

Speaker 1:

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. So we have the beginnings of creation and the immediate aftermath of all of that. So Adam and Eve have ate the fruit, they've realized that they were naked, and they hid from God. And God comes into the garden and he is "surprised." He's like, "Where are you?" God really didn't know what was going on here. Of course, he knew what was going on. I think God was asking this question, "Where are you?" to see the response and the reaction of Adam and Eve? Were they going to own up to it? Were they going to confess their sins? Were they going to go back to the Savior for their hope, their God, or were they going to make excuses and point fingers? Guess what? They made excuses and they pointed fingers.

But it's interesting how they pointed the fingers. Now, Eve, she says she owns up to it a little bit, but she also points to the serpent. "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Okay, fine. So I'm trying to pass some of the blame onto the devil made me do it. Not my fault. The devil made me do it." Right? Adam, on the other hand, "The woman that you gave me." He's not pointing fingers at the woman. He's pointing fingers at God. He's literally saying, "God, if you hadn't given this woman, things would've worked out just fine. It's your fault, God."

Now, we might laugh at that. We might think that is pretty bold and brazen, but in essence, we kind of do the same thing. I know we wouldn't want to admit it, but whenever we say, "Why me? Why is this happening to me? It's as if God, you're not being fair. This isn't fair." Have we ever said that in our lives? In essence, we're saying, "God, you don't get it right. You're not doing it right. If you've done it right, then things would work out for me and life would be fair." So we, in the same way, often point our fingers at God and say, "God, this is your problem, not mine." Or like Eve, "The devil made me do it. It's not my fault. I couldn't help myself." Either way, we're not taking responsibility for what we have done, which is we have not heard the word of God. Or when we have heard it, we've rebelled against it, and we have fallen short of the glory of God. And we have brought all sorts of sin and chaos and death into this world.

Really, the reason that we have any of the problems in this world is because we did not trust God's word in the first place.

And in our own individual lives specifically, a lot of the problems often come because we don't trust God's word as he says. We try and create our own law. We try and define God's will in our own ways, by what we want or what we think is important rather than what God says is important. And so we live with trials and tribulations and heartache and death, and demons and all the chaos that is going around us. And yet, in the midst of all of this, in the midst of the sorrow and the

pain and the suffering that we have, we still can live in joy and peace. Why? Because we have done the work and gotten it right? No, but because God has promised to be with us. He has promised that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, that we are made part of the family of God in our baptisms, brought into the family, redeemed and restored, and forgiven, forgiven of our sin, forgiven of our finger-pointing, forgiven of that rebellion that we ourselves have brought against God.

But even though we are forgiven, we live in a world that is still filled with chaos, still filled with problems and trials and tribulations. Now, last week, we talked about our lives being a great treasure contained in clay pots. And the understanding is God has given us his life, he has given us his spirit, and yet we hold this in earthen vessels. Vessels that are fragile, vessels that are temporary. We know how easily clay pots can break and fall apart. Well today, we have Paul talking about not clay pots, but that we live in tents, that our lives, that our earthly home is this tent that we live in. Now, if any of you have been camping, you know that tent living is not a permanent solution to life. I don't know about you, but the older I get, the less I want to sleep on the ground in a tent.

It gets harder and harder every year. But a tent is flimsy, a tent is thin, and it tears, it rips, and it is affected by the elements around it. And so that is the description that Paul has of our life here on earth. We do live in a world that is still filled with sin, our own personal sin, and then the sin of everything around us, the chaos, and the fact that our sin has led to the one thing that all of us fear is death. The wages of sin is death. And God promised that once we ate that fruit, we were going to die. And that's what we've been doing ever since. And yet, even though we know we're going to die again, we are not afraid. And again, we can live in joy and hope because, again, our lives are this great treasure held in a tent.

And the tent is a temporary dwelling place because we are not citizens of this world. We're in this world. We're here. We're living, but it's not our home. It is, by definition, transitory. It is transient. It does not last here. Our lives are described as tents. When we die, our lives are described as a building, a sure and firm foundation that we have in Christ Jesus, a building that is solid and will never be compromised, and that will last, and in this case will last for all eternity. So even though we suffer personal sufferings of guilt and frustration and physical sufferings of illnesses and pains and broken bones and all these other things that we must face in this life, and ultimately the fragility of our life that leads to death itself, we are not afraid. Not only are we not afraid. We're filled with joy and hope and confidence. So even if we're facing a hard time in our own individual lives, and even if we look around the world and we go, "Wow, this world is falling apart."

Even when we see all of that, we still live with joy and hope in our lives because we know this is temporary. It's not going to last. We know that our hope is elsewhere. And so even when we face our own last breath, we are not afraid because we know that Christ died to forgive our sins, and that confidence holds us so that everything that happens in this world, we do not need to be overwhelmed by it. There are times in this world where it feels like the events of life are just overcoming us, and we're feel like we're without hope, but that is never the case. We are always with hope in Christ Jesus, and all of our sin is forgiven. Christ died on the cross to forgive the sins of all of humanity for all time, including Adam and Eve's and the fruit, and including the last person alive. He forgave all their sins. And because he died, all of that sin is forgiven.

But wait a second. Didn't Jesus just say there's an unforgivable sin, a sin against the Holy Spirit? It's true, but this is the case. All of the sin of all of humanity was indeed and is indeed forgiven on the cross. Christ's death on the cross when he said it is finished, that's what he meant. Now, the unforgivable sin is not believing that that is for you or not desiring that for you, or not walking in that faith. In other words, it's "Yeah, okay, Christ died on the cross to forgive my sins, but I think I'm a good person, so I'm going to rely upon that instead." The unforgivable sin is rejecting the fact that his death in the cross was for you, believing in some other way of salvation, other than Christ dying on the cross and giving it to you freely as a gift. That is the only unforgivable sin.

Now, in my years of pastoring at different congregations, I've had this question come up. What is the unforgivable sin? And am I in danger of committing it? If you're concerned about whether or not you've committed it or not, don't worry. You haven't. Because if you have committed it, you won't care. Basically, the unforgivable sin is walking away and not caring about whether Christ died on the cross for you or not. That's it. And even then, God pursues us to the very last breath, so that until we die, there's always hope. There's always hope that even those who do not believe will be brought into the family of God, become brothers and sisters in Christ through his word and through his love.

And so we on this earth have a duty and a privilege to pray for our friends, our family, our loved ones who may not know or who seem to have rejected this sacrifice. It is our privilege to pray for them to ask that God would come into their hearts, through his word that they might know and trust that grace for them. And so we do not give up hope, even for those who seem lost, because God's word is effective, and it accomplishes what he desires. And so we can pray and continue to pray for those that we are uncertain of or know or do not believe, and that is what we are called to do, so that God's word might dwell in them richly and that they

might know that grace and mercy and peace and that joy and that confidence that we have.

This life is transitory. You're in a tent right now, and ultimately that tent will give out. But do not be afraid for God has prepared for you, a place where you will dwell for all eternity in the firm foundation of Jesus Christ as your Lord, and Savior, and a building that will last. These wonderful mansions that he has prepared for us to dwell in, our heavenly bodies are restored bodies in paradise, where we will live without fear, without pain, without suffering, without worry, without doubt, without anxiety, without disease. We will be at peace and free to celebrate the joy of our salvation for all eternity. May his grace and his mercy and his peace be and abide with you in joy and love from this day forward until eternity. Amen.