

What is Sin? How Big is the Fall? How Big is God's Redemption?

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[0:00] Last week, we started a new series in this class on the book, A Quest for More, Living for Something Bigger Than You. Before we start doing what we're going to do today, we want to do some review.

Tripp, the author, Paul Tripp, said that this book is basically a meditation on one verse. Do you remember what that one verse is? It's Matthew 6.33, which says what?

Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added or given to you as well. And we saw last week that there's basically two ways that we can live our lives.

We can live as a pagan or as a disciple of Jesus Christ. And a pagan's mind and life is set in this world. That's where it's focused.

A pagan thinks about food and drink and clothes. Everything that he needs. That's where his concentration is on. The alternative is what Jesus proposes.

[1:11] And that is that we live for God's kingdom first. And so you can live for yourself and your needs, or you can live for God and his kingdom. And it's clear as we look around that people long to live for something more than just themselves and their needs.

They long to be a part of something bigger than themselves. And we gave some examples. We gave the example of the beauty queen and how she wants world peace.

And the football fan, he thinks of himself as part of something that's bigger than just himself. Because he is a fan of this football team.

And so he feels like he's part of this big organization that's centered around his favorite team. So he's connected to them.

And so how his team did last Sunday determines how he did this last week. Because he is a part of them. Well, the beauty queen and the football fan, they show us that humans were never meant to live isolated, singular, self-sized lives.

[2:22] God has designed us to be a part of something that's bigger than ourselves. And as sinners, the problem is we take that impulse, that God-given desire to live, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves.

And we turn it into very sinful, selfish, stupid, pointless, very small things. We still have the desire, but we take it and we use it in the wrong way.

Well, we all have this desire for something great. We want to live for something magnificent. And what the Bible calls that thing that we are longing to live for is glory.

Glory. Glory. We're all hardwired for glory. And we said last week that there's four kinds of glory that God has made us to live for. Do you remember what those were?

Any of those four? You don't have to know them all, but any of those four glories? The glory of God. That's the first one. That's the most important one. We were made to live for God's glory.

[3:34] To see Him, enjoy Him as something beautiful and magnificent. What else? And the other three are underneath the glory of God.

Mike. Stewardship glory. What did that mean? Right. He's called us to be stewards. We're called to care for more than just ourselves.

We're called to care for the whole creation. What else did we say? There's two other ones.

Revelation. We call that truth glory.

But we were meant to receive truth from outside of ourselves. We were never meant to have our thoughts contained to just what we could think and what we could experience.

We were made to live with God telling us how to think. And then there's the final one. Do you remember?

[4:34] Yes, dear. Community. And what did we mean by that? Right. We are made for relationships. We're made to be a part of families and cities and towns and churches.

And we were never meant to live as hermits. We were always meant to live as part of the fabric of the tapestry of humanity. Well, and that's what God has made us for.

And that is really the best and the happiest way to live. The problem is we don't live that way. As unconverted people, we live almost completely selfish lives.

We take all those things and we twist them and they all end up pointing back to us. And then even as believers, we have an extremely difficult time making the truly important things functionally important in our lives.

We end up living for less. So sin deceives us into living for less. And then God saves us and he gives us new ways to live for something great.

[5:55] And that's what we want to talk about today. That when we sin, we live for less. And then when God saves us, he brings us out of that small little box that we're in.

And he gives us back all those glories that we just talked about. Well, we have three questions today. The first is, what is sin? What is sin?

And the second thing is, well, when Adam and Eve sinned, how hard, how big was that fall? How hard did they fall when they sinned? And then the third question is, then how big is God's redemption?

What is God aiming for? So first, what is sin? The Apostle John said that sin is lawlessness. Lawlessness.

That's not the answer that we want. That's the right answer. Do you remember the Westminster Confession? It's of lesser authority than the Apostle. But what is sin according to the Westminster Confession?

[6:58] Does anyone remember? Okay. Sin is any lack of conformity unto the law of God or transgression of the law of God. And so those are both right answers.

And today we're going to give a complementary answer. A complementary definition of sin. And what we're saying is, sin is settling for less when God offers more.

Sin is settling for less when God offers more. And I didn't make that definition up. That came from Paul.

The Apostle Paul. The book of Romans. Romans 3.23. And what does Romans 3.23 say? Falling short of the glory of God.

And so that's what sin is. Sin is falling short. It's coming short of the glory of God. Sin is when we live for something other than the glory of God.

[7:57] It's living for less than enjoying God in all of His infinite goodness and greatness. Well, that's what sin is.

And every time we sin, we settle for something less when God is offering more. And we can see this all the time in our day-to-day lives. He gives an example.

