

Well, good morning, folks. How are we? The weather is changing for the better. I love sunshine. Theoretically, I do not like the heat that comes with sunshine.

And now we get sunshine without this bearing down heat. Anyone like me loves sunshine. Hate heat. Okay, good. I feel like this is the church for you.

If you're visiting with us this morning. That alone should be enough to say, I'm with my people now. Oh, I. It is great. It's just beautiful outside.

It puts me in mind, of course, whenever the leaves are changing and things are just lovely, you get the yard mowed and you know that the grass is gonna, like, slow down a little bit and you want to mow it again for a while. It's like, oh, this is the perfect time of year. It puts me in mind there at the very beginning. Most of us, many of us know the story of creation and how God created this beautiful place, just like, lovely. A place of beauty and delight that perfectly reflected its creator, the Garden of Eden.

And most of us have a picture of that. What we think of that, we think of this beautiful place. And God says then to these two. Two creatures of his that he creates a man and a woman. He says, what's mine is yours, and he hands it off to them.

And of course, we just know that. It's just been all uphill since then, hasn't it? You know, it's just been amazing. It's just gotten better and better and better and better. We've been.

We've just done so well with this responsibility. No, that's not what happened. They sinned. Romans 8. We talked about this.

Romans. Well, Romans says that. That the wages of sin is death. And of course, with sin, the consequences are that. That we begin and the creation around us begins as slow sort of decaying process that always ends in some sort of death.

It touched everything, and it touched the man and the woman, and it touched the ground that they walked on. Everything came under that curse. And since then, there's an old saying, going to hell in a hand basket. Anyone familiar with that phrase? Anyone ever used that phrase?

It's just going to hell in a handbasket. I don't think I'm cursing when I say that. I may be. If I am, forgive me. Since then, it's just like it's that hell in a hand basket with pain and suffering and death just touching every aspect of your life.

And some of you are going, wait, is this the direction the sermon's

going? Because I could find someplace else to be. If we're just going to be Talking about death and destruction and pain. I've got that in my own life. We're not going to be talking just about that because that's not the end of the story, is it?

That's not the end of the story. There's light at the end of this very dark tunnel. And so today we're going to sort of explore the tension between living in this place where yes, creation, humanity is living under this, this curse, this, this, the consequences of sin, the slow decay, the slow destruction. But we're also going to be living side by side with hope that this is not the end of the story. So we're in Romans chapter 8.

We've been there for a while. We've been working on some memory verses. There's no memory verse this week. I want to give you a break because the memory verse for next week really ties in with next week and it doesn't really tie in with this week. So we're going to give you a break on the memory verses.

Get you time to catch up on your memory verses, really knock them out. So that when we have the big test day, you guys are going to a it. But if you got your Bibles with you, go ahead and turn to Romans chapter 8. It's in the New Testament so it's towards the left hand side of your Bible. And you kind of whip around in there, you'll come, you'll come across it, it's Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans.

You'll run across it pretty quickly. So go to Romans, Romans chapter 8. If you did not bring a Bible or if you don't have a phone on you with a Bible app, I encourage that as well. We will have the Scriptures up on the, on the screen for us. But I'm going to pray as you're turning, you can watch and pray at the same time.

And we'll dive Into Romans chapter 8. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have not left us here in this place of decay and destruction and death without hope. You are pointing us to something bigger, something greater, something newer and, and more than what we've ever experienced. And so today as we open your word and we talk through what that looks like for us living in this space, in this time. For from the moment we're adopted until that eventual inheritance, we live here in this space.

And how do we live it? Well, well we're gonna learn that in your word. So instruct us in Jesus name. Amen. So last week we finished up in Romans 8 and we finished with this verse, Romans 8, 17 you may remember it if you were in the room.

And Paul writes this. Now, if we are children, then we are heirs. And we're children because we've been adopted by God. Children adopted in Roman times became the inheritors. That's why they were adopted to inherit the family property, the family name, the family obligations.

They were entrusted with this. And Paul says, well, if we're children now, then by default we are heirs. We, we're heirs of our Father God. We're heirs of God. And he says, interestingly enough, we have other heirs.

We are co heirs and we're co heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. It looked fun, didn't it? It's like, whoo hoo, we're gonna get it all. And then we go, wait, what's this about sharing in his sufferings? I did not see that coming at all.

