

Remarkable Redeemer

Series: Advent 2009, #2

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Introduction

Last week we began Advent with thinking about Jesus as the *Breath of Life*. This week, as we've already said, we are thinking about Jesus as the *Remarkable Redeemer*. As with many words, *remarkable* has a wide range of meanings. While it basically means to be worthy of being noticed, sometimes it means the best thing about something that really is not all that great, while at other times it describes what someone thinks is the best thing ever. You may have heard the line, "The most *remarkable* thing about my mother is that for thirty years she served nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found."¹

When we speak of Jesus Christ as the *Remarkable Redeemer* we are referring to Him as the one and only, the wonderful- beyond-comprehension Redeemer. We will begin with reviewing from the Bible that Jesus is in fact the Redeemer, and then turn our attention to what He redeems us *from* and what He redeems us *to*.

Jesus Is The Redeemer.

Let's start by reviewing the basic idea of redemption. The overall concept of redemption is to buy or ransom something or someone. On November 25 Amanda Lindhout, a journalist from Sylvan Lake, and Australian photographer Nigel Brennan were released after being held by kidnappers in Somalia for 15 months. According to news accounts their families payed a ransom to free them. Reports suggest that the ransom could have been over \$700,000.² Their families ransomed, redeemed them from captivity.

Our situation is that we are sinners by nature and action. Our sinfulness and sin separates us from God who is holy. We are captives, slaves to sin. There is nothing we can do individually or collectively to free ourselves. As Jesus said, "everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin" (John 8:34). As the apostle Paul wrote, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and also, "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Romans 3:23, 20).

As slaves of sin we naturally are under the domination of Satan's forces who work hand in glove with our sinful nature. The apostle John tells us, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). We need to be *redeemed* from our sin, all its devastation and the separation from God it brings. We need a *Redeemer*.

The remarkable news is that God is the Redeemer, and that He provides redemption for us. We don't deserve it nor can we earn it. It is God's gift. Both the Old and New Testaments tell us that God is the Redeemer. King David wrote, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). Isaiah frequently refers to God as the Redeemer. For example, in 44:6, "Thus

says the LORD, the King of Israel and his *Redeemer*, the LORD of hosts, 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.'”

The Old Testament prophesied and the New Testament recorded that Jesus Christ, God the Son, is the Redeemer. When Joseph and Mary brought the newborn Jesus to the Temple, an elderly man named Simeon was there. God had promised him he would see the Savior before he died. The Holy Spirit directed him to say,

“Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32)

Jesus said His purpose for coming into the world was “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). He left us a great example and perfect teaching. But they do not redeem us. He gave His life to redeem us. The apostle Paul wrote, “In Him we have redemption *through His blood*, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

This is the basic truth, the remarkable message of the gospel. Let's survey some of what the Bible tells us about Jesus, the *Remarkable Redeemer*. First, what ...

Jesus Redeems Us From ...

He redeems us from sin. This should be the obvious starting point of redemption because all of us are sinners. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Titus 2:14 tells us Christ “gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed.” Paul asserts that sin shall not be the master over the redeemed (Romans 6:14).

This wonderful truth, I said, *should be* the obvious starting point of redemption. But it is not for many. Some don't use the words sin and redemption at all. Others see sin as isolation or alienation, not connected to right and wrong, good and evil, morality and immorality. Then there are those who see sin as simply a failure to reach your potential.

The Bible tells us sin is not measuring up to God's perfect character and law. It is missing the mark, going our own way, transgressing His law, being lawless. It is the natural way of life and the universal enslaver of all who enter this world. Our *Remarkable Redeemer* redeems us from sin, its control, devastation and penalty.

Jesus also redeems us from being under the Law and its curse. Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia about justification by faith as he combatted the Jewish legalism that threatened their freedom in Christ. He said,

“For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.’ ...

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’” (3:10, 13)

And also,

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (4:4-5)

When God gave the Law to Israel, He stated blessings He would give them if they kept it and curses or judgments if they did not keep it. God did not give the Law as a means to becoming righteous, but to show their sinfulness and need to trust God and receive His mercy and grace by faith. When Christ took our sins on Himself on the cross, He took our curses, our judgment for our sins; and He paid the price, He redeemed us from the Law. So, as Paul wrote in Romans 6, we “are not under law but under grace” (6:14).

As well, Jesus also redeemed us from Satan’s realm of darkness. 1 John 5:19, again, tells us, “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” Satan is a usurper. He and his forces direct and control the evil, the sin in our world. Those who are not redeemed by Christ are still prisoners of Satan’s forces as well as sin.

Now, Satan’s doom was sealed when Christ gave Himself as a ransom on the cross. Galatians 1:4 states us Christ “gave Himself for our sins so He might rescue us from this present evil age.” The apostle Peter adds, God “has called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The redeemed are called out of darkness—that is, out of not being able to see God, His truth, beauty and holiness—to the life He designed for us.

For now Satan and his forces are the “rulers... the powers ... the world forces of this darkness ... the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). He and his forces prowl “around like a roaring lion” looking for people to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Praise God for Christ your Redeemer who has ransomed you from Satan’s rule of darkness, that God has “rescued [you] from the domain of darkness, and transferred [you] to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13).

