work on your spelling words.

Hmm...so now on to Michelangelo and his 1500's piece that adorns the Sistine Chapel known as The Creation of Adam. **(image)** This is not the whole picture, but an area I want us to focus on. 2 hands. One hand is the hand of God, and the other hand is the hand of the created man...Adam.

Which one do you think is the hand of God? The one on the left or the one on the right? XXX The left one is wrong the right one is right. The right hand belongs to God, the left hand belongs to Adam. Notice Adam's hand. Fingers slacking, kind of limpy and wimpy. It's as Adam is saying, “I don't know. I kind of maybe want what God is offering. Sor of. Not sure. Maybe. Oh, I'll get around to it. Perhaps I'll think about it some more.

Now look at the gap. The gap between God's hand and Adam's hand is small, but HUGE. What does the gap represent? It represents the almost of life. What we could have had if we only energetically reached out to God like He is reaching out to us.

The gap shows the distance... of the life we have and the life we want and need---the life God wants us to have. We reach, we try, but honestly people can be a real mess. We can be a real mess.

What we are talking about is Sin. Rev. Berlin says, “We don't struggle with a particular sin. We suffer from the condition of sin.”

Yes, we were all created in the image of God (known as the imago dei). But also, there is what we call Original Sin.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism said this in his sermon entitled “Original Sin.” the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God, to repair that total loss of righteousness and true holiness which we sustained by the sin of our first parent” (Original Sin, III.5).

That first parent is Adam. And yet it is often easier to see sin in the lives of others, but not see the sin in our own life. IT is kind of like a bad cough. You can make it stop for a moment, but that doesn't necessarily mean you're cured of the infection.

Wesley concludes the sermon on Original Sin saying: "Know your disease! Know your cure! (You) /Ye/ were born in sin: Therefore, (you) /'ye/ must be born again,' born of God. By nature (you) /ye/ are wholly corrupted. By grace (you) /ye/ shall be wholly renewed. In Adam (you) /ye/ all died: In the second Adam, in Christ, (you) /ye/ all are made alive. ('You that were dead in sins hath he quickened:') He (has) /hath/ already given you a principle of life, even faith in him who loved you and gave himself for you! Now, 'go on from faith to faith,' until your whole sickness be healed; and all that 'mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus!'"

The theological word justified can be used. Never thought of it this way, but Berlin makes the analogy of the justification icon on your computer and relates it to our life and being spiritually justified. On your computer and the software, you use you can highlight a paragraph, click the justification button and suddenly all the text is justified...to the right, to the left, or center.

We are made "right" by justification. (Get it!)

My dad in his auto mechanic business used to do front end wheel. If your tires/front end was not aligned it could cause you to run off the road and wreck. Even today I at times check my car and tire alignment by carefully taking my hands off the wheel and see if the car pulls one way or another to the left or to the right. If it pulls and heads over to one of those directions most likely you need an alignment.

Beloved, spiritually perhaps we need alignment...before we run off our discipleship road and journey of faith and have a wreck. This is a real mess! On this first Sunday of Lent perhaps we need to have a spiritual alignment, and to look at being justified and being made right.

Perhaps instead of saying, "Don't mess with me." Maybe we should say, "My life is a mess."

This is a real mess. I'm going to point to myself and say that... "This is a real mess." Now your turn... All together, "This is a real mess."

We may wonder why? In fact, I wish someone would ask my why? Xxx So glad you asked. There is a conflict going on inside of each one of us. I read earlier Romans 7 verses 18 and 19. A few verses earlier in verse 14 of Romans 7 you will find Paul saying, "I am unspiritual." Then I love how he puts it in verses 15 and 16:

**<sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.**

**<sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do..."—I don't know what I'm doing!!!!**

**<sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.**

Sin is living in me. Paul says, I have desire to do good, I just can't carry it out completely.

**<sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.**

With all do respect, it is a bunch of do dos. Ah, this is a real mess!!!!

So, with this original sin, with the mess what do we do? Paul says later this in verse 24.

**<sup>24</sup> What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?**

Oh, who will rescue me---don't say it...but I know that you know who.

Here is what Paul says, **<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!...**

Woo-hoo!!!

It is only through Jesus that we can be rescued and delivered. It is only through Him that we can be restored and find redemption in our mess.

Let's go back to Michelangelo's painting (**image**)

Rev. Berlin closes chapter one, "This is Real Mess," by saying, "You may be a mess. You may be stuck. But there is hope. You can recognize your need to bridge the gap between you and God and you can understand that you are powerless to do so on your own. You may not be aware of it, but right now God is on the move. Right now, God is reaching out to you." (page 32)

There's been a mess. We may be in a mess. Yes, this is a real mess. But as Paul says, "Thanks be to God, who delivers us through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

///8:05 and 9:30///

My hope and trust are not in people. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name.

It's through Him in our mess that the weak are made strong...even in the storm.

However, sometimes it feels like He hides His face, but I know, I know of His unchanging grace. My anchor *has* to hold---if not I'll be swept away in the mess. Jesus must be my anchor.

Through the storm...He is Lord of All. Through the mess He is Lord of all. Be restored. Be redeemed.

///11:05///

You may be hurting and broken. You may be overwhelmed. Jesus is caring.

The Father's arms are open wide to receive you even in the mess.

Regrets, mistakes, sorrows---let's trade them.

Be restored, be redeemed in the mess.

Oh, what a Savior.

He is Lord of all---even in the mess.