And so we ended with this, that verse, and we talked about it alluding to this span of time between when we are adopted and our adopted Father God says, you're going to receive this inheritance and the time, the span of time that we actually receive that inheritance. And that span includes this season of sharing in his sufferings. Now, how do we share in the sufferings of Jesus? You may have some ideas, some of them that I thought is, you know, know, share being, being persecuted for sharing our faith. We don't live in a place where anyone's going to behead us for sharing our faith, but we might find it uncomfortable or awkward in our place of work.

If people know that we're serious about our faith and sharing our faith, that's a real possibility. So that, that is, it's, it's probably minor persecution, but I would say it's a small P persecution. If we find ourselves in that spot, maybe we're just suffering normal life, normal challenges that test us and that refine us. I don't know if you've got teenagers, but I feel that I daily am tested and hopefully, hopefully not always, but hopefully refined in my character as I'm learning to just manage the tests and challenges that come along with that. Maybe you're suffering because you're making some personal sacrifice for the greater good.

You're giving up. You know, we talked about last this weekend about a guy named Barnabas who in the fourth chapter of Acts, we find out that he's in a community that has some needs. And so Barnabas makes some big personal sacrifices. He sells some real estate and he donates the proceeds his inheritance, his livelihood, his retirement plan to the community that he's part of to help them. He made some personal sacrifices.

In a sense, he is suffering as well. But maybe if it's just bearing one another's burdens. If someone shares something going on in their life with you, you say, I'm going to pray for you. And now in taking on their concerns in prayer, you're sort of sharing in the sufferings of Jesus, who bore our concerns as well. So these are all ways we share in the suffering of Christ.

Rob Muncie is leading a 9, 9830 class in the back room over there.

Last week I was able to be part of it. And we were talking about Philippians chapter one, where Paul talks about his suffering. And if you know the story of Paul, especially in chapter one, he tells you a little bit about what he's going through. He's been put under house arrest, he's in chains.

Maybe not literal chains, but he's tied down to one place and he's under 24, seven guard by these, by the royal guards, so that he doesn't go anywhere. He's got his friends, fellow Christians, who are using this opportunity of Paul's challenges and persecutions to lay claim to the fact that maybe God isn't as happy with Paul as Paul seems to think God is. Because if God was really happy with him, he wouldn't be going through all this hard, hard stuff. So he's got, he's got chains, he's got critics, and then he's living under the real possibility that he's not going to come out of this alive. And so death is always at the back of his mind.

I might die for my faith. But here in Romans chapter 8, look at verse 18 where it says this. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. That promised glory that he's talking about is part of our inheritance that was promised last week. This, this glory that we're looking forward to is part of what God has promised to us.

And Paul goes on to say, it's not just us, it's not just you and I who are going to be receiving this beautiful inheritance. We're not the only beneficiaries of this inheritance. The look at verse 19. It says, for the creation, everything around us. Creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed, for God's final inheritance to be laid out in front of us.

Take this, it is yours. Now, verse 20. For the creation was subjected to frustration what an interesting phrase there. Not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it. What will?

Whose will? Who subjected it? Whose will was this? Was this God's will that creation be subjected to this curse? It was Adam's will.

Adam's the one that decided to sin. Adam's the one that said, I'm going to defy God and do my own thing. And because of Adam's sin, creation became subjected to this curse as well. But notice, so if you got your Bibles open and you got a pencil or pen in your hand. In hand, here's what I want you to underline.

So verse 20. For the creation was subjected to frustration not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it. In hope. Now, if you got a pencil, that's where you underline in hope. If you don't have a pencil, I just want you to turn to your neighbor right now and say, in hope.

Go. That was the quietest, most subdued in hope. Let's say it like we're really hopeful. Okay? 1, 2, 3.

In hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God, that they'll be brought into this glorious inheritance as well. Verse 22. We know that the whole creation has been groaning, as in the pains of childbirth, right up to the present time. Now, this is a callback, of course, to the Garden of Eden, when everything was perfect. And Paul reminds us that the earth is now subject to frustration, meaning it's just not working the way it was supposed to work.

It's not. It's not the way God designed it to be. But again, it's experiencing this futility in hope, in hope. Creation is. Is experiencing frustration, is subject to frustration in hope.

And this hope is pointing to creation's beautiful future. You see, not just you and I, it's not just us that have this glorious inheritance, creation itself, who have been suffering alongside of us because of our own disobedience. Creation's been suffering alongside with us. They are also. Creation itself is also looking forward to this inheritance.

Meaning it's not all going to hell in a handbasket. Is that good news or what? It's not going to hell in a hand basket. If you thought this week, watching the news or hearing something play out, oh, my word. Oh my word, we're doomed.

This is it. This is the last. This is it. We might as well just give up. Jesus says, shut up.

