

God Made Right What We Made Wrong
'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3
Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. Thank you so much for joining us again this Sunday as we worship our Savior. We have been in this series called 'HIS Story' where we have been looking at the grand narrative of God's story in His Word. We have been looking also at ancient and future hymns. You probably have noticed that a lot of the focus this week has been on this idea of redemption. And this idea of redemption is so big, it is so huge, that it reminds me a lot of when I went to buy an engagement ring for my wife, Liz.

We are about to celebrate 22 years of marriage next month. And I remember the time when I was looking for an engagement ring because I wanted to get one that she would want, and that she would love. But when you are a young guy looking to buy an engagement ring you find out that you have a lot to learn about diamonds. It is not just about how big a diamond is, but you have to care about the color of the diamond. And then there are different grades for all these different levels of things like clarity which is another thing you need to look at. And finally there is one thing that maybe most people don't understand how important it is and that is the cut of the diamond. They have to make sure that it is cut at the right angle so that all these tiny little cuts that are made will just explode with color and beauty when the light hits it.

And redemption is a lot like that diamond that has been cut perfectly. Today we are going to be talking about a lot of things because a lot of ideas fit into this concept of redemption. I believe it is a lot like a diamond in that every single idea is a dimension of cut of what this picture really is all about. And I want to elevate this idea of redemption for us this morning, because I think there is no greater idea or truth in God's Word than in understanding His gift of redemption for us and to us.

As we said going back a couple of week when we began this series the Bible is not just a collection of stories about people doing things for God. The Bible is one cohesive narrative of God rescuing His creation. The first thing we looked at was creation and the goodness of God. And then last week Pastor Dan talked about the fall and how we need to understand that all the things that are broken in this world are because of us, because of our sin. And that is why Jesus came and paid the penalty for us.

So the good news that we are going to be talking about today is this - we have God over here and man over there and the good news is that redemption is what brings together the separation that exists between the sinful man and the holy, righteous, good God. So we are going to be looking at that this morning.

The idea of redemption as we focus on the person of Jesus is not something that just appeared when Jesus showed up. The idea of redemption has been woven

God Made Right What We Made Wrong **'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3** **Ben Rudolph**

throughout the narrative of God's Word. Even in the Old Testament we see these pictures over and over and over again of God doing something to rescue and redeem His people. We see this in the very beginning in the book of Genesis with Noah and the flood. We see this in the book of Exodus when God is rescuing and redeeming His people from slavery in Egypt. And then we have the institution of the Passover which is the picture of redemption.

Then there is the picture of redemption in the Day of Atonement in the book of Leviticus. There is the picture of redemption in the book of Judges when Israel is rebelling against God and He sends an oppressor to teach them that He is the only God they need to follow, and they are always calling out for a rescuer, a redeemer. And God kept sending His people rescuers over and over again. God sent the nation of Israel into slavery in Egypt, then He redeems them and brings them back into the Promised Land. Over and over and over again we see this idea of redemption throughout the entire narrative.

But it culminates in the person of Jesus. So this morning we are going to look at three ideas about redemption. We are going to look at the picture of redemption, we are going to look at the plan of redemption, and then we are going to look at the process of redemption. That's the picture of redemption, the plan of redemption and the process or redemption.

So what is redemption? Redemption is simply this - it is this idea of being bought back. It is a simple term - to be bought back with a price of something. And this idea of being bought back is realizing that what we have broken God can fix. What we have made wrong God can make right. That is what redemption is. Everything that we have messed up God can make it new again. That is the picture, and that is the story of redemption that I think God wants us to understand this morning.

As we have done the last couple weeks we are going to be looking at an Old Testament passage and then a New Testament passage. So I want you to turn first in your Bibles to Isaiah Chapter 55 in the Old Testament. To me the idea of redemption is so beautiful with all these dimensions, and I think it answers these questions, these longings we all have inside of us. When we woke up this morning we all probably felt a little hungry. But we also experience deeper longings than just hunger that are in our souls.

The last portion of Isaiah is probably where we find the word redemption used most in the Old Testament. Isaiah is broken up into two major sections. The first section deals with Israel's sin and their judgment as God tries to call them to worship Him. But the last section of Isaiah beginning in Chapter 40 is this idea of God redeeming His lost

God Made Right What We Made Wrong
'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3
Ben Rudolph

and sinful people. And over and over again we see these pictures of redemption in the book of Isaiah, especially in the last section.