The last part of what Christ redeemed us from we are noting today is futility. Futility is worthlessness, emptiness, even if one pursues fulfillment and meaning with sincere, disciplined effort. You may have heard the old piece of advice, “Never try to teach a pig to sing. It just wastes your time and annoys the pig.” The point: “It’s a *futile*, worthless effort!”

King Solomon opened the book of Ecclesiastes with “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.’ What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?” (1:2-3). He goes on from there to tell us he tried to find a solid substance, fulfilling meaning in his life through pursuing wisdom, pleasure, wealth and establishing a legacy. But all of it was vanity, empty, futile.

Life without God at the center is futile. In the 17th century Pascal wrote,

“Being unable to cure death, wretchedness and ignorance, men have decided, in order to happy, not to think about such things.”³ Of course, there is no real, lasting fulfillment in that.

In the 20th century Francis Schaeffer dealt with *the human predicament*, that is, the significance of human life in a world that has set God aside, where there is not God. William Lane Craig, one of today’s leading apologists, writes,

“If there is no God, then man and the universe are doomed. Like prisoners condemned to death, we await our unavoidable execution. There is no God, and there is no immortality. And what is the consequence of this? It means that life itself is absurd. It means that the life we have is without ultimate significance, value or purpose.”⁴

But God is, and so there is significance and meaning in life. Christ redeems us from a life of futility. The apostle Peter wrote,

“you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your *futile way of life* inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Part of that futility, the apostle Paul states, is “being slaves to those which by nature are no gods” (Galatians 4:8). Some are idols of wood and stone. Others are the idols of self, self-fulfillment, self-actualization, wealth, reputation and position. Yes, Jesus redeems us from futility. Now let’s move to briefly note some of the things that ...

Jesus Redeems Us To ...

First, He redeems us to the forgiveness of our sins. This is often the first thing that comes to mind when we think of being redeemed, being saved, and rightly so. We’ve already looked at being redeemed *from* sin, now I want you to think about being redeemed to being *forgiven* people. You see, when Christ redeems us from sin and all its deadly devastation, He does not sit our sin to the side, but He *forgives* us of all our sin. It is no longer a barrier to fellowship with God. It will not be brought up again. The penalty has been paid. As Jesus said, His blood was “poured out for many for the *forgiveness* of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Paul proclaims, “In [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the *forgiveness* of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). And again, “in whom [in Christ] we have redemption, the *forgiveness* of sins” (Colossians 1:14). Yes, Christ redeems us to be forgiven people.

Then, He redeems us to be justified and righteous. In Christ we are declared “Not Guilty!” and have been given His righteousness. *What a change in identity!* Ephesians 4 tells

us, to “put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been *created in righteousness* and holiness of the truth” (24). And it all is in and by Christ. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Romans 3:24 says that we are “justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

This is our standing before God in Christ. We are to stand, to live in it by faith and God’s power and grace. We are to grow in these qualities so they are primary attributes of who we are, so that we live out the truth Paul states in Romans 6, “having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (18).

Next, our *Remarkable Redeemer* redeems us to everlasting life. This is what Jesus promised and is the hallmark of the gospel.

“Whoever believes will in Him [Christ] have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:15-16)

Last week we considered our struggle as creatures of time, of beginnings and endings, to grasp eternal, everlasting life. It is more than life without end. It is primarily life with and of God. Jesus, in His High Priestly prayer said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). As the apostle John wrote,

“the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”
(1 John 5:11-12)

There is so much we can’t grasp here, but all that we can should give us confidence and peace leading to joyful worship and service.

The fourth thing Jesus redeems us to is be under grace. Grace runs against the grain of natural, sinful human nature. For example, we look at God’s command to Israel, “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” and see justice but not grace. While justice is certainly there, God’s command was not the automatic penalty that had to be enforced, but the maximum penalty allowed (Exodus 21:23-25). A judge could not decide “two eyes for an eye,” and certainly not “a life for an eye.” In His grace and mercy God set limits on punishments for injury.

Jesus, the apostle John writes, is “full of grace and truth” and “of His fullness we have received, grace upon grace” (John 1:14, 16). Paul reminds us that we are set free from trying to please God through any law-keeping or good works because we are now “under grace” (Romans 6:14).

There are implications of “this grace in which we stand” (Romans 5:2). One is found in Paul’s testimony in Acts 20:24.

“I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”

I don’t know about you. I may be the only one convicted by this verse at times. You see, I don’t always find it easy to count myself as unimportant in comparison to living and speaking the gospel of God’s grace so others can see and understand it. Sometimes it may be a matter of priorities. At other times it may be a matter of what I think is right or I have a right to do or receive. Being under grace we are to be people of grace in all ways and things, especially the grace of the gospel.

Next, Christ redeems us to purity. God “chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be *holy and blameless* before Him” (Ephesians 1:4). Yes, that is how God sees us now in Christ. This is an established reality!

