

Sermon followed by Service

November 5, 2021

Romans 8:18-23

You're waiting. You're waiting for the Big Reveal, God's Big Reveal. It won't be like the *Wizard of Oz*. You follow the Yellow Brick Road; you face the wicked witch and the flying monkeys; you finally reach the Emerald City, only to pull back the curtain and find a fake and a fraud. It won't be like the *Price is Right*. You dress up like a clown, get all excited, wait with bated breath, and then the curtain opens to a can of Spam. It won't be like some flipping remodeling show. They open the door; you take off your blind-fold; you see the "big reveal," and you wonder: "What in the world were they thinking?" God's Big Reveal, the Big Reveal we're waiting for won't be like that. On the Last Day, we won't feel manipulated, disappointed; when the curtain is pulled back, we won't groan. We'll be No, not yet.

First, we groan. And not just us. All creation all around us groans. Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, volcanoes. After this summer, burnt lawns, dying trees; now frozen flowers. Watch that show about the twig-eater, the moose in Yellowstone, the penguins in the Antarctic, your pet at home - and sooner or later you see pain, fear, death. Listen to the news - climate change, global warming, pollution. Whatever side of the debate you're on, take away the politics, and there's no arguing this - we live in a world of death, destruction, decay. And even if somehow, some stone-cold hearts don't groan, the Apostle Paul says that creation, even the stones around us, do groan in pain.

In what other ways (perhaps Bible passages) does the Holy Spirit anthropomorphize (humanize) creation? What does that mean for how the Spirit wants us to see creation?

And it's not just creation groaning, is it? A couple weeks ago, in our sermon, I had us groaning. This world has us groaning, groaning with death and dying, groaning with evil in us and around us, groaning in our hurt and heartache. You know what has you groaning, don't you?

So why the groaning? Creation around us isn't groaning because it wants to groan. And we aren't groaning because we want to groan. Oh, I imagine we all do things we know will make us groan. But go back to its first cause, we aren't groaning because we want to groan. Creation is groaning because God has subjected it to groaning. And we are groaning because God has subjected us to groaning. Not because God has some love of pain, some need to hear people

groan. No, we go back to the beginning, the Garden of Eden, to a world with no groaning, no hurt or heartache. Until Satan thought he knew better than God, and tempted Eve, and Adam with her to think they knew better than God. Then when Eve, and Adam with her, rejected God's Word, God's Truth, God's Way - for their own truth, their own way, for Satan's truth, Satan's way. That's when God subjected this world to frustration, to destruction, to death and decay. Why? To give us a taste of the consequences of going without God and against God, to give us a taste of God's judgment. A taste of what we would have coming if we were to continue to go without God and against God. That's right, I said "a taste." No matter what some people might think, the groaning we go through in this life isn't hell; it's only a taste of hell.

What if God didn't subject creation and sinful humanity to frustration, destruction, decay? (We might think: "This is as _____.")

Even though that taste of hell is only a taste, that taste still has us groaning, doesn't it? But our groaning doesn't have to be a hopeless groaning, just like creation's groaning isn't a hopeless groaning. Why?

Well, why has God subjected creation to destruction and groaning? In our first lesson, we heard Paul say: "**The wrath of God is now being revealed**" against this world for going against him. But now in chapter 8, Paul isn't looking to convict and condemn us. We've already cried out: "**What a wretch I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?!**" We've already heard Paul's answer: "**There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.**" So Paul doesn't point us *back* to our sin as the reason for our groaning with the world. Paul doesn't say: "God subjected the world to destruction and decay *in anger*." No, Paul points us *ahead* and says: "God subjected the world to destruction and decay *in hope*." Remember hope isn't just a wish. Hope holds the future reality God has for us and his world. So what is Paul saying? God subjected his creation to frustration to give his creation a better existence than just being a slave colony for sinners. God subjected his creation to frustration to give his creation a better future to look forward to.

If God wants - and has - a better for his stuff, what do you think wants and has for his children?

And we get to look forward! You have the “first-fruits of the Spirit.” In baptism, in the Gospel Good News of Jesus, God has given you his Holy Spirit as his down-payment, his deposit and guarantee that he has something more for you.

What is that something more? What do we get to look forward to? What is all creation - standing up on tippy-toes - looking forward to? God’s Big Reveal.