And Isaiah Chapter 55 is beautiful because we see this longing that we all have for redemption. I want to take you through a couple of different passages in Isaiah Chapter 55. Verse 1 says this: ***“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”*** Right here we have this idea that He wants us to come and buy these wonderful things for Him, but without money. And the question is - how do you buy something without money? It can only be supplied when something has been already bought for you.

Verse 2: ***“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”*** What is God saying? This is a beautiful picture of redemption. This is a picture of this idea of the longing inside of all of us for true satisfaction. That we have these deep desires inside of us that want to be satisfied. There is a longing in our souls that craves for something. And what God is saying is when we pursue these longings and these desires for satisfaction outside of Him we are always going to have that feeling of, *‘Man, this didn’t satisfy me.’* And so what redemption does is it brings a sense of satisfaction to our souls that only God can give to us. That is the first picture.

The second picture is found in verses 6 and 7: ***“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”*** See, not only do we have a longing for satisfaction in our souls, but we have a longing for acceptance. The problem without acceptance though, is we know that we are sinful.

As we talked about last week we know we have done so many bad and wicked things in our lives, and we know that we have done so many things that are selfish. So when we think about who is going to accept me for me, we see here in this passage God is saying, *‘If you will forsake the sin that you are doing, and you turn to me I will have compassion on you and I will abundantly pardon you. I will forgive you of all of your sins.’* It is this idea of acceptance and reconciliation that we crave. Every single one of us this morning want someone to look at us and see the fullness of who we are, our mess, our sin, our selfishness, and say, *‘I still want you.’* And that is what God is saying in this passage.

God Made Right What We Made Wrong 'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3 Ben Rudolph

So we have a longing for satisfaction, we have a longing for acceptance. And then lastly, verses 12 says this: *“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”* So there is this idea of this restoration, this idea of this picture of creation rejoicing, singing and celebrating what God is doing.

And what is He doing? Let's read verse 13: *“Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”* This is such an amazing picture. Since we have all been at home I am sure most of us are doing some house projects. There have been weeds that have grown over the winter, and there are things that we need to re-organize and make beautiful again. But here is what God is saying - when you are doing what you want to do, when your sin goes unchecked, it creates the thorns and the briars, it creates things that are ugly, and it creates disharmony like we talked about a couple of weeks ago.

But instead of the thorn, it says He will grow the cypress tree. Instead of something that hurts, instead of something that is ugly, He will create something that is beautiful and strong. There is this longing for transformation, a longing for the things to be fixed that are so broken in our lives, that God alone can fix. Some of us this morning may be looking around in our lives, looking around at our families, looking around at our finances, looking around everything in our lives, and maybe we are just feeling like everything is just a mess. And we know that we contributed to that mess.

Here is what we need to understand - the mess that we have created God can redeem; He can transform. I know I talk a lot about movies, and the reason I shared this a couple of weeks ago about why movies captivate our soul is that movies follow the same story often that we find in Scripture - creation, fall, redemption, restoration. And there are these moments in movies where things look so bad that we think the bad guy is going to win. And then at the last moment something turns the story. It turns the narrative from things seeming to be so bad that we think they won't get any better, and then something happens.

And I remember this one scene in the movie, 'Return of the King,' and again I know I am a 'Lord of the Rings' nerd. Okay? I have read the book many times, and I have watched the movie lots of times. And there is this one memorable scene, and I won't go into all the funky names because it would just confuse you, or bore you, but the bad guys are fighting the good guys in this epic battle at the end of the movie when it looks like all hope is lost. It looks like they good guys are going to be overrun because the bad guys have a greater army than the good guys. But all of a sudden the good guys

God Made Right What We Made Wrong 'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3 Ben Rudolph

show up with an army that they didn't know they had and with a power that was greater than their enemies, and they win the battle.

Every time I watch that movie and that scene I get goose bumps. It doesn't matter how many times I have watched it, when that moment comes I want to cheer and I want to shout 'Yes!' And there is a reason for that because every single one of us when we are confronted with the story of our own lives we want someone to come to our rescue. We long for transformation. We long for things to shift and to change for the better.