That's a lie. I rebuke You. No, it's not all going to hell in a handbasket. God has a glorious plan that he's. That he's playing out.

And these hope, these groans. Maybe you made that sound this week when you're watching.

You know people like that, don't you? Brian? Is that you when you're watching the news?

Romans 8:22 says, we know that the whole creation's been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until the present time. These are not death pains. Like, no, these are like, I've never given birth and I hope never to. But I'm telling you, this is what this is the picture that Paul's presenting. This is someone giving birth.

Something new and amazing is being, is playing out, is coming forth out of all of this season. These are labor pains that are leading to new life. The garden of Eden may be long gone, but something better is coming. Amen. Amen.

Amen. This is the promise of a new heaven and a new earth. Now, this promise goes way back, clear back to Isaiah. Isaiah, chapter 65. Here's what Isaiah writes.

Here's what God has revealed to me. And here's what God says to tell you. I will create new heavens and a new earth. That's verse 17. In verse 19, we're the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard no more.

Verse 20. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days. Have any of you lost children in infancy? Have any of you had miscarriages? That's over in this new heaven, new earth, or an old man who does not live out his years.

Someone cut down in the prime of life. And you're like, what? Why? Says not in the new heaven, new earth says, my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. How many of you guys just love what you do?

You just can't wait to get to work. You just can't wait to get your nose back on that grindstone. You love it. You just love it. Well, Jesus says, in new heaven, new earth, yeah, you will.

You'll be doing exactly what God designed you to do, and you will love it. And then look at this. The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like an ox, and the dust will be the serpent's food. This is beautiful picture of the natural world just living in harmony again rather than at odds with each other.

That's Isaiah revelation, which most of us think about when we think about this new heaven, new earth. Revelation 21 says, there's no more death, there's no more Disease, no more natural desire, disasters. There's perfect fellowship with God. The dwelling place of God will be with man. A callback to when God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening.

That's going to be our relationship with our Father. Not some distant, faraway relationship, but a right here and now relationship. Isaiah talks about this new kingdom, new heaven, new earth being fertile and flourishing, where deserts bloom, where there will be peace between the species. The wolf and the lamb will lie down together. We'll have renewed bodies, Corinthians tells us, suited for a renewed world.

I tell you, 58 years old. How many of you guys get up in the morning? Now, I'm looking at those over the age of 40 that you jump out of bed with the same energy and freedom from pain and discomfort that you did when you were 18. Anyone? We were talking.

I had that song, forever young. I want to be forever young. And we

were on the way to work this to church this morning. Work on the way to church this morning, thankfully. I love my nose to the grindstone here.

We're on the way. And I said, boys, would you like to be forever young? And Mason's like, no, no, no. I want to get old so I can get a car and I can do all the stuff. And then they were all talking about it, and Robert's like, I want to be forever 18, where I'm old enough to drive and do my stuff, but I still look good.

Yeah, I get it, I get it, I get it. I remember. I remember, too. And I remember thinking, oh, I wish I was better looking. I look back now and go, oh, my word, I was a stud.

What was I thinking? I mean, this is. This is the place. So we'll have renewed bodies suited for this renewed world. And Peter says it's a place where righteousness rules.

And Revelation says the same thing. Revelation 21:27 says this. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. And we will rule and reign there with Christ. That's a wonderful inheritance.

But in the meantime, we suffer with Christ. So how do we do that in this world that still sort of is experiencing the decay? Well, one, we just live with eager expectation. And when you're tempted to go, go, ooh, something good's coming. Growing that way.

Instead of that, oh, the world's going to hell in a hazmat. Because the world is not.

Okay, we'll try it again. Later, see if we can pick it up again there. There's a new heaven, a new earth, a new you and me coming. We live with eager expectation, but we take care of what we have. I don't know.

It was earlier this summer, and I don't know what even the context was, but we get out of the car, we park in front of the house. We get out of the car, and I look up and I see the house and faded shutters and the tuck pointing needs to happen. And I think the shrubs were still trying to come in. And like boys, someday all this will be yours. And I think it was Mason who looked at it.

He goes, I just want the minivan.

I get it, I get it, I get it, I get it. There's scuffs on the walls. There's stains on the carpet. The linoleum in the kitchen is sort of peeling at the seams. The world, this house is not new and shiny, but we don't just let it decay and fall around, fall down around our

heads, do we?

We take care of things. Someday we'll. We'll get the carpets replaced. Someday the flooring will be refinished. Someday we'll give everything a fresh coat of paint.

