

Sunday, November 7, 2021  
All Saints Sunday  
Pastor Matt Duerr

### The Why of it All...That I May be!

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. Have you noticed that we are living in a world that is desperately, desperately trying to prevent death? In fact, at our recent pastor's conference, I heard an individual kind of make that little quip of; 'why is it we spend so much time praying to keep people out of heaven, instead of praying to get people into heaven?' I think that's a pretty good question, isn't it?

When we do look at the world around us, we do see a world pretty obsessed with car safety. I remember growing up that the first car that I can remember my parents having was a rambler and it didn't have seatbelts in it. Then we did get a car with seatbelts, it was much safer. And well now you get cars with seatbelts and front airbags, side airbags, leg airbags and well autonomous control, and all sorts of stuff to again prevent us from dying in a car wreck. Consider the number of organizations, groups, universities that are dedicating themselves to eradicating cancer. How about all of the companies, businesses, groups that are really pushing healthy habits such as healthy eating, healthy exercising, and healthy minds? Or how about just even focusing on Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson vaccines to prevent us from getting the COVID?

Our obsession with this, and don't get me wrong, I'm not saying it's really a bad obsession. But our obsession with trying to prevent death has led to us, in this digital age, to have to go back to ten-digit dialing in the 209 area code. Why? To make room for the three-digit suicide prevention hotline. Why do we need a suicide prevention hotline? Well, the reality is suicides have grown faster than probably the COVID in terms of causing deaths. Suicide deaths are skyrocketing. and it is a fact, the studies show that if a person who is contemplating suicide, has someone to call, it greatly reduces the chance that they will follow through on the suicide. Why would that be? If you were to Google the

reasons for suicide, I think that you would find the reason. Three words pop up: isolation, hopelessness, alone. People who are alone, feel isolated, feel there is no one there that cares, they become hopeless and they take their lives. But if they call someone, they don't feel alone. The premise behind the suicide prevention hotline is actually scriptural. It comes from the Bible. God said, "it is not good for man to be alone."

That is a key concept and the key foundation of the Christian faith, it is relationships. And that's what this sermon series; starting today and go all the way up to and including the first Sunday of Advent is all about: relationships and answering the question why? The why of it all. Why, for instance, did God create the world and us? Well, the first part is easy, why did God create the world? He was creating a home for us to live in, and we still live in that home. I guess the bigger question is why did He create us? That is a little more challenging, but it brings us to focus on relationships. It is the very nature of God as we saw in the last sermon series; Father, Son, Holy Spirit in a relationship with each other and again, total unity in purpose. God wanted relationships; God wanted children. I want you to this consider this; we are created in the image of God, we get married, what do we want? We want children. It's the nature of God coming out through us. God created children because He wanted someone to love and He wanted someone to love Him, to be with Him. So, He created a Kingdom of people in relationship with Him.

Genesis 1:26-27 "And He created us in His image, why? So we can understand Him. but when He created us in His own image, that was a monumental change right there. Up to that point in time in creation, the first five and a half days, He had created everything by speaking or using His word. But when it came to us, He used His own hands and He formed us. He formed Adam out of the ground. And then He breathed into Adam His own breath. Can you imagine the animals that day, that you know had all been created, looking around and 'hey, wow, God just spoke?' We're here and look at all of this pretty neat looking stuff.' 'Oh what's He doing over there? He's making something personally. Look at that, He's performing mouth to mouth resuscitation; before people in the 20th century would figure out how to do that. What is that? Wow, look at that, it's alive!' Yeah, we're different! He created us with His own hands, gave us His own breath, and He gave us freedom. Freedom to be able to choose

who or what we would love; probably the most difficult decision God had ever made. But He made it because relationships are not forced, relationships are free. And what a beautiful vision we have here, the King and His people together in an earthly Kingdom. And God looked at the creation and said, it is good. But when He looked at Adam, He said, 'it is not good for man to be alone.' And so, He finished creation in His image, in relationship, husband and wife for eternity, and understand that if Adam and Eve had not sinned, they would still be in the garden of Eden. They would not have aged at all, and they would still be husband and wife.

But it introduces us to another key theme in scripture; people living with people, and how important that relationship is. Some people question why is the book of Ruth in the Bible? It's got a beautiful message about relationships. Ruth the Moabitess living with her mother-in-law Naomi whose husband and her two sons including Ruth's husband have died. What was Naomi doing? She was going back to her homeland, back to her people, back to a relationship she was familiar with. And what did Ruth the Moabitess say? "Where you go, I will go. Where you lodge, I will lodge, your people will be my people. Your God will be my God." It's that leaving the old behind and stepping into a new relationship. That's what Ruth is all about. Not to mention, that also becomes a part of the lineage of Jesus Christ.

Or consider queen Esther. Mordecai comes to her and says, 'who knows but that you were born for such a time as this?' What time was it? Her husband the king was going to wipe out the Hebrew people. Mordecai was calling on her to go and step in on their behalf and save them save the relationships. And she did.