And that can only happen with God. If we try to pursue these longings for satisfaction, these longings for approval, these longings for transformation from the sin that we have created in our own lives we will always fall short. That is what redemption looks like. It looks like our soul is satisfied. It looks like being accepted, being reconciled perfectly in harmony with God and with people again. And it looks like a life that is changed. All the things that are wrong He has made right.

Now how does God do that? That leads us to our plan of redemption where I want us to turn in our Bibles to Romans Chapter 3. That is where we are going to be for the remainder of our time together this morning. In Romans Chapter 3 and verses 21 through 26 there is a paragraph that some people have said might be one of the most important paragraphs in the entire Bible. It summarizes the gospel so perfectly because there is so much theology there, so much truth and richness there.

Here is the reality - there are a lot of words in this paragraph that might need some explanation. We talked about the acceptance and the satisfaction and the transformation, and we need to realize that these are just small little cuts that show the dimension of redemption. So we are going to be talking about some words in this passage that are just more cuts to create this beautiful diamond of what redemption is.

I want to start in verse 19, because Paul the apostle is writing this letter to the church of Rome and he has already laid out the problem. The problem is what we have talked about the last two weeks, where we have a good creator, God, and we have a sinful humanity that rebelled against God. And there is a chasm between the holiness, righteousness and the goodness of God and the sinful rebellious mankind. And the bridge of that gap is the love of God.

So we are going to see how the love of God bridges that gap beginning in verse 19 of Romans Chapter 3. It says, "***Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.***"

God Made Right What We Made Wrong 'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3 Ben Rudolph

Here is what Paul is saying in summary. The Bible teaches us what God requires for holiness, what God requires for righteousness. We see this in the Ten Commandments, we see this over and over again what it means to truly love Him, follow Him and obey Him. But over and over again what the Old Testament has shown through the narratives that we have read, and what we know ourselves from our own story, is that we can't do it ourselves. We can't keep the Ten Commandments; we can't keep even one of them well. We are always breaking them. And because of that there is a righteousness that we cannot attain by obedience. So we cannot save ourselves. It is that simple. So how do we attain this righteousness? How do we bridge the chasm between our sinfulness and God's holiness? We have to understand that Jesus Christ is the only one that can bridge that chasm.

Let's look at what it says in verses 21 through 26: ***“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it - the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption (notice the word there - redemption) that is in Christ Jesus, who God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”***

The crucial point, that moment in history that changed the narrative of humanity, of time and space, was the cross. Dan spoke so beautifully about this last week with how the cross and the resurrection was the turning point that saves us from our sin. But how does it play out? How is that chasm bridged? There are some great ideas here that we need to understand. But the first thing that we have to do is to confront this idea that it is by our righteousness that we are saved. We sometimes make up some standard in our own minds that we think would make us good enough for God to accept us. But we see over and over again that there is no way to be accepted by God by our own standards.

I see how we do this all the time. We always judge ourselves better than we really are. I see this playing out today in a real life example like when we look at how President Trump has handled the Corona virus issue. This week there have been a lot of articles written about his response and when he made it. And there are a lot of evaluations going on about our president, and I am not here to make any political statements. But what I have found by reading and hearing what people are saying has been dependent on where they sit politically and ideologically when they determine

God Made Right What We Made Wrong
'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3
Ben Rudolph

whether or not he has done a righteous and good job, or whether he had done an unrighteous and poor job at handling this situation.

And so what is the standard? And if we sit in our own ideology, and we are the ones with our own world view that are saying we think this is good and this is bad, we are never going to make a good judgment. So when it comes to evaluating our own selves we cannot do it, we have to go to God's Word to test ourselves. We have to confront our own standard of righteousness because if we compare ourselves to anyone else's righteousness apart from God's righteousness, we are going to make ourselves look better than we are.

This passage is saying that there is a righteousness of God that does not come from anyone else but from God Himself. See how God bridged that chasm between sinful man and the holy God is that the Son of God took on human flesh. And when Jesus came to earth He lived the life that we cannot live. He obeyed God perfectly. He earned Heaven. He was righteous. He was holy. And so because of His righteousness He is the one human being that actually earned Heaven. He earned salvation.