Someday I'll have that lush and perfect lawn that I want in the back of my deepest heart of hearts. But today we vacuum, we mop, we clean the walls, we repair the holes, we mow the grass. Someday all this will be ours in its glorified state. But in the meantime, we don't treat it like trash. We take care of it.

We learn how to take care of these small things so that we are prepared to take care of the greater and the more glorious. All right. We take care of what we've got, and we keep an eternal perspective. Remember Paul back there in his chains in his guarded home prison where he couldn't go out and preach? The guards that were placed around Paul were intended to keep him from leaving his home and going into the marketplace and sharing the gospel and starting new churches.

That's why they were there, to keep him from doing what God called him to do. But Paul says, I want you to know that that's not stopped. The purposes of God. I may not be in the marketplace, but here's what happens. As I share my testimony, as I live my testimony out in front of these guards.

They take the story of Jesus from my little apartment back to the palace, and the gospel is growing and being spread there in the halls of that palace. I could never go there myself, but look, God's providing a way to get it where I could never take it. And how about those critics of his, his friends, his friends who had very low opinions of him but still preached? Paul says, I don't care. I don't care what they think about me.

Here's the beautiful thing, he says. The gospel is being preached. It's not about me, it's about Jesus. And the gospel is being preached. And even when facing death, Paul rejoices knowing that whether he lives or dies, it's a win win for him to live as Christ, to die is gain.

So this eternal perspective is how we live right now. In the middle of things not being great just yet, Paul says all the tough stuff, it's working good for the glory of God and it's also working good for us. In Romans chapter five, we passed it several weeks ago. But In Romans chapter 5, verse 3 and 5, Paul says, Listen, Suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope. This is what parents do with their kids all the time.

They teach them things so that when they're older they've got the skills and the resources and the attitude to face life with, with what

they need. This is what God for our Father does for us. So you talk to Abraham, you talk to Joseph, you talk to Job, you talk to Paul. All of them will tell you that the, the perseverance gained through trials purifies our faith and builds a deeper trust in God's faithfulness. That's, that's why they're there.

So we keep our eyes on Jesus in the middle of this world and we keep an internal perspective and we engage with the world. We don't retreat from it. When I was a kid, maybe some of you who grew up in the 70s and 80s, when I was a kid, we only did Christian stuff with other Christians and not any Christians. Our type of Christians. Anyone go, yeah, I remember those days.

I remember that. So we were Pentecostal. Did we hang out with the Presbyterians? They weren't even saved, for crying out loud. We weren't going to hang out with them.

The Baptists. Oh, they had a form of godliness, but they weren't really godly. No, we didn't hang out with them because we thought one, we were the only ones. And we thought if we hung out with them, let alone the world out there in the bowling alleys and in the bars, no, our pure faith would be so contaminated. We would be contaminated by that.

We had to remain separate, come out from among them. That was our favorite verse. So we wouldn't engage with the world. But that is not the picture Jesus gives, is it? Oh, my word.

What did they accuse him of? He hangs around with these publicans, these sinners. He's got friends who are alcoholics. Well, that can't be right. Jesus engages with the world.

He mixed it up with the unredeemed.

Jesus went to the places that religious people avoided. This is our challenge today. If we want to be the best church for Bedford, we can't be people who isolate. We can't be people who segregate ourselves into our own little circle, us four and no more. We have to be people who get out there.

Here's what's coming up. How many of you guys have been part of Trunk or Treat in the past? You made a. You made a. You brought candy.

You've decorated a trunk. We usually do it right out here in our parking lot, and cars line up. Everyone has a great time. I know people in the community who bring their kids every year that said, oh, you guys have the best Trunk or Treat because you actually engage with us. Like, you have games the kids play to get candy.

You talk to us. It is a fun, fun experience. We do Trunk or Treat

really, really, really well here. We've been doing it great. Heather, how many years have we done Trunk or treat here?

For 10. Yeah, 10 years we've been doing it here. It's been amazing. But we made them come to us.

It's easy. We've done it enough that we know how to pull it off without much effort. But less than a mile away in downtown Bedford, right there on the square, there are going to be hundreds of little kids. Susan, do you recall how many kids were there last year?

There was a lot. It was a lot. And it was raining. Okay, well, let's just stick with. It's a lot.

It was a lot.

Rain did not keep them away. That's what you're saying. Yeah, that's true. A lot. A lot.

A lot of kids, moms and dads and little boys and little girls are going to be showing up on the Bedford square for something called Scare around the Square. Have you heard of it? Okay, that's what's going to happen the same night we're doing our thing. So here's what we decided to do. As Ariel said in the Little Mermaid, I want to be where the people are.