In fact, when it comes to relationships, Jesus Himself speaks about the importance of relationships. When we go to mark 10:6-9 it is Jesus Himself who points out that God created us male and female. So that the two might become one flesh. And what then God has joined together, man should not separate because it is a good relationship.

But I want you now to consider again, God created us. God created us a little different than the other animals. Because if we take our hands

and we put our hands out like this, which is not what your animal kingdom can do. Notice what He also did, He formed us in the image of a cross; yes, a foreshadowing of what was to come. His Son would go to that cross to re-establish the relationship. But I'd like you to think about the other image of the cross, it is one that is open, to embrace and hold. And when Jesus did go to that cross, He took our sins and He embraced them. He didn't let Him go. He took our sins on Himself. He died, He took those sins in the grave, and on Easter morning, when He walked out of that grave, He left our sins behind; and He comes out with His arms wide open to us. This is the Kingdom that God created. A creation of relationships. God in a perfect world, where perfect people lived in harmony, in relationship with him and with each other. That is why God hates sin because sin destroyed their relationship. And that is what God lost, He lost what he loved.

At that point in time, He had a choice on what to do. One He could just overlook our sin. Consider Portland, Minneapolis, Chicago, Seattle even livable, lovable, Lodi. When you overlook sin what happens? Well, we just read this past week in the Lodi news Sentinel that shoplifting is just going off the charts in our city. Why? Well because we're overlooking it. Unless their stealing over \$1000, there's not going to be prosecution so they just steal it will. They know they can do it. It's not worth it for the stores to put themselves at risk trying stop the person because well, they might get sued if the person gets hurt. So, overlooking sin doesn't work. A second one is a very viable option, but we would hate it. It is to punish the sin. It says 'the wages of sin is death.' God could have right at that time smote Adam and Eve and ended everything. But we wouldn't be here then. So, it's kind of good He didn't take that option.

The third option is to forgive. And that's the option that God chose. Which takes us back to Jesus and the cross. Who really paid the price? The offender or the offended? It's the offended who paid the price. There is always a cost to forgiveness, and that cost is always by the person who has been offended. Its why God says, "I will remember their sin no more." It's not that we won't remember our sins, no He is the one who's taking that on Himself. It's a major part of reconciliation and restoration but we'll talk about those next week. Understand, it's the offended that pays the price.

And that's what sets Christianity then again apart from all other religions. Christianity is the only religion where the God at the center of it wants a relationship. He wants something with us, not from us. And knowing and teaching the *why* we are saved, *why* we were created, teaching the why of all of it, is the foundation for the how. It doesn't do any good to teach the how, if we don't teach the *why*. What is the real why? Just breaking it down, why did God create the world and us, and why did He send His son? Martin Luther got it right in his explanation to the second article of the Apostles creed. Why did Jesus do this? I quote, "so that I may be His own." That's the core message of the Bible. It's why we see an emphasis on that relationship throughout Bible. It's what God wants. He wants to be *with us*.

Consider the Old Testament reading in Exodus 29:44 "I will dwell with them." Consider our Gospel this morning, John 1:14; "The Word became flesh and dwelt with us." And consider where we're headed; Revelation 21:3 the dwelling place of God is with men. What happens when His dwelling place is with us? He will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more mourning, grief. There'll be no more crying, no more pain, no more sun, which is symbolic of the heat of the day, beating down and drying you out. Oh, no that's not going to happen anymore because we will be living in the glory of God and His glory will light where we're at. And that's a gentle light. There will be no more night. Night represents evil. Consider your vampire movies, and you know your zombie apocalypse stuff. Yeah, they always are happening at night. Night is scary because it's evil. There will be no more uncleanness, in other words, there will be no more sin. And lastly, there will be no curse. the curse is the curse of sin, death. No more. There is life with God.

And there comes the challenge for today and dare I say for the rest of our lives; to look at life through a new lens. A lens that asked the question, what if God wants more than from us? What if what God really wants is to be with us? And not just from, with. And not just with God, but with each other. I'd like you now to consider the tragedy, the real tragedy in Genesis chapter 3. It comes before God confronts Adam and Eve. God was walking in the garden alone. He wanted to be walking with Adam and Eve, but they hid themselves. They withdrew from Him. They

had broken that relationship. I'd like you to consider the tragedy that happens when we decide to walk alone. We decide to walk away from God's word and say 'you know the word is so old fashioned, I'm just don't buy it. I'm not going to walk with that anymore.' Because when we do, we are now walking away from God. We're walking our own way, but we leave God standing there in the garden. "Won't you come back? Please.

We are created. Why? To walk with Him, to walk with each other. So that one day, as we celebrate this All Saints Sunday, we may walk with the Saints before us, the Saints we walk with right now, the Saints who will come after us; but who will all be joined together in relationship with our Lord and Savior. Let us begin that walking *with* Him and *with* each other as we now celebrate Holy Communion. In our Saviors Name, Amen.