

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEB 12 - 16, 2024

THE GREATNESS OF THE

CROSS

2/18 - 3/17

LENTEN SERMON SERIES



MONDAY

Read **Luke 4:1-13; Romans 3:23-25; Titus 2:13-14**

Lent commences this Wednesday, February 14, and concludes on Maundy (“Commandment”) Thursday, three days before Easter Sunday. Glenkirk Church’s associated preaching and devotionals series will consider the primary views of Christ’s atonement, both this week and over the several following weeks. But first let us consider Lent’s emphasis, the meaning of atonement, and the relationship between these.

“Lent is the Christian season of spiritual preparation before Easter ... [remembering] the Temptation of Jesus after He spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness. ... During Lent ... [many] observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual discipline. ... [Believers] set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ—to consider His suffering and ... sacrifice, His life, death, burial, and resurrection.” (Learn Religions)

“Atonement refers to the needed reconciliation between sinful [humankind] and the holy God. This reconciliation is possible through the atoning (compensating) sacrifice of Jesus Christ. ... On the cross [Jesus absorbed the judgment] of God ... [in] a transaction between the Father and the Son. The Father pours out His anger towards [our] sin on Christ, and His [righteous] wrath is ... satisfied. ... Believers are justified (deemed righteous) and reconciled [to God] by the atonement of Christ.” (Christianity.com)

Lent pictures how God commonly prepares and refines His own for usefulness and service, often via disciplined self-denial and cleansing trials. A helpful way of grasping atonement is via the expression “at-one-ment”—we are made one (reconciled) with God in Christ, when previously alienated from Him by our sins.

Jesus’ 40-day wilderness fast and concluding temptation by the devil—commemorated by Lent—followed His baptism by John. These events launched His First Advent ministry and advanced the process by which “[Jesus] learned obedience through what He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Jesus’ faithful obedience and resultant purity throughout His life qualified Him alone—as the perfect Man and Substitute, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)—to atone for our sins on the cross. The divine transaction between Father and Son at Calvary—the basis for our atonement in Christ—provides the backdrop for each of this week’s devotionals.

QUESTIONS

What does the Lent season commemorate? How does the expression “at-one-ment” help in understanding the effects of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice at Calvary? Why was atonement even necessary?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen (GlobalGrace)

Pray for single refugees who are doing their best to trust the Lord with their lives and their future. Spending a long time in one or more refugee camps takes a toll on a person’s hopes and dreams for career, marriage, and family.



TUESDAY

Read **Isaiah 51:11; Revelation 5**

A popular Advent hymn opens with the lyrics, “O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel.” The Messiah is called “*Immanuel*” explicitly three times biblically: in Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8, and Matthew 1:23. You probably know this name’s meaning, “God with us.” What an apt way to identify Jesus! You might challenge, “Wait—I’m not Jewish! Why the hymn’s emphasis on Israel? Isn’t Jesus the Redeemer of all, not just believing Israelites?” “Israel” means “strives with God.” What better way to describe pre-Christians, or even we who wrestle with fallenness while following Christ?

Possibly murkiest are the hymn’s words, “ransom captive.” Have you ever considered Jesus as having *ransomed* you? Merriam Webster defines ransom as “to free from captivity or punishment by paying a price.” This week’s focus is: the “ransom theory” of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice upon Calvary’s cross.

Jeremiah 31:11 declares, “*For the LORD has ransomed Jacob (Israel) and ... redeemed him.*” Jesus Himself reinforced this: “*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45). Isaiah 51:11 calls believers “*the ransomed of the LORD,*” and other Scripture uses similar ransom imagery.

Perhaps surprisingly, Revelation provides helpful clarification. Revelation 5 calls Jesus “*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*” (5:5) and

“Lamb ... [which] had been slain” (5:6), the only One “worthy ... to [open] the scroll” (5:11). Some view this “scroll” as earth’s “title deed,” forfeited by Adam and Eve upon falling in Eden. Others consider it the Bible itself, a Gospel account or Revelation. I see the scroll as a binding legal agreement.

Upon exclaiming from Calvary’s cross per John 19:30, “*It is finished!*” (“*Paid in full!*”), Jesus declared that all had been done to enable freedom from sin’s ravages, death’s finality, and the accompanying separation from God. The transaction between Father and Son—“*the wages of sin ... death*” (Romans 6:23)—was completed, the debt fully paid. Via His broken body—given sacrificially—Jesus “broke the seals of the scroll,” securing atonement for all who would believe. Some leave this redeeming, already-paid ransom unclaimed—share this good news with them.

