

DCF:

In history, certain individuals are perceived as pivotal characters. Christopher Columbus discovered the new world. Dr. Martin Luther ushered in the Reformation. Paul Revere, Nathan Hale, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln were all pivotal characters in the history of the United States. Albert Einstein formulated quantum physics. Jonas Salk discovered the vaccine for polio. Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced the New Deal. Pivotal characters, one and all. Every single one of them introduced an element of change into this world of ours.

This morning God reminds us of the two most pivotal characters in this world of ours - Adam and Jesus Christ. They rightfully can be called “**THE AGENTS OF CHANGE**”. Adam was an agent of terrible change, for all of us are guilty because of Adam’s disobedience. Jesus was an agent of marvelous change, for all are declared righteous because of Christ’s disobedience.

Part One: Adam was an agent of terrible change

Once again we pick up the precious book of Romans. If you could read only one book of the Bible, other than one of the gospels, pick this one. In it every teaching of God’s is presented in depth. In this section, Paul contrasts Adam and Christ. He very rightfully shows us that these two individuals were truly the agents of great change.

Whether we want to admit it or not, Adam has effected a great change in this world of ours. Recall the beginning of all things. God created this world in 6 twenty four hour days. He created a perfect and holy paradise. There was no imperfection. There was no death. There was only happiness and joy. The Garden of Eden was indeed a paradise. No pain, no depression, no unhappiness at all with anyone or anything. Truly, it was a joyful place to live.

But into this paradise our ancestor Adam introduced something terrible. He introduced pain and suffering and depression and sickness and disease. He introduced sin. He introduced death. This death that Adam introduced was not just the death that all living things experience. Oh no, it’s much worse than that. The kind of death that Adam introduced to this world is a death that is also eternal. It’s the kind of death that you are aware of, conscious of, suffering eternally.

There’s a definition of death that might help us to understand this. Think of death as a separation. Physical death is a separation of a body from the soul. Spiritual death is the soul’s separation from God. Eternal death is eternal separation of your body and your soul from God. That’s hell, being eternally separated from the blessings of God.

That’s Adam’s inheritance for each and every one of us. (Read v. 12) Adam contracted the disease of sin and passed this disease on to each and every human being who ever walked the face of this earth. You think cancer is bad! Just consider what sin has accomplished. It has slaughtered everyone! We have that disease of sin. We have that corrupted nature inside of us. Babies might look innocent and harmless. They might look as if they are true angels, but that’s because we can’t see the symptoms of sin. They haven’t as yet exhibited the corruption that lurks within. But give them a few years and then they learn how to show their sinfulness.

It’s not hard to see the effects, the symptoms of our sinful nature. We really don’t have to look any further than our own lives. We can so easily become envious of someone else’s talents or treasures. That’s a symptom of sin. We get angry. We get vindictive. We become lazy, arrogant, selfish, greedy and proud. Do we need any more symptoms to show us our inheritance from Adam?

(Read v. 17) Because Adam sinned, we are doomed. All are guilty because of Adam’s disobedience. Does that seem fair? Does that seem like it’s the right thing to do? Are we doomed simply because Adam sinned? We weren’t given the choice of eating or not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It just doesn’t seem fair to us to be condemned because of what Adam did. Fair? We say no! But God says that’s the way it is. Sin is a corrupting influence that has followed mankind throughout the ages. Adam was truly an agent of change; not a good agent, but a terrible one. His actions brought

unimaginable pain and suffering into this world.

But notice, please, that we are talking about the agents of change. Plural. Two. It's true that all are guilty because of Adam's disobedience, but it is also true that all are declared righteous because of Christ's obedience. Death came through Adam, the agent of sinful change. Life comes through Christ, the agent of soulful change.

Part Two: Christ is an agent of wonderful change

Oh, the height and depth of God's love! It is simply amazing that God would love us so much to save us from our sinful fate. There's nothing that we do that is acceptable to God. There's nothing within us that moves God to give us eternal life. There's nothing that we can become that moved God to send the ultimate agent of change, Jesus Christ. He did it simply because He loved us. He showed us undeserved kindness. He gave us an undeserved gift.

During Lent we are focusing once again on how He did it. How Christ, the agent of change, changed us from hellbound rebels to heavenbound children of God. All are declared righteous because of Christ's obedience. Christ did what we failed to do. First of all, He lived that perfect life which God demands of all of us. From the moment that He was conceived, Jesus obeyed every single one of God's commands. And, He actively paid for all the wrong things that we have done. In fact, Jesus paid not only for our wrongs, but the wrongs of everyone. We have been declared holy, perfect, sinless children of God. What a change in our status! What a magnificent gift Christ, the agent of wonderful change, has given to us.

God declares us righteous because of what Jesus has done. He sees us as perfect. Now, we know that we are still sinful. We know that every day we break at least one of God's commands. Then why does God, why can God, see us as perfect? It's because of Christ.

Maybe I can explain it in a better way. These are my sunglasses. They're polarized lenses. You know what polarized sunglasses do, don't you? They filter out all the glare from windshields and other reflective surfaces as you travel down the road. Think of Christ's payment for sin as God's polarized sunglasses. When God looks at us through Christ's payment, all our sins are filtered out. He sees us as if we are perfect.

How does this wonderful news affect us in our lives? Very simply, it takes the heat off of us. Our eternal happiness isn't dependent on anything we can do. It isn't dependent on anything we can give or say. It all depends on Jesus Christ, the greatest agent of change in the world. And, if it all depends on God, then what are we worrying about? He is God! He has all power in heaven and earth. He has told us of His love time and time again. He has reminded us of the mansions of glory that are waiting for us. No one can take them away from us. For after all, if God gave us eternal life, if He gave us the forgiveness of sins, who's powerful enough to snatch them away from us?

We can lift up our heads and hearts, knowing where we are going! And we can live our lives as God wants us to live them, for we know what He wants. In a way, our faith serves as our sunglasses. Through our glasses of faith, we see this world as it really is. We are not blinded by the glare of sin. We are not deluded or distracted by what the world thinks is important. With our faith sunglasses, we can see the Lord's will for our lives.

And knowing what it is, we can offer the gift of faith sunglasses to others. We want others to know the Lord as He reveals Himself to us. We want others to see the way to eternal life as clearly as we do. We want others to believe and trust in Jesus, and then live their lives in thanks for all that He has done. Oh, what a change Christ has made in our lives! What a wonderful thing to tell others, especially at this time of year.

There are pivotal people in the history of this world. Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, FDR, Ronald Reagan, our fathers and mothers, teachers and perhaps pastors. But there never has been such pivotal personalities as the two that we have studied today. Truly, Adam and Christ were the ultimate "**AGENTS OF CHANGE.**" One was very, very bad. The other was very, very good. May we thank our God that Jesus Christ's change was one that changes us in a very wonderful way. We are Christians. We have been changed into believers headed for heaven. Let us raise our voices in praise and thanks!

AMEN