

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

MARCH 11 - 15, 2024

THE GREATNESS OF THE

# CROSS

2/18 - 3/17

LENTEN SERMON SERIES



# MONDAY

Read **Genesis 3:1-19; Romans 5:12; 8:19-23**

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Skeptics' leading criticisms of Christian beliefs include the challenge, "If God is good, loving, all-powerful and sovereign, why is there so much evil and suffering in the world?" Interestingly, this is a great place to meet unbelievers where they are. Most anyone reasonably mature with normal capacities can see that things all around are "not as they should be," far from ideal. A quick scan of daily events, as well as the frustrations of everyday life and even our own tendencies, reinforce this observation.

It is important to understand that the world is not as God intended it. *"Sin came into the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and so death spread to all people because all sinned"* (Romans 5:6). Resultantly, *"creation was subjected to futility ... [needing] be set free from its bondage to corruption and ... [until then] groaning ... in the pains of childbirth"* (Romans 8:20-22). God's creation was "very good" (Genesis 1:31) until Adam's and Eve's rebellion against God prompted the enduring curse upon humankind and all creation.

God created us as an expression of His goodness, creativity and love, to be in intimate fellowship with humankind. But sin broke relationship with God, a continuing pattern among anyone ever born other than Jesus Himself. Thankfully, our holy (perfect,



set-apart, merciful) God made a way to save us when we couldn't save our selves.

Do you struggle with what do say to a family member, friend, colleague or neighbor who apparently doesn't walk with Christ? What about a new acquaintance, wherein you have no idea regarding his or her spiritual journey? Meet these people in fallen creation, a reality everyone faces. Perhaps a question like "How do you feel about the state of the world?" or "Why do you think things are such a mess most everywhere?" is a great place to start such spiritual conversations.

And this is part of the good news ("gospel") of God's plan: He will not leave things as they are—presently in broken, troublesome imperfection and decay. Jesus Christ will return, setting all things right, reversing the curse and redeeming creation just as He has His true followers.

## QUESTIONS

Where is a great place to meet unbelievers where they are, to prompt a spiritual conversation? Why did God create humankind in the first place? What's the good news regarding what God has yet to do?

## PRAYER

### Neighborhood Homework House (NHH)

On Friday, March 15, twenty-eight NHH teens along with four adult leaders will head to Winter Camp in the Big Bear Area. Pray for safe travels, safe activities, overall wellness and a wonderful experience. The staff and volunteers are anticipating this to be a special weekend for all who are able to attend.



# TUESDAY

Read **Romans 5:13-21; Galatians 3:19-25; Hebrews 10:1**

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W.C. Fields was a well-known vaudevillian and comedian in the early 1900s, known for his drinking and womanizing. In 1946, a friend found Fields reading the Bible intently as death neared. Surprised, he asked, “What are you doing?” Fields responded, “Looking for loopholes.” And so it remains today, even among professing Christians.

A continuing, spirited debate: “Is the Law still relevant?” Biblically, “the Law” can refer to any of these: the 10 Commandments; the collective Jewish religious, civil and dietary laws; or the Bible’s first five books (“the Torah”). In New Testament usage, “the Law” generally means the 10 Commandments.

Those challenging the Law’s present significance cite “*Christ is the end of the law*” (Romans 10:4), “*you are not under the law, but under grace*” (Romans 6:14), “*if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law*” (Galatians 5:18), etc. Antinomianism (“against law”) over-extends and misapplies such verses, adherents including ancient Gnostics, “carnal Christians,” and others holding “the Law doesn’t matter” views.

Legalists represent the other extreme, including ancient Pharisees, Judaizers (Jewish heritage believers maintaining that one must pass through Judaism to be a legitimate Christian), and those overemphasizing God’s holiness and rules-following at the expense



of His grace. Both extremes—“the Law is meaningless” and “the Law is supreme”—are perilous.

Paul skillfully characterized part of the Law’s role: “*the law was our guardian (schoolmaster and mirror) until Christ came*” (Galatians 3:24, parenthetical text added)—it clearly shows our need for a Savior.

The Hebrews’ author called it “*a shadow of the good things to come*” (Hebrews 10:1). In keeping the Law perfectly, Jesus fulfilled it and thereby was qualified to take our place in receiving the fullness of God’s judgment.

The Law remains “the right way to live”—even the Fourth Commandment to “*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy*” (Exodus 20:8), whose principle (dedicated, undistracted, meaningfully set-apart time with God) still applies although we need not adhere only to Saturday Sabbath-keeping (Romans 14:5). The Law cannot save you—only redeeming faith in Jesus can—nor does it equip us to walk faithfully—only the indwelling Holy Spirit does this. However, it endures in righteousness and relevance.

