
“A New And Glorious Morn”

ROMANS 8:1-11

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AT A GLANCE

The fact is the world is as weary today as it ever is. As much as I wish I could turn off the weary, I am comforted that Christmas doesn't have to be problem-free for me to rejoice. In fact, Christmas, or really the birth of Christ, is the cause for a weary world to rejoice.

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Wildwood! Turn in your bibles to Romans 8:1-11. I know that last week we left off with Romans 14:13-18 so you might expect that we'd be looking at 14:19-23 this morning. But I thought it would be nice to step out of our normal progression through Romans today for a Christmas message.

I mentioned a few weeks ago on the first week of advent that I sort of regretted not doing a full Christmas series, which would have been four Sunday sermons plus Christmas Eve. That's what I've typically done. I said I had all the Christmas feels with our decorations and Christmas songs and at that moment I wished I was preaching a Christmas sermon.

This week I remembered why I don't really like doing Christmas series. I love to preach them, but I do not like to prepare them. I'm much more comfortable moving to the next passage in scripture than I am creating a topical sermon out of thin air.

On Wednesday evening I texted our elders and asked them to pray for me because I was 'stuck.' I was frustrated and I was spinning my wheels. I was looking at a sermon concept and it just wasn't coming together.

THE TENSION OF THE SEASON

On Thursday morning the Lord heard our prayers and opened the flood gates. And that's when it hit me. I was living the sermon this week. There's a tension that we all feel at Christmas. The tension is that we want so desperately to feel the Christmas feels and to recreate nostalgic moments, which we've mostly romanticized and inflated in our minds, of how Christmas *should* feel.

Or worse, we long for our Christmas season to feel like the movies. Most of us have our favorite movies or we're stuck on the Hallmark channel, and we envision the Christmas season to be this warm and easy and joyful season. The movies depict it so romantically. Even when they include the hardships and stresses, they romanticize the conclusion. Every Christmas movie gets wrapped up with a nice bow and hearty dose of yuletide cheer. What does our Christmas season end up with? Bags of trash and January.

And our hearts long to recreate the nostalgia of the movies in our own lives. Even if only subconsciously. Maybe its just me, but when the decorations go up at the church and in our home, I relish in the lights and I want to soak it all in. And what I really want during this season is to set

aside all the woes of the world. That's where I think the tension comes in. I want the world to be merry and bright and the reality is the world is weary. Its always weary.

War, famine, political strife, natural disasters, and school shootings all proceed as if no one got the memo that it's Christmas. And then there's our own personal issues like relational strain, financial stress, which can be exacerbated this time of year for a lot of people, and health complications, again none of which seem to have gotten the memo that it's Christmas. The short days and long nights don't help our emotional and mental well-being, either.

The fact is, the world is as weary today as it ever is. As much as I wish I could turn off the weary, I am comforted that Christmas doesn't have to be problem-free for me to rejoice. In fact, Christmas, or really the birth of Christ, is the cause for a weary world to rejoice.

DIVINE LIGHT PIERCING THE WEARINESS

We don't need the world to cease being weary to rejoice. We rejoice because in Christ, divine light has broken through the dark night of weariness. *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."* Isaiah 9:2 *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* John 1:5

We rejoice because of the breaking of a new and glorious morn. The birth of Jesus marked a new era in redemptive history and pierced four hundred years of divine silence. It marked the beginning of the fulfillment of the Law and the fulfillment of God's promise to Adam and Eve in the Garden some 4000 years before. And more than that, it established the promise of a still future new and glorious morn, one that will put an end to our weariness forever.

So, while I felt stuck this week, and frustrated that the joy and cheer of the season did not meet me in my office on Wednesday, I rejoice in Christ my Savior and I long for the day when the task of preaching is fulfilled and we celebrate not only Jesus' first coming, but also His second.

When Christmas sermons will unfold before our very eyes every moment of every day. When all the feels we want to feel, and none of the weariness that we do, enrapture us perpetually. Won't that be a new and glorious morn?!

This morning, I want to do something a little different in our study of God's Word. I typically read one short passage and say a lot of words to help us understand it and apply it. We call this expository preaching. Today, I'd like to read nine passages and say few words and let God's Word speak for itself.

You'll want to open your bibles to Romans and follow along with me as we begin in Romans 8 and work our way backwards to Romans 1 and then return forward to Romans 8.

ROMANS 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

I'll confess, I've never read Romans 8 in relation to Christmas. That is not until Thursday morning in my devotional time. But now that I have, I cannot help but see it as such. Here Paul beautifully depicts the thrill of hope we sing about in O Holy Night. The thrill of hope is that what previously bound us in captivity, what we could not previously break free of, the law of sin and death, has been broken for us and we have been set free! By sending His own Son...He condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.

⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

If you are in Christ, you have not only been set free from the law of sin and death, you have also been made alive by the Spirit who raised Christ from the dead because that same Holy Spirit now dwells in you!

“What do you mean I have been made alive? I’m already alive.” Physically, that is true. But spiritually, you were dead inside.

ROMANS 5:12-19

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

See, the result of Adam’s sin in the Garden is that spiritual, as well as physical death, spread to all men. This is the curse. This is why the world is weary. Man is estranged from God. This is the source of our tension, anxiety, strife, and sin. We are cut off from our Creator God in whose image we were made. But Christmas is about gifts! And principally about God’s gift to us!

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices! One man’s sin brought death to the whole world. And the world agonizes under it. The world, every man, woman, and child feels the strain of the curse of condemnation. In our heart, we know we are not right with our Holy, Creator God. We know we could never fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law to establish ourselves right before Him.

ROMANS 3:21-25a

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith...

We could never achieve God's righteousness, we must only receive it by faith. We cannot pay for it, it was paid for with Christ's own blood. We cannot earn it, it is a gift of grace. "Who says we need it? I'm a pretty decent person; I'll be alright on my own."

ROMANS 2:1-5

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ²We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

All the above, all the Christmas blessings and celebrations, mean nothing apart from the truth of Romans 2:1-5. If the hard and impenitent heart is not storing up God's wrath, if God's judgment is not inescapable, Romans 8:1 means nothing, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." But Romans 2:1-5 is true. And God's wrath is coming. God's judgment will rightly fall on all who practice such things. Which is why the Gospel brings so much hope to the weary world. And why the weary world rejoices.

ROMANS 1:16-17

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

The Gospel is powerful; it changes everything. While we stand condemned by our works, those have been made righteous by faith shall live. But faith is more than intellectual assent. It involves the heart, not just the mind.

ROMANS 2:28-29

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

This is so much more than looking the part and talking the part. The hope of a Christian is not that other people see his life and approve of it, but that God approves of it. And what does God approve of? Certainly not our own outward behavior.

ROMANS 3:28

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

It is faith, and inward transformation of the heart, that justifies us. And it sets us at peace with God. A peace without which no one will be at ease at all. It is the peace our soul longs for. And it is this peace that thrills our soul and evokes hope in our lives.

ROMANS 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character,

and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We have God's Spirit dwelling within, all who belong to Christ by faith and have been justified by God's grace. And His Spirit causes us to hope in the glory of God. A glory that is soon to come, a new and glorious morn.

ROMANS 8:15-30

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

A new and glorious morn awaits us, beloved brother and sister. Until it comes, He has not left us alone. He has left us with His Spirit, who reminds us we are His children and who helps us in times of weakness, or shall I say weariness. And He points us to that new and glorious morn.

Merry Christmas, Wildwood. Hear the words our dear Savior, whose birth we celebrate, "*Behold, I am making all things new.*" *Revelation 21:5*

Amen, Lord. Come and make all things new.