I want to. You know, Jesus says that, too. I want you to be where the people are. And so we have been given a beautiful spot on the west side of the square called Harp. Commons.

Some of you have been there. And instead of opening up our trunks, we're going to set up some pop up tents. You pass one on your way in here and we're going to decorate the time out of them. We're going to make them incredible. We're going to fill them up with people who love Jesus, who can play some little games with these kids and hand out some candy to them and Bob Kern.

Bob, where you at? There you are. Bob's got some of his buddies and they're gonna play some fun music. I'm hoping 90% of it is just corny old timey music and Halloween songs. The Monster Mash.

Oh, the Monster Mash. Okay, so Bob's gonna be there with some fun music. So someone's going to be serving up popcorn and hot dogs. I don't know, maybe it's you. Bode's going to have his robotics team there with their little robots delivering candy to kids.

The kids love it. Darren Swango's got this mobile escape room that he's going to bring and set up and you can do the escape room and win a prize. Mike Ferry, I found out two weeks ago, rides a unicycle. Mike's a big guy, so I want to see him ride a unicycle. And so I think

I've got him convinced to bring his unicycle down and be riding the unicycle around, creating just the right amount of chaos.

That's what I'm looking for. But there are plenty of places to serve. I want this to be an all in for us. If you consider yourself a Sherwood Oakrer, I want this to be an all in ways that you can help. One that's a busy area.

We've got a state highway that goes on the north and the south side of that square. Big trucks, lots of traffic, potential for trauma. So we need some guys. Specifically, I'm calling out the guys. We need guys to act as crossing guards.

I think we need about 12,3 for each location to make sure that is fully manned as kids are walking around the square making sure that no one gets hurt. We'll give you a little stop sign. We'll give you a little orange vest to wear so that no one runs you down. But guys, we need you to step up and, and say, I can be a crossing guard. We need folks who can keep an eye on trash because what do we let the world do around us?

We don't let it fall apart. We leave the world better than we found it. And we're going to leave the square better than we found it. So we need people just working the commons, working the sides, just with a little, little picker upper and a trash bag, making sure that little candy wrappers nothing. The square is cleaner than it's been for years.

We want this place to look great and we need you. We need you to donate candy, to decorate a tent, to dress up in something fun, not too scary. Something fun and mostly to show up ready to smile and help where there's a need. Again, this is an all in. We do this a couple times a year where we want everyone engaged at some level with this because with one voice we can really be the best church for, for our community.

Creation is groaning all around us, but that groaning is an indication that God is working. God is working all around us and he's calling us to join him in that work. So start thinking right now what fun and crazy ways you can make a TED or treat. A fun and refreshing experience for our little community. Now we're going to share in communion here right now.

So if you're helping with that, you can go ahead and go to the back and get ready because here's communion is really a reminder that Jesus wasn't afraid to mix it up. He didn't isolate, he didn't segregate. He wasn't afraid of spiritual contamination. He didn't come to condemn the world around him. He came to save the world around him.

He gave his life on the old rugged cross to reverse the curse, to flip

the script and set you and me on this, in this path and not just us, but this whole world on a path towards ultimate redemption and ultimate renewal. Ephesians says this. He says God's goal through Christ is to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ, under His lordship. The Bible talks about this as reconciliation. When, when it's complete, it's going to be better, so much better than the Garden of Eden ever thought about being.

And on the cross, Jesus has already paid the price for this to become reality. Every principality, every power opposed to God's plan for this world and for us been defeated at the cross. So we've got, we got, we got an open, we got an open path in front of us. Jesus has not given up on the world, so why should we? Instead, we want to be the very best church for the place God has put us.

So today, as we share in this time of communion, this is an opportunity to remember that the cup is this, is this picture of a promise or a commitment God has made a covenant is the Bible word for this. He has made to us his adopted children. He says what is mine will someday all be yours. And the bread reminds us that just as Jesus physically entered into the brokenness of the world, he calls us to physically enter into the brokenness of the world. Will you go?

Heavenly Father, today as we share in this time of communion, we are so thankful that you've called us sons of daughters. You've adopted us through the work of Jesus on the cross and at its heart. This is what this moment is, a callback to give thanks and rejoice in the fact that we are now sons and daughters of God if we've accepted him and claimed the salvation that he offers us freely. Lord, meet us in this moment and call us to the next step of engaging with the world. A world that is groaning under the labor pains of the good things you are doing.

I pray this in Jesus name, Amen.

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