



**Saint John United Methodist Church**  
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**Message for February 26, 2023**  
**“Good News: One Man”**  
**Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb**  
**Scripture: Romans 5:12-17**

## **Patient Zero**

You may have heard the term “*patient zero*.” “*Patient zero*” is understood to be that person who is the first to become infected with an illness or a disease in an outbreak. We will probably never know who patient zero was for the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Scripture has long since identified “*patient zero*” when it comes to the pandemic of sin, a pandemic that has infected the world since the beginning of time.

From the very first pages of the Bible, we read about Adam who due to his waywardness was the first to introduce sin into an otherwise perfect world. It has been downhill ever since.

The Apostle Paul writes about that in Romans 5 as he develops a treatise about the problem of sin and its remedy. Of course, we know that remedy to be Jesus Christ. We read about that specifically in Romans 5:12-17. Let’s hear that just now.

## **Romans 5:12-17**

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people, because all sinned—*

*To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.*

*But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!*

## **My Brother, Adam**

I have a brother. His name is Mark. He is a really good guy. He and I favor one another, save for the 20 or 30 pounds he has on me. Don't tell him I mentioned that.

I also have another brother. I am like him, and he is like me. We are one in the same when it comes to bad choices, playing the blame game, willful disobedient, and generally straying from what God wants. My brother, Adam and I are more alike than I would care to admit.

I am thankful, though, that Adam and I have taken divergent paths. I am thankful that Jesus Christ has set me on a path where bad choices, laying blame, constant disobedience, and continually straying from God's will is not as prevalent as it might otherwise be.

## **The One-Man, Adam**

Upon reading scripture, it is clear that Adam introduced sin and death into the world with what he did in the garden.

As we know from scripture, Adam ate the fruit that God had said was off limits. He did this at the urging of Eve and based upon the deception of the wily serpent. The serpent coaxed the two of them into eating the fruit by telling them that if they ate the fruit they would become like God.

Isn't that the way sin is? When we sin, we chose to be the Lord of our lives rather than letting God fill that role.

## **The One-Man, Jesus**

So, if Adam gets us into sin, Jesus gets us out. While one man may have said, "no" to God and set humankind on a downward slide, another man, the one-man, Jesus, said, "yes" to God and put many in the right.

The good news is that in Jesus there is now:

- Obedience instead of disobedience.
- Righteousness instead of sin.
- Victory instead of defeat.
- And life instead of death.

All of this is a matter of choice and demands a response of faith. It calls for the full-on surrender of our lives to Jesus to the place where he is number one and we are not.

All this talk about Adam brings up the notion of original sin, the notion that asserts that we are fatefully flawed right out of the womb. I look at things this way. I am like Adam in that I am human just like him. I am also willful and wayward just like him. In a word, I am sinful just like Adam was.

As Paul puts it in Romans 5:12, *“death came to all people, because all sinned.”* (Romans 5:12)

Paul puts it this way in Romans 3:23, *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23)

We all sin, actually and because of that we are, in fact, sinful, save for the good news that comes our way in Jesus Christ, good news that is ours to accept.

I figure this about original sin. If we are in Christ by consent, then we are in Adam by consent. It all comes down to a matter of choice. Salvation is always available. It is not always accepted.

### **How Much More**

In reading Romans 5:12-17, I am struck by the hopeful word Paul brings.

Romans 5:12-17 is not easy to interpret. There are other parts of Romans that are the same way. Despite that what comes through loud and clear is a message of hope.

Upon reading our passage for today you will notice that Paul uses the phrase, *“how much more”* in Romans 5:15 and 17. The phrase *“how much more”* moves the discussion from a consideration of sin to a wonderful emphasis on the grace and love of God.

In verse 15 we read, *“how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!”* (Romans 5:15) Notice the exclamation point here. Paul is excited to report the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ.

In verse 17 we read, *“how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!”* (Romans 5:17) Again, there is another exclamation point.

We have gained so much more in Christ than what was lost in Adam. This is the very thing Paul wants to get across.

As I have mentioned on other occasions, Paul was a grace man through and through. It was grace that turned Paul’s life around. This one who upon giving his life to Jesus knew it wasn’t the law that was going to save him, but the grace of God offered in Christ. In Christ, Paul came to know that there was no way to attain God’s favor by good works alone.

He sums it up well when he writes in Ephesians 2:8-9, *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from ourselves, it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

The gift of God’s love is not earned but received, and as that gift is received the power of sin is broken and we become new creations.

Hear this: There is enough power available in the grace of God to overcome the power of sin every time. That's the good news of the one man, Jesus, the good news Paul wants to get across and the good news that is ours to receive.

The great song, *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing* shares this about Christ, "*He breaks the power of canceled sin, he sets the prisoner free; his blood can make the foulest clean; his blood availed for me.*"

### **Ashley Dillingham**

With all that in mind, particularly in regard to the great grace that is ours in Jesus Christ, allow me to invite someone who is no stranger to many of you. Ashley Dillingham grew up in this church and is very much a part of the ministry here.

She has a wonderful story to tell of new life and the way Christ is blessing her in a mighty way. Allow me to invite Ashley to come and share that story.