On the Last Day, when God turns the page ... on the Last Day, when God pulls back the curtain ... what will we see? Some say that with the fires of Judgment Day, creation will be gone, replaced by the glory of heaven. That doesn’t give creation much to look forward to, does it? Doesn’t fit the hope Paul talks about. Instead, Paul gives this hope - on the Last Day, when God turns the page, on the last Day, when God pulls back the curtain, on that Last Day, after the fires of Judgment Day do their purifying work, we and all creation will see creation re-done with the glory of heaven. Creation the way God meant it to be - no death, no danger, no decay - life just the way it’s supposed to be. I wish I could tell you more, but Paul has other things to tell us.

On the Last Day, when God turns the page ... on the Last Day, when God pulls back the curtain, Paul tells us, God will reveal the sons of God, the children of God, for us and all creation to see. In the meantime, Paul says, we wait for our adoption into the family of God and the redemption of our bodies.

That raises some questions, doesn’t it? What does it mean that the sons, the children of God, will be revealed? What does Paul mean that we are waiting for our adoption and the redemption of our bodies? I thought we were already adopted, already redeemed; already adopted in baptism, already redeemed by the holy, precious blood of Jesus.

And that’s true! You are; we are. With his death on the cross, Jesus has redeemed you, forgiven you, delivered you for life with God - done deal. In your baptism, our Father who art in heaven has adopted you into his family - done deal. But it doesn’t always look that way or feel that way, does it? We don’t always look, feel, or act like we’re adopted and redeemed. On the one hand, we might have so much trouble in our lives, so much hurt and heartache, that we might wonder if God really sees us as his. On the other hand, Christians don’t always sound like Christians, look like Christians, act like Christians, do they? Sometimes with what we do, we have people around us wondering if we’re really Christian;

sometimes with what we do, we might have ourselves wondering if we're really Christian.

But on the Last Day, when God turns the page ... on the Last Day, when God pulls back the curtain ... on the Last Day, in God's Great Reveal, what will we see? Things will be different! We'll see heaven; we'll see creation re-done with the glory of heaven. We'll see Father and Son with arms open wide, the Spirit with a great big smile holding open the door to heaven - "Welcome home! Our home is your home. Here is where you belong." We'll see the angels serving God and his family. We'll see the saints, God's family; and we'll see ourselves with them - perfect, blameless, all living life with God and each other the way life is supposed to be.

What do you look forward to seeing?

What do you look forward to experiencing in heaven?

On that Day and forever after, we won't wonder, question, or doubt anymore. On that Day and forever after, we won't have reason to groan anymore. On that Day and forever after, we'll live and experience our adoption into God's family ... we'll live and experience the redemption of our bodies ... in a whole new way. On that Day and forever after, everything in our lives will look, sound, feel, and act just like it's supposed to for people who are the children of God. On that Day and forever after, we will look, sound, feel, and act just like we're supposed to as the children of God. Life the way it's supposed to be. Love the way it's supposed to be. Wonderful the way it's supposed to be.

That's what we get to look forward to; that's what all of creation is looking forward to. Amen.

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DIVINE SERVICE II

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we see the signs of changing seasons; in our bones we feel the changing seasons of life. In the changing seasons (and their accompanying groans), we have a fore-taste of the end of life in this world. And in our pains, we have just a small taste of the coming judgment.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we accept the hard truth of judgment, and eagerly look forward to the hope (the future reality) of redemption and relief in Jesus, life forever in heaven!

OPENING HYMN

“Great God, What Do I See and Hear”

Hymn 208

Great God, what do I see and hear? The end of things created;
The judge of mankind shall appear On clouds of glory seated.
The trumpet sounds; the graves restore
The dead which they contained before:
Prepare, my soul, to meet him!

The dead in Christ shall first arise At that last trumpet’s sounding,
Caught up to meet him in the skies, With joy their Lord surrounding.
No gloomy fears their souls dismay; His presence sheds eternal day
On those prepared to meet him.

But sinners filled with guilty fears Behold his wrath prevailing,
For they shall rise and find their tears And sighs are unavailing;
The day of grace is past and gone; They trembling stand before his throne,
All unprepared to meet him.

O Christ, you died, and yet you live; To me account your merit,
My pardon seal, my sins forgive, And cleanse me by your Spirit.
Beneath your cross I view the day When heav’n and earth shall pass away,
And thus prepare to meet you.

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY (*Kyrie*)

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God Almighty, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit that we may always look forward to the end of this present evil age and to the day of your righteous judgment. Keep us steadfast in true and living faith and present us at last holy and blameless before you; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST LESSON

Romans 1:18, 28-32; 2:5-10, 16

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them ...