But there is more. When we see Christ in heaven we will be completely pure. The apostle Paul wrote,

“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might *sanctify her*, having *cleansed her* by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, *having no spot or wrinkle* or any such thing; but that she would be *holy and blameless*.” (Ephesians 5:25b-27).

This too is an established reality!

But there is yet more. We are to be pure or holy here and now. We are to keep growing in purity. 1 Peter 1:5, “like the Holy One [God] who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior.” “But,” you may say, “you don’t know the things I struggle with, how firm a hold they have on me, how weak I am!” Remember, God gives us the ability to do all the things He commands (cf. Philippians 4:13).

One part in the process is our focus. The apostle John spells out the important relationship of one aspect of our focus to purity. 1 John 3:2-3.

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him *purifies himself, just as He is pure*.” (1 John 3:2-3)

If we really have the hope of being like Christ when He returns fixed on Him, on Christ Himself and His ability, of then having no weaknesses and sin but having complete purity,

it *will* motivate us to be pure here and now. This too is an established reality. Christ redeems us to purity.

Next, Christ redeems us to have the Holy Spirit within us. Jesus promised His disciples that when He left them the Holy Spirit would come and always be with them. He fulfilled that promise at Pentecost. Since then everyone who belongs to Christ has the Holy Spirit living within (Romans 8:9).

The Holy Spirit makes so much difference to us. For example, He seals us with God's mark of ownership and protection and is the pledge, the visible proof of our final and complete redemption. He teaches, corrects, and guides us as He takes the things of Christ and makes them plain to us. He gives us spiritual abilities for serving God from the treasury of Christ's grace.

Finally, Christ redeems us to serving God. Sometimes we may think of serving God as a heavy burden rather than a great privilege. "After all, what can I do? What can I do that really makes a difference?" And, especially in this season, "Where will I ever find the time and energy?" Christ redeemed each believer to be His servant. And, remember, what He intends and commands He enables us to do.

This service is based on faith, not just what we know or can see ourselves doing. It is also based on knowing we now are "slaves of righteousness", as Paul wrote in Romans 6:18. It is carried out relying on the spiritual abilities God has given us and the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. It begins and continues by presenting ourselves "as instruments of righteousness to God" (Romans 6:13). One goal here is one the apostle Paul had, that people will "regard" (see, recognize think of us) "as servants of Christ" (1 Corinthians 4:1). Is that what people think when they think of us?

Be glad and thankful, Jesus has redeemed you to serve Him.

Conclusion.

Jesus is the *Remarkable Redeemer!* We've covered many things today. If Jesus had not come, If he was not the *Remarkable Redeemer*, none of them would be true for anyone. What difference does, will this truth make for you today and throughout the rest of the Christmas season?

Imagine for a moment that you have a son in the military who is serving in Afghanistan. You, naturally, are very concerned about his safety. Your neighbors and good friends also have a son in the military. He has received notice that he too will be going to Afghanistan. They are really worried. It is on their minds all the time. It's lowered a pitch black gloom over them.

You shovelled your walk early and are warming up in the house with the TV on. A special news bulletin breaks into the programming. The Prime Minister just announced that a cease fire and peace accord has been reached in Afghanistan. All our troops are standing down and will soon be on their way home. No more troops will be sent there.

You are ecstatic! You literally jump, shout and cry for joy! Then, as you look out your window, you see your neighbor with his now permanent lifeless and glum expression going through the motions of shovelling his walk. You say to yourself, “He has to know this great news!” So you put on your coat and boots, run out to him with an ear-to-ear smile, waving your hands. But that’s all you do. You don’t say a word. Your neighbor looks at you and finally asks, “What’s gotten into you?” You say, “I have great, unbelievably good news you need to know that will change your life! But, I don’t talk about it, *I just live it!*”

I think we all would agree your neighbor would think the stress has been too much and you have gone off the rails.⁵

You get the point. You and I have the greatest news that everyone needs to hear. But sometimes, even in the Christmas season, we in effect say to people around us, “I have great, unbelievably good news you need to know that will change your life!. But, I don’t talk about it, *I just live it!*” Isn’t that ridiculous, even a bit crazy?⁵

As you reflect on these truths now with God and respond to His prompting in your heart, thank and praise Him that Jesus *is* the *Remarkable Redeemer*. Commit to both live *and* speak the good news of Him to one, two, three or many people in this Christmas season. Invite some of your neighbors and friends to come with you to Christmas events, including our Christmas Eve Service.

¹ A widely circulated line. Attributed to Calvin Trillin on <<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/472.html>>. Accessed 03 December 2009.

² “Alberta reporter leaves Somalia a free woman.” *CTV.ca Edmonton*. 26 November 2009. Accessed 02 December 2009. <http://edmonton.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20091126/edm_lindhout_release_091126/20091126/?hub=EdmontonHome>

³ Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Trans. A. J. Krailsheimer. (New York: Penguin Group), 1995, p. 66.

⁴ Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith* (3rd ed.). Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008, p. 72.

⁵ This illustration is based on and adapted from one by Dr. Earl D. Radmacher (President of Western Seminary when I attended). His illustration can be found in: Swindoll, Charles R. and Roy B. Zuck, editors. *Understanding Christian Theology*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003, p. 860.

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