QUESTIONS

Why was it necessary to “ransom captive Israel”? How was Jesus the only One “worthy ... to [open] the scroll” as per Revelation 5:11. What is the significance of Jesus’ declaration from the cross, “*It is finished!*” in John 19:30?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen (GlobalGrace)

Join Bryant and Anne in prayer for an Afghan couple, soon to have a baby boy. May God bring them into a closer relationship with the Wilhelmsens and with Jesus. The couple narrowly escaped the mob at the Kabul airport. Pray that the Holy Spirit’s covering is with them during their time together.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Job 33:22-24, 19:25-27; Hebrews 12:2**

Amidst extreme trials and losses, not only did Job reject his wife's advice to "Curse God and die" (Job 2:9), but he was remarkably restrained in complaints regarding the horrors plaguing him. Job even declared amidst his darkest hours, "For I know that my Redeemer lives" (19:25), and appealed for "a Mediator ... [One to] deliver [me] from ... the pit ... [and provide] a ransom." (33:23-24) Job clearly anticipated the "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Job's story provides useful context for the so-called "Christus Victor ('Christ the Victor')/ransom theory of atonement," which sees "the atonement ... as divine conflict and victory over the hostile powers that hold humanity in subjection. ... [Our necessary] 'ransom' ... [entails] a rescue or liberation of humanity from the slavery of sin." (Theopedia) "[Per this theory] Satan ('the god of this world') owned the world and all of the people in it (2 Corinthians 4:4). ... [Accordingly] God must have paid Satan [the ransom] for the human race by offering His Son." (James Rochford)

"[This theory is] rooted in the incarnation and how Christ entered into human misery and wickedness and thus redeemed it ... [yielding the saying] 'Jesus became what we are so that we could become what He is.'" (Theopedia) This aspect of the theory is appealing.

However, the “*Christus Victor*” theory has issues. “It was God’s [righteous] wrath that was dealt with at the Cross—not Satan’s. While humans deserve judgment, Satan has no right to dole out this judgment.” (Rochford) We know from Job’s story that Satan—a fallen creature subject to God’s sovereignty—could afflict Job only within God’s permitted boundaries (Job 1:12, 2:6).

“[*Christus Victor*] completely ignores the demands of God’s justice as seen throughout Scripture. It also ... [elevates] Satan ... [and portrays] him as having more power than he really does.” (GotQuestions.org) Some foolishly dismiss the devil as fictitious or harmlessly cartoonish. Others wrongly see him as God’s near-peer. Job made neither mistake while looking forward to the coming, glorious Savior. We should do likewise.

QUESTIONS

What are a couple of the essentials of the “*Christus Victor*/ransom theory of atonement”? What problem does this theory have regarding the devil’s stature?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen (GlobalGrace)

Pray for Bryant and Anne as they attend court cases for believers seeking asylum. The outcome of each case holds serious consequences, even life-or-death for some. Pray that God will shine His light and truth so that the end result of each case aligns with God’s will.

THURSDAY

Read **Hosea 3:1-5, 13:14; 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23; 1 Thessalonians 1:10**

“A ruler asked [Jesus], ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.’” (Luke 18:18-19)

We considered Job’s story yesterday. Job was seemingly a “good person”—even God called him “*a blameless and upright man*” (Job 1:8). Yet Job, as a fallen human, needed ransoming by the Savior—he declared as much in Job 19:25. Daniel appeared virtuous yet prayed discerningly, “*we have sinned ... and acted wickedly and rebelled*” (Daniel 9:5)—Daniel recognized that he, too, needed a Redeemer.

Jacob’s eleventh son, Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers, eventually wrongly imprisoned. He endured trials and—uplifted by God’s providence and gifting—became Egypt’s second-in-command. However, now in the eternal presence of God the Son, Joseph would not self-describe as having been “good.” Joseph’s release from prison and career ascension perhaps foreshadows the eternal effects of spiritual ransoming. Interestingly, Joseph tested his betrayers by imprisoning them temporarily, later holding Simeon even longer until the others returned with youngest brother Benjamin as the ransom price (Genesis 42:24-43:23).

The prophet Hosea’s story offers a tapestry of God’s enduring faithfulness and a meaningful ransom. God commanded Hosea to

“take ... a wife of whoredom” (Hosea 1:2), his wife Gomer representing unfaithful Israel. Gomer betrayed Hosea, leaving him for others until she hit rock bottom, winding up for sale at the slave market. God then told Hosea to purchase Gomer back despite her adultery, which the prophet did (Hosea 3:2).

