

Becoming

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Text: Romans 8: 18-25
Becoming

1. Sin's Terrible Work

We walked into the backyard earlier this year. Rabbits all over the place. Cute rabbits that have little fear of humans. We sort of enjoy a passive battle with them using wire to protect our plants. But a day later one was lying dead in the yard...the victim of a cat or a dog. One could not help but feel sorry for the creature. This was probably not part of God's original plan for the garden into which he put Adam and Eve.

It was Charles Darwin who was great disturbed when he observed that the female ichneumon wasp would find a caterpillar and would lay its eggs by injecting them into the caterpillar. The caterpillar did not die but the eggs hatched into larva which then proceed to eat the living host. Darwin thought that it was terrible that God would allow such a horrible thing to happen in the creation.

This was not God's intention. Nature was created good and complete. God delighted in making each of His creatures. Adam would talk to God in the garden. We cannot reconstruct that world in detail to imagine what it was like. Then Adam and Eve sinned...they decided that they wanted to be like God. ...bringing death into the creation...causing all creation to suffer.

And, of course, what has to come down to some kind of human error. Jeanette and I drove past Miller Park on the freeway last Wednesday at about 4:15 p.m. We were amazed to see the crane called Big Blue slowly lifting a huge 400 ton section of roof. The roof floated in the sky like something out of Star Wars. We traveled on to the south side. In an hour the section was only 10 feet from being in place and disaster occurred.



And the personal level there is illness and pain. There is loneliness and frustration. There is the friend that got cancer. There is our still bright, young soul looking out of an aging body.

Why does God allow such things to happen? God did not cause this. Mankind did.

This is something that many forget. We are quick to blame God for what we have done and what we continue to do. Not only did Adam and Eve leave a state of perfection...so did the entire Creation. It is all suffering. We obviously see it in people. All are sinners. We see it in society, in politics. We see it



everywhere. People show greed and self-centeredness. Mistakes happen among Christians and non-Christians. St. Paul says in our text, *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice,... (v.3)* All are suffering...the people in the church and outside, all the creatures, the whole creation.

2. Freedom in Christ

But now Christ has rescued us. He became one of us. He kept law. He took the debt of our sins upon himself. Imagine if someone paid all your bills....all your debt. You are free.

If you die, you will go to heaven. Why? Because you are good? No. Because Christ was good for you. Our hope and trust is rightly in Him.

3. Living in Anticipation and Hope

So we are saved. But the world we live in is still not perfect and our lives are not perfect. Those people who tell you that if you accept Christ as your Savior...then everything will be great and you will be blessed on this earth.... are not telling the truth. Christians, no doubt, are among the builders of Miller Park and still things go wrong. You know from your own experience that you have problems.

St. Paul says *...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 first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for (heaven.)*

So let's look at this.

Having Christ, we live in hope and anticipation of heaven. We are sure of that because it doesn't depend on us. Christ has done it for us. We know what is coming.

We do have many blessings here on earth...this will vary.... but can include family, friends, friends here at Salem, food, shelter, clothing, living in this country,...

But none of this is perfect yet. We live in hope of what is to come. The hope is to become whole... to again have a perfect relationship with God. ...to again have perfect health...no illness, no death ...to again have perfect judgment ...to be wise ...to again be able to live and be good stewards of nature. We have no single word in English to describe the restoration to normality with God, says one writer (Wilkinson) but it is no accident that wholeness and holiness are related.

And here is the key: Wholeness and holiness are what we are becoming.

How?

The Word comes to us as seed and Jesus is the living water.

The seed grows in us. We are BECOMING that which we will be. Still here on earth we should more and more look and act like the beings that God originally created.

Here is a danger. The word can come to us. It can start to grow...but then it might die if we are like the rocky places in the parable of the sower.

What are we like inside? Do we harbor attitudes that are not Christian...bitterness against others...old grudges...self-centered ways of dealing with life that only say me-first...what's in it for me. ...my way or no way.

Martin Galstad, a professor of mine, noted and others have also seen it. Those in the church who think that they are always in the right and have quick solutions for everything can be very mean to each other.

Here is another danger. The word can come to us. It can start to grow ...but then it might be choked by the weeds which grow nearby. We need to look at what we expose ourselves to. Our entertainment, our pastimes, our friends could be harmful to our faith. Bad habits...overconfidence are dangers for what we should be about.

Christ is at the center of our lives...nothing else. Let Him grow.

When the word comes, we hear it and understand it. The Holy Spirit works this within us. The Word calls us toward what we will be in heaven. It calls us to keep the commandments. It calls us to love God and love our neighbor.

We are like a plant growing and becoming. I gave Jeanette a Fuchsia plant last year. In the fall we took it inside and cut it back to stubble. We wondered as we followed the directions in a gardening book. It spent winter in our kitchen with some watering. It slowly grew. We cut it back again and then took it outside in spring. It grew and increased its leaves. Then recently it began to show flower buds. We anticipate the wonderful flowers that can be only a few days away.

This is like us. Daily we become more like what we were meant to be...day by day. The flower buds are the love we show for God and man. We get a sense of what the full flowering might be... St. Paul says. Consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that WILL be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation...that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.



And we can return to the image in the gospel reading for this Sunday: *But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the person who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.*

We are growing.

We are becoming that which we will be. When opportunities come in which we can serve the Lord...Let's take them. When opportunities come in which we can show who we are...and that we have something special, let's take them.

This is natural for the Christian that we will show that Christ is in us by how we live.

Amen

May Christ , the living water, be with us every day of our life. May we grow daily in faith and works. May we reach out to others in love and concern. Amen.

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Ref.

Wilkinson, John.

THE BIBLE AND HEALING: A MEDICAL AND THEOLOGICAL COMMENTARY. 350p, hardbound, Handsel/Eerdmans, 1998.