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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Review the account of a death camp survivor's response to Adolf Eichmann (see **Sermon Summary**). Do you agree or disagree with his conclusion—and **why? What** do you think led him to that conclusion?
- Pastor Doug distinguished between obedience and self-interested compliance in **the root of sin** (see **Sermon Summary**). What do you think about that distinction? **Who** is being loved in each? Where would you place your moral behavior on this scale? 
- The essence of sin** ([2] in **Sermon Summary**) is that we often treat God like a "vending machine". How have you seen that tendency in action? Give concrete examples. In what situations are **you** tempted to treat God that way?
- How have you seen sin destroy relationships ([3] in **Sermon Summary**)?

Creating "God Space": "God Space" is where cynics, skeptics, and spiritually curious people can safely raise their questions, reservations, and doubts because we have listened well and demonstrated love in practical ways.

- What do **you** think is wrong with this world? How do you think things got that way?
 - Are you optimistic or pessimistic that we'll find solutions? **Why** do you feel that way?
 - What do you think might be some possible **solutions** to world problems today?
- [Then, if they haven't asked for your opinions on those issues, consider asking...]
- May I give you my thoughts on those things? [See **Sermon Summary** for thoughts.]

- Who do you know who needs a solution for their sin ([4] in **Sermon Summary**)?



Application-Challenge

Sin is us putting ourselves in God's place; salvation is God putting himself in our place. Sin is man assuming prerogatives that belong to God alone; salvation is God taking on guilt that belongs to man alone. **Come to Christ today in faith.**

Sermon Summary

Key Text: Genesis 2:16–17; 3:1–9

In 1961 Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi who masterminded the death camps, went on trial. When a certain Jewish death camp survivor was brought in to testify, he collapsed to the floor, sobbing. When asked, “What was going through your mind? Why did you collapse? Were you overwhelmed with hatred or fear in the presence of your former persecutor?”, his startling reply was: **“No, no, no. As I looked at Eichmann, I realized, ‘He’s not a demon. He’s not a superman. He is a man just like me. And if he’s capable of doing this, then so am I!’”** This man who’d suffered at the hands of the Nazis realized “Eichmann is in all of us.” Have **you** faced the potential for evil within you? Do you know what’s in **your** heart? Do you know what **you’re** capable of? But more importantly, what are you going to **do about** the evil in our hearts? Genesis 2-3 tell us about the root of sin, the essence of sin, the results of sin, and the solution for sin.

[1] The root of sin. In Genesis 2:16-17 God gave the first humans one simple command. God doesn’t give a reason for his prohibition; He just said, “Don’t eat from that tree.” Had God given them a reason they might have abstained simply because they perceived it to be to their advantage. But that’s not obedience; that’s self-interested compliance. God wanted them to refrain just because he asked them to, because they loved him and trusted him. And that is what the Serpent (Satan) went after: he engaged in character assassination (3:4-5). The Serpent is saying: “If you submit to God, you’ll miss out. You won’t be all that you could be.” That lie has passed down to us. We really don’t believe that God has our best interests at heart. We work ourselves to death, we tear others down to bolster our own sense of self-worth. Why? Because we don’t trust God and his love.

[2] The essence of sin. Genesis 3:6 reveals the essence of sin. There was one law and they violated it. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). But even the motives of our heart can be sinful (Matthew 5:27-28). In her heart, Eve wanted to be like God (Genesis 3:5). That is what we are after too. We try to make everything orbit around our comfort, our glory, our worth, and our acclaim. But God should be at the center, not us. Sin is putting ourselves in the place of God. Human nature is “curved in on itself.” We often think only cruel egomaniacs are self-centered, but we all are inclined to bend everything toward our own advantage. Self-centeredness can become main motivation for being moral and generous! We use people for our own sakes. Religion often is fueled by self-centeredness. We attend worship and do religiously expected stuff, so that when we ask God for things—he will grant our requests. People will often say, “What use is it to be a Christian, if God never answers my prayers?” Did you catch that? “What use is it?” Whenever we say to God, “Lord, I’ll obey you if, or as long as...”, whatever lies on the other side of the “if,” or of the “as long as,” is our real god. It is what we ultimately worship. Ever since Adam, none of us simply loves God. We always have an angle. We all use him. Sin isn’t just breaking the rules. It is living for our own glory, being our own rescuers. Self-centeredness expresses itself just as much through being moral and religious, as it does by being immoral and irreligious.

[3] The results of sin. Sin is a cancer of self-centeredness which destroys all relationships. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, they felt shame (Genesis 2:25 cf. 3:7, 10). They were afraid of anyone who had perfect knowledge of who they really were, and of what they had actually done. In sewing fig leaves they were trying to be their own savior, to patch up a righteousness, an identity, a self-worth of their own. We can’t bear for others to have an unfiltered view of who we really are, so self-centeredness destroys our relationships with people and with God. If we get too near a holy God, we’re going to see how very flawed we are, how absolutely weak and helpless we are, how selfish we are—and that’s tough to admit. Most of us base our lives on the idea that we’re competent, that we’re not all that bad. Then we get near God and that illusion is smashed!

[4] The solution for sin. In v. 9 God asks, “Where are you?”—and since he knows everything, it really means, “Why are you hiding from me?” Our answer should be: “Because I sinned.” But the answer God gets is: “I’m hiding because I’m ashamed.” So God says, “All right, then, why are you ashamed? Did you eat from the tree I told you not to eat from?” The right answer is: “Yes we did.” But that’s not the answer God gets. The man says, “The woman made me do it,” and the woman says, “The Serpent made me do it.” God is counseling them! Just moments into the fall and he’s already our Wonderful Counselor! God doesn’t descend in fire and judgment. Instead, he seeks them out in love, like a shepherd does a lost sheep. He tenderly tries to wake them up, to redeem them, not simply to judge them. If you had only read the Bible up to this point in the book of Genesis, you would have no idea of the lengths to which God would go to not judge us, but to seek us out in love. In Genesis 3:15 we have the first prophecy of the Messiah. We are told that some future descendant of the woman would be bruised on our behalf. He would shed his blood, but he would destroy the works of the Devil. Jesus came to reverse the work of the Serpent and to restore paradise. How? The Serpent put a lie in your heart through a tree, and Jesus Christ is going to take the lie out of your heart through a tree. Do you see it? Sin is us putting ourselves in God’s place; salvation is God putting himself in our place. Sin is man assuming prerogatives that belong to God alone; salvation is God taking on guilt that belongs to man alone.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to study our sin problem as described in Romans 3:9-18...

Monday— What percent of humanity is encompassed by "Jews and Greeks"? (See v. 9.)

Tuesday—The "all" of v. 9 is described as "none" in v. 10-12. What do none of us do?

Wednesday— V. 13-14 speak of our verbal tendencies. How have you seen this in yourself?

Thursday— V. 15-17 speak of our violent tendencies. How have you seen this in yourself?

Friday— If we feared God as we ought (see v. 18), how would v. 12-17 be different?

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord with your church family, read Philipians 2:1-11.***

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]