And that is why He went to the cross so that He could take our condemnation. There were a couple of words here that we need to understand what happened with Jesus and what He accomplished for us on the cross. The words I want to share with you are: justify, grace, redemption, propitiation, forbearance and then you have this idea of just and justifier. What do these words mean? What has Jesus accomplished for us on the cross?

Well, this idea of being justified means to be declared righteous. It is a legal term meaning you are not righteous but you are declared righteous by the judge, and God is the judge. It is not humanity, it is not what the culture thinks, it is what God thinks. And you need the ultimate judge to declare you righteous. We all want to be justified and the only way we can be justified is through Christ. And how does that happen? It is by a transfer of His righteousness to us, and our sinful condemnation on Him. That is what happened on the cross. Our sins were laid on Him, and He paid the penalty for our sins.

That word propitiation means that Jesus satisfied the wrath of God. Today we don't like to talk about the wrath of God. It is not something that most human beings like to talk about. But the idea is this - God should be angry at sin. There is not one of us watching this message this morning that if you heard about a child in your neighborhood that was abused by their parents, or someone else, that wouldn't have a certain kind of outrage or anger about such an egregious sin. And that is just one instance. Should not the God of the universe, the holy and perfect God, be angry about sin?

God Made Right What We Made Wrong 'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3 Ben Rudolph

We said the only thing that can bridge the chasm between God's holiness and goodness and our sinfulness is His love. And here is what we have to understand about His love - His love is expressed not only in His mercy and grace, but also in His justice. An act of love is to show justice toward sin. So His propitiation, His blood provided the satisfying sacrifice that was needed for our behalf. And that is what Jesus accomplished.

So we have justified which means to be declared righteous. We have propitiation which means to satisfy the wrath of God. We have grace which means God's undeserved favor. God is always looking to show us His favor even though we don't deserve it. His love is pouring out this idea that says we can't save ourselves and that is why He is going to handle it for us. We can't do anything about our sins so that is why He is going to take them from us. This is how much God loves us. Grace is a gift from a righteous God to sinful mankind.

We also have this word redemption. We talked about what redemption means and that is to buy us back when before we were slaves to sin. Later on in Romans Chapter 6 He tells us that we are slaves to sin. But because we are in Christ we are now slaves of righteousness. We have been bought from enemies of God to children of God. That is what being redeemed is all about.

The idea of forbearance means God is patience toward our sin. He is saying that He is willing to be patient with us even in our rebellion. Do you ever wonder why God doesn't just zap people or judge people like when we are fed up with them? Well, think about your own life, think about how so many times we rebel against God, we have done our own thing, gone our own way, lived selfish and sinful lives. And God has always just waited for us to repent and turn back to Him. That is what forbearance means.

And lastly the words just and justifier. See, in that moment with Jesus on the cross He had to be faithful to His righteousness and to His justice, but also be faithful to His love and His grace. And what Jesus did was able to satisfy that perfectly so that He could be just and the justifier for all humanity. That is the perfect plan, the only plan that works. So when it comes to the process of redemption, salvation only comes through Jesus. If we try to find another plan to be restored, another plan to be made whole, another plan to redeem ourselves, we are going to fall short. It is the cross alone that saves us. It is Jesus alone that saves us.

And that leads us to our last point which is the process of redemption. We are saying it is Jesus alone, so how do we apply that redemption? How do we get it? Well, there is one word that is mentioned over and over again throughout this passage of how we apply the redemption that God offers us through Jesus Christ. And it is the word 'faith.' Verse 22 says: "***The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all***

God Made Right What We Made Wrong
'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3
Ben Rudolph

who believe.” Verse 25 says: “Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.” Verse 26 says: “It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” It is faith, it is belief, it is trust.

So we need to ask ourselves the question - have I placed my faith, my complete faith, my trust in Him? This is not just a mental acquiescence to say, *‘Yeah, I agree. I believe in the facts about the gospel. I believe in the facts about Jesus dying on the cross. I believe in the facts about the resurrection. Everything you said, Ben, in your previous points I believe that is true.’* You can believe it is true and not have faith, because faith requires a turning from trusting in yourself, trusting in your own ways and plans, and trusting alone in Jesus. That is faith alone in Him.