## QUESTIONS

What are some common “loopholes” that others might look for in the Bible? What is “antinomianism” and what are some of its problems? If we are saved by grace, is the Law still relevant and useful?

## PRAYER

### Neighborhood Homework House (NHH)

On Friday, March 15, twenty-eight NHH teens along with four adult leaders will head to Winter Camp in the Big Bear Area. Pray for safe travels, safe activities, overall wellness and a wonderful experience. The staff and volunteers are anticipating this to be a special weekend for all who are able to attend.





# WEDNESDAY

Read **Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 5:14-15, 18-20; 6:23**

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If you asked a typical unbeliever, “Are you a fallen sinner spiraling toward damnation, desperately needing a Savior?” they would likely dismiss you disparagingly. A more palatable question, recalling Monday’s devo, is: “If we’re not sinners, how do you explain the world’s evils?” Many blame a “god” in whom they profess disbelief, renouncing personal accountability. Hugh Ross observed, “[Many atheists’ anti-God] passion and intensity ... [indicates] that they really do believe in the [biblical] God ... but ... do not like Him ... [or] His followers.” Adrian Rodgers’ harmonious quote: “[Unbelievers] can’t find God for the same reason a thief can’t find a policeman.”

A theological question to consider: Are we sinners because we sin, or do we sin because we’re sinners? Islam teaches the former, seeing newborns as untainted, their subsequent sinfulness due to external influences. The cults generally agree.

One Christian denomination teaches that babies are born stained with literal “original sin,” damned at birth and requiring infant baptism to be saved. Other Christians, including Glenkirk’s ECO denomination, believe that we’re born with a sin nature, an inherited, fallen, driving inclination toward sinning. ECO emphasizes infant baptism not as a means to salvation, but as “a sign and seal of [God’s] covenant of



grace [in Christ], a mark of entrance into the visible church” and a congregational call to support the child’s Christian upbringing.

The Bible teaches that physical death is the inevitable consequence of sin (Romans 6:23), that “*sin reigned in death*” (5:21). Romans 5 underscores that “*death reigned ... [and] many died through [Adam’s] trespass (vv. 14, 15) ... [which] led to condemnation for all ... [as] the many were made sinners*” (vv. 18, 19). The natural, fallen person—either hostilely opposed to God or passively resisting God—rejects the only Remedy for this plight, the Savior who has already secured his/her ransom if only he/she would receive Him.

In an increasingly post-Christian America, is it any wonder that “the suicide rate ... has risen steadily over the past 18 years” to its highest level since WWII? (USA Today) What, then, are we to do? Lovingly share with all “*the hope that is in you*” (1 Peter 3:15)!

## QUESTIONS

Are we sinners because we sin, or do we sin because we’re sinners? What is Glenkirk’s and ECO’s stance on “original sin” and infant baptism? What might you do about the US’s rising suicide rate?

## PRAYER

Neighborhood Homework House (NHH)

Pray for the safety of the daily programs. Students, families, volunteers and staff are consistently encountering people experiencing homelessness. There is no comprehensive security or daily oversight of the campus where the Homework House programs occur daily.



# THURSDAY

Read **Romans 5:16-21; Galatians 3:10-14; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49**

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A curse is defined as “a solemn utterance intended to invoke a supernatural power to inflict harm.” (Quizlet) It’s unlikely you ever contemplate curses seriously. We dismiss them as superstition, the fabled stuff of enchanters or voodoo. However, the Bible talks of curses; in fact, it reveals all as cursed apart from Christ, fallen creation included.

*“By the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners”* (Romans 5:19), which is evidence of the curse’s cause and enduring effect. “[Biblically], a curse implies being separated from God and thus subject to His holy judgment.” (Doug Redford) “[The fall] would never have [happened] if Adam and Eve ... obeyed God. ... Instead of subduing the devil, they listened to his lies ... [Resultantly], they lost their authority [on] earth, their right standing with God, and ... [in] the curse [itself]. ...

“But, long before any sin was ever committed, God had a plan that would reverse the curse and restore [humankind] to right-standing with Him. ... Jesus Christ would shed His blood to redeem [humankind] ... [overturning] the curse ... [and shattering] the power of the devil to steal, kill and destroy.” (Cathy Duplantis) “Jesus’ separation from God, His being ‘forsaken’ (Matthew 27:46), allowed us to be forgiven and reunited with God.” (Redford) *“Christ redeemed us from the curse*



*of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Romans 5:13). The Lord’s sacrifice at Calvary, “this one act of love, ... [enabled] God’s blessing to be upon everyone who would obey His word by faith.” (Duplantis)*

*“The first man (Adam) was from the earth, a man of dust; the second Man is from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:47). “By the one [perfect] Man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).*

As the only sinless Person, Jesus could substitute for us on the cross; as God, He has the capacity both to receive our sin fully and judge completely and righteously. Christ is “*the last Adam*” (1 Corinthians 15:22), the only Way to reconciliation with God. Gloriously, “*just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the Man of heaven*” (1 Corinthians 15:49).