In these events Hosea, though not “good” personally in light of divine holiness, pictured God and how He endured Israel’s—and our—continuing unfaithfulness upon sinning. Yet in infinite love and obedience, Jesus came to join us in our plight, paying our ransom at Calvary.

Those self-describing as “good” likely cannot fathom that they are, in fact, sin’s captives needing to be ransomed, prisoners for whom bail has been posted. Hopefully you are keenly aware of this when reflecting upon your pre-Christian life. If so, walk in the gratitude and joy of one set free!

QUESTIONS

Why did Jesus question the ruler who called Him “*good Teacher*” (Luke 18:18)? What do Job, Daniel, Joseph and Hosea have in common with each other and with us? How does the story of Hosea and his wife, Gomer, portray God’s relationship with ancient Israel?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen (GlobalGrace)

Praise God for His work during trips to Sardis, Turkey, last fall, and ask Him to bless the ministry of Ibrahim and Nergiz there. Also pray for direction as the Wilhelmsens evaluate possible visits to another refugee camp not far from them. Many camps have security, and they need God’s help to make these visits.



FRIDAY

Read **Leviticus 25:23-25; Ruth 3:6-11; Romans 6:22-23**

The history of Ruth and Boaz—in the Messiah’s lineage as King David’s great grandparents (Ruth 4:21-22)—is a moving love story, while also one of devotion, faithfulness and restoration. Boaz is a picture of our Redeemer whereas Ruth is an image for Jesus’ Bride, the true Church.

“The Atonement of Jesus ... satisfied the justice of God by enabling God to punish our sin [via] our Substitute, Jesus Christ. ... The Atonement was also a ransom (paid to God) to liberate the captives [of sin]. ... [Related to redemption and atonement was Israel’s legal concept of] the kinsman-redeemer. [Per] Leviticus 25:23-28 ... property was to remain in [a] family and ... not ... given to others. If a person became poor and had to sell [his] inheritance, [a] kinsman was to come and buy it back so that it would remain in the family [to preserve his inheritance].” (Ligonier)

“The story of Ruth and Boaz begins when Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, return to Bethlehem from Moab ... [after the death of] Naomi’s husband and both sons, one [Ruth’s] husband. ... [These circumstances left] the women penniless ... Naomi sends Ruth to glean in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi ...

“In Ruth 3:9, we see a beautiful and poignant picture of the needy supplicant (Ruth), unable to rescue herself, requesting of the kinsman-redeemer (Boaz) that he cover her with his protection, redeem her,

and make her his wife. ... In the same way, the Lord Jesus Christ bought us for Himself, out of [our bondage to sin and] made us His own beloved Bride.” (GotQuestions.org)

God made each of us in His own image (Genesis 1:27). However, our sinfulness has distorted that image severely. Further, sinning separates us from God while amassing a debt we cannot pay. If unredeemed upon our physical death, that debt compels God—in His holiness—to judge. “[Jesus] is our Kinsman-Redeemer who paid our debt ... [The Father] sent Christ to secure our inheritance by paying the moral debt we owed as covenant-breakers.” (Ligonier) The debt is “*Paid in full!*” (John 19:30).

QUESTIONS

What is the significance of the story of Ruth and Boaz? What was a “kinsman-redeemer” in ancient times? How and why does sinning separate us from God while amassing a debt we cannot pay?

PRAYER

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen (GlobalGrace)

Ask the Lord to raise up believers who will step into the gap with prayer and financial support for GlobalGrace. Many friends who have supported Bryant and Anne for decades are now elderly and unable to continue. God knows the needs are as great as ever, and they are deeply grateful to Glenkirk.



Sources

- Learn Religions' quotes are from <https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-lent-700774>.
- Christianity.com's quote can be found at <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/salvation/what-is-atonement-biblical-meaning-and-definition.html>.
- The author of the hymn, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is unknown; it was first translated in 1851 by John Mason Neale.
- Merriam Webster's "ransom" definition is from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ransom>.
- Theopedia's quotes can be found at <https://www.theopedia.com/christus-victor>.
- James Rochford's quotes are from <https://www.evidenceunseen.com/christ/3-the-christus-victor-theory-or-ransom-theory/>.
- GotQuestions.org's quotes can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/atonement-theories.html> and <https://www.gotquestions.org/kinsman-redeemer.html>.
- Ligonier's quotes are from <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/our-kinsman-redeemer>.

These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.

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