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will give to each person according to what he has done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

PSALM 143 (CW)

Refrain



Lord, let your mer-cy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Psalm tone



O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for `mercy;*
in your faithfulness and righteousness come to `my relief.

Do not bring your servant into `judgment,*
for no one living is righteous be`fore you.

My spirit grows faint with`in me;*
my heart within me `is dismayed. *Refrain*

Answer me quick`ly O LORD;*
do not hide your `face from me.

Let the morning bring me word of your un`failing love, *
for I have put my `trust in you.

Teach me to do your will, for you `are my God;*
may your good Spirit lead me on `level ground.

Glory be to the Father and `to the Son*
and to the Holy `Spirit,
as it was in the be`ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. `Amen. *Refrain*

SECOND LESSON

Romans 8:18-24a

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies....

VERSE OF THE DAY

Alleluia. Watch therefore, for you do not know
on what day your Lord is coming. Alleluia.
(Matthew 24:42)

GOSPEL LESSON

John 5:24-30

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

HYMN

"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less"

Hymn 382

My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare to make no other claim But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, his covenant and blood Support me in the raging flood;
When ev'ry earthly prop gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.

When he shall come with trumpet sound, Oh, may I then in him be found,
Clothed in his righteousness alone, Faultless to stand before his throne.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.

SERMON

Romans 8

HYMN

"Jesus, Your Blood and Righteousness"

Hymn 376

Jesus, your blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed, With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in that great day-- Who can a word against me say?
Fully through you absolved I am From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

Lord, I believe your precious blood, Which at the very throne of God
Forever will for sinners plead, For me -- e'en for my soul -- was shed.

Lord, I believe were sinners more Than sands upon the ocean shore,
You have for all a ransom paid, For all a full atonement made.

When from the dust of death I rise To claim my mansion in the skies,
E'en then this shall be all my plea: Jesus has lived and died for me.

Jesus, be worshiped endlessly! Your boundless mercy has for me,
For me and all your hands have made, An everlasting ransom paid.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Individually packaged wafers are gluten-free.)

(Before and after Communion prayers are found in *Christian Worship*, page 11.)

M: The Lord be with you.

C: **(Spoken) And also with you.**

M: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them up unto the Lord.**

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

C: **It is good and right so to do.**

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who rose from the dead in glorious triumph to bring forgiveness to the world and everlasting life to all who believe.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **Amen.**

LAMB OF GOD

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sin of the world;
grant us your peace. A - men.

DISTRIBUTION

CLOSING PRAYER

M: We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet that you have given us to eat and to drink in this sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“Lord, You I Love with All My Heart”

Hymn 434 vs. 3

Lord, let at last your angels come; To Abram’s bosom bear me home
That I may die unfearing. And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep Until your reappearing.
And then from death awaken me That my own eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, your glorious face, My Savior and my Fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, My prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise you without end.

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New Mission News

Five home mission congregations are enjoying new or renovated worship spaces.

- **Beautiful Savior, Fayetteville, N.C.** dedicated its new worship space, which was built with the help of Builders For Christ. This congregation serves a large military population.
- **Illumine, Rock Hills, S.C.** began worshiping in their “old” worship space and then caravanned to their new building to finish a special “Moving Day Worship Service.”
- **Risen Savior, Mansfield, Ohio**, dedicated a new space on Oct. 10. In June, the congregation hosted a Praise and Proclaim outreach seminar, which led to 15 people knocking on 300 doors and making more than 50 gospel presentations. Since then, Risen Savior’s members have continued to reach out to their neighbors by canvassing local neighbors one Saturday each month.
- **Amazing Grace, South Beloit, Ill.** held a dedication service for its new building on Oct. 31. This congregation has a pumpkin patch on its church property and each year it offers community members the opportunity to pick a free pumpkin in exchange for donations for a local food pantry.
- **Shepherd of the Lakes, Linden, Mich.** dedicated its new church.

WELS Church Extension Fund, Inc., (CEF) helped these congregations along the way by providing financing through loans and grants for their ministry facilities. In fiscal year 2020–21, WELS CEF approved \$15.4 million in new loans and \$1.98 million in new grants to congregations. In addition, it provided grants of \$1.06 million and \$.6 million to the Board for Home Missions. Visit wels.net/cef to learn more about WELS Church Extension Fund. **WELS CEF offers CD rates that beat the rates my bank offers. - KR.**