I remember when I was a kid, and I have shared this with you before, how I was not a really good swimmer growing up. I remember as a young child going to the pool with my family. And my dad would be in the pool standing in waist deep water and he would call out to me to jump to him. But I wouldn't do it. I would be too scared that somehow I would slip through my dad's hands and fall to my death. I just had irrational fears even though my dad was much taller than the water he was standing in.

But I would only jump to him if I had my orange floaties on. Remember those floaties that you could blow up and put them on your upper arms? As long as I had those on I would jump to my dad. Do you know why? It was because I would remember when I was in the water with my floaties on that they would keep me from sinking. So what was I really trusting in when I would only jump to my dad if I had my floaties on? I wasn't really trusting in my dad, because when I didn't have my floaties on I wouldn't jump to him.

And I think that is the same thing with us when we say we are trusting in God but there is something else we are really trusting in. There is a deeper level of trust that we are depending on such as our church attendance, or our own goodness, or because of our baptism. There is something that we are holding on to that we believe is going to keep us from sinking. But the only way that we are truly trusting and putting our faith in Christ alone is when we accept that there is nothing else to catch us, that there is no other security other than in Him. That is the kind of faith we all need and it requires repentance, which simply means 'turning from.' Turning from those ways that we have created in our minds, or things that we have been taught to believe, and trusting in Jesus alone to save us, to redeem us.

See, those passages we looked at in Isaiah Chapter 55 gave the idea of satisfaction, of realizing we are truly loved, even in the midst of all our sins and mess,

God Made Right What We Made Wrong
'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3
Ben Rudolph

that there is someone that still wants us. We can look at our lives and all the things that are broken, all the things that we have done wrong, and understand that there is a God who can touch our lives, put His hands on all the brokenness, and can make us beautiful. That is who Jesus is. And when we trust in Him we are saying He is the one who can satisfy us with His love. It is His love that makes us acceptable. It is His love that can transform us if we trust in His love for us.

There is no one in this world that will ever love us like Jesus. There is no act of love that can ever be done for us that is greater than the act of love that God did for us on the cross through His Son. The question is - will you accept it? That is the invitation this morning. I want to leave you with three questions and then we are done.

The first question is this - what is your heart longing for this morning? We looked at pictures in Isaiah Chapter 55, and I am sure that at least one of those captivated your heart and you realized that is what you have always wanted. You want to believe that God can change you. You want to believe that you are acceptable to God. You have always wanted something deep in your souls to be satisfied. Are you turning to Him? The second question is this - have you submitted to God's plan for redemption? Not your own plan, not your own standard of righteousness, but have you submitted to His plan for redemption?

And the last question is this - have you turned and trusted in Jesus alone? The invitation for redemption is always open. God is waiting for us to respond to Him and to His love. And I can't think of any better way to worship Him and end this service than by inviting you to make that decision. Maybe you have never done that. Maybe you have only had mental knowledge, or maybe it has been your own plan, or Jesus plus your good works. I don't know what it is, but I am asking you this morning if the Holy Spirit is telling you that you have never done that, I am inviting you to do that right now.

There is no magic prayer, you don't have to give anything, it is just simply telling God you are turning to Him, and you have no hope if he doesn't catch you. You can do that where you are sitting this morning. If you have questions this week about knowing more, we would love for you to reach out to us. Reach out to us at lifecharlotte.com and let us hear from you. If you have questions about what it means to truly find the story of redemption, and receive the great gift that God can give to us through His Son Jesus, please contact us. We want every one of you to experience that goodness.

Let's close in prayer. I want to pray for those who may be in that decision making mode first. *Father, I pray for every person right now who wonders whether or not they have the true redemptive gift that you offer to us. I pray Father that they will*

God Made Right What We Made Wrong
'HIS Story' SERIES - WEEK 3
Ben Rudolph

place their trust in you, that they will turn from their sin and from themselves, and place their trust in you now.

And God, for any of us that have made that decision, may we rejoice this morning. May we understand, may we re-discover your love in a fresh way. May we understand that whatever narrative is running in our minds that we are not running from your story. God, may the longing of our souls for satisfaction, for acceptance and for transformation realize that we now have full access to that story and to that fulfilment. Lord, I pray that you will continue to invite us into the fullness of your love, and that we would enjoy it to the fullest. God, we pray this in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.