## QUESTIONS

What does the biblical view that humankind and all of creation are under a curse mean? How is Jesus Christ uniquely qualified to “reverse the curse”? Why does the Bible sometimes refer to Jesus as “*the second Man*” (1 Corinthians 15:47) or “*last Adam*” (1 Corinthians 15:22)?

## PRAYER

### Neighborhood Homework House (NHH)

NHH has an opening for a Volunteer Coordinator that they’ve been unable to fill since December. Volunteers are essential to the work they do daily with students. Please pray that the right candidate comes forward to help equip, train and recruit volunteers.





# FRIDAY

Read **Romans 5:20; Romans 6:1-7, 15; Luke 6:43-46**

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Of all the spiritual conversations I've ever had, two are most troubling. A somewhat carnal colleague once quipped, "I walked down to receive Jesus when I was a kid. Who's to say I'm not still saved?" Another friend commented regarding her confidence in her husband's eternal fate, "Jamie did the whole 'born-again thing' in school." Both of these typify an attitude which Dietrich Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace."

Bonhoeffer defined cheap grace as "'the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline. Communion without confession. ... Grace without discipleship, grace without the cross ... [nor] Jesus Christ.' ... [It embraces] the idea that we can have Jesus as Savior, but not necessarily as Lord, ... that as long as we make a profession of faith, we are saved." ([GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org))

Jesus not only bore our sins, but was "*made ... to be sin*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Contemplate the gravity of this. God Himself came to His creation in a saving mission of reconciliation, born in a mangy feed trough to an unwed teenaged girl pledged to an impoverished carpenter. They lived in a backwater village, likely the objects of ongoing, scandalous small-town rumors. From at least age 30, Jesus had no home or income-producing vocation.



The horror of Jesus' torture and crucifixion are underplayed cinematically—few could have survived His scourging, His back flayed open to the bones and produced a shocking amount of blood loss. He was humiliatingly stripped naked and hung in front of His own mother, only John among the twelve disciples having not abandoned Him. And the most costly and painful of all: amidst the fullness of God's holy wrath poured out at Calvary's cross, Father and Son were separated for the only time throughout eternity.

“We are not saved by a profession of faith, ... [merely] by praying the Sinner's Prayer, ... [nor by] signing a card or walking down an aisle. We are saved by [God's grace, through] a living and active faith (James 2:14-26) ... that manifests itself in repentance, obedience and love of God and our neighbor. Salvation is not a transaction; it's a transformation. ... There is nothing 'cheap' about grace!” (GotQuestions.org)

## QUESTIONS

What is “cheap grace”? What does “We are not saved by a profession of faith” mean? Do you agree?

## PRAYER

### Neighborhood Homework House (NHH)

The NHH staff is actively looking for a different location within Azusa that can easily and affordably be converted for their programs. They are open to a purchase or long-term lease but are primarily looking for a partner who shares their vision for serving Azusa families. Please pray that a viable solution is in place by fall 2024.





## Sources

- ECO's quote is from the ECO Constitution, Essential Tenets 2022, page 6.
- Hugh Ross' quote can be found at <https://reasons.org/explore/publications/questions-from-social-media/why-are-atheists-so-passionate-against-gods-existence>.
- Adrian Rodgers' quote is from his radio teaching ministry, "Love Worth Finding," from the audio sermon available at <https://www.lwf.org/sermons/audio/no-other-way-to-heaven-except-through-jesus-1965#:~:text=The%20Refusal%20Factor%3A%20light%20refused%20increases%20darkness.%20Adrian,and%20we%20continue%20to%20refuse%20God%2C%20we%20regress.>
- USA Today's quote is from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/graphics/2023/11/29/2022-suicide-rate-historical-chart-comparison-graphic/71737857007/>.
- Quizlet's quote can be found at <https://quizlet.com/381983620/the-boy-who-harnessed-the-wind-chapter-1-5-flash-cards/>.
- Doug Redford 's quotes are from <https://christianstandard.com/2023/03/reverse-the-curse/>.
- Cathy Duplantis' quotes can be found at <https://www.cfaith.com/index.php/article-display/105-featured-c5-articles/21542-the-curse-has-been-reversed>.
- GotQuestions.org's quotes are from <https://www.gotquestions.org/cheap-grace.html>.

*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](mailto:KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org). If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.*