And we're going to read it. And I want you to look and see how sin is settling for less. And as I read this illustration from Tripp, I want you to ask two questions.

Ask yourselves two questions. The first is, what is he living for at that moment? And what did he sacrifice in order to get it?

So two questions. What is he living for instead of the kingdom of God? And then, what did he sacrifice in order to get it? It was one of those moments, small and unimportant in one way, but a sign of something very significant when looked at from another perspective.

[9:02] We were on our way somewhere. Because of my eye problems, Luella often drives in the evening. As she headed off toward our location, I said, Don't you want to turn there?

Just when we passed the street where I would have turned. And she replied, That way will take too long. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, I reminded her.

And that's exactly why I didn't turn. But you're taking us out of the way, I insisted. Well, why don't you just relax and let me drive? Because I don't trust your sense of direction.

And Luella offered, Let's make a deal. When you're driving, you get to decide the route. And when I'm driving, I'll decide the route. But what about if you're going the wrong way? It's not a matter of right or wrong.

It's simply a matter of preference. And I thought without saying it, But my preference is right. Instead, I said, I wish we were in a helicopter.

[10:03] So I could show you the whole route. Then you would understand what I'm trying to tell you. Luella replied, I don't think a helicopter is what you need right now. So it was a moment of minor irritation, never exploding into full-blown anger, yet a moment that is worth unpacking.

What this conversation reveals is how hard it is for fallen human beings to keep focused on what is really important. In a heated moment, all of us are quite capable of treating a minor detail of life as if it were a major thing.

We are all capable of fighting for what has less value while forgetting things of transcendent value. So what was he living for instead of the kingdom of God?

Okay, how so? I can't see you. There you are. He wants to be right, doesn't he? He wants to be right.

And so he's living for himself in just a very minor detail. Yes, Jim? I can enter into that too because I'm in the same boat. I think it's got to be done my way. I find out my way isn't always the best way.

[11:16] But we have a hard time believing that sometimes, don't we? So he's living for himself, his own little, he wants to be right. And what did he sacrifice in order to get what he wanted?

Good advice. Peace.

Yeah. So instead of the fruit of the Spirit being peace, he decided that I want to be right and it doesn't matter. Peace doesn't matter. And so that's what sin is.

It's settling for lesser glory than what God wants for us. It's settling for a lesser glory than God. Well, we were made to live in light of these big glories, of these great glories that we just talked about.

But so often we live for our little kingdoms instead. And so let's go back to the garden, to Adam and Eve. And there's Adam and Eve and there's Satan.

[12:22] What did Satan offer Adam and Eve? He said, if you eat this fruit, you will what? You'll be like God.

You're going to escape God's narrow boundaries for your life. And you will live and you will enjoy so much more if you disobey.

And so Satan offered great glory, but in reality, their choice shrank their world into something very, very small.

And when we trade living for God's glory and living for his kingdom, what happens is our world gets very small. And it becomes about the size of me.

And so Satan is just like some, and I say some, not all. He's like some used car salesmen. They deceive.

[13:19] And they embellish the positives. And they hide the negatives. And they're full of plausible lies. So you're walking around the lot and you're interested in buying a car.

And you're looking at a car and up comes the salesman. And as you talk, he says something like this. The sound system in this car is the best in the entire industry.

And then he says, now just sit down in the seats. These seats have over 50 positions. Well, he's doing two things. He's making some minor features look really big.

And he's probably at the same time exaggerating how good they are. And he doesn't bother to tell you, you know, the things that are really important. That, you know, this car was pulled out of a lake a week ago and it's almost completely ruined.

And so he talks a big game. The salesman will talk a big game. But the entire thing is a bluff. And Satan works the same way. He makes a big deal out of sin.

[14:25] He makes it sound bigger and better than what it is. He makes sin look glorious and good. And he says, if you just spend your time and your money on yourself, then you'll be happy.

If you spend your money on yourself just this one time, you know what? This will do it. This will make you happy. You really will be happy if you buy that TV instead of giving to your brother or sister who needs help at church.

Well, he makes sin look like the route to the good life. And the whole time he's hiding the things that are most important.

He's hiding God's glory. And he diminishes. He makes small the joy that we could have in God. And he makes the joy that we can have in sin look really big.

And the problem is we play right into his hands. Because a lot of times we like in our hearts what he has to say to us.

[15 : 29] So a father will trade his children for a career. He'll trade his own family for a job. For going up higher and higher in the company. Now let me ask you, why would a man do that? Why would a man trade his family for a career? Why would he trade down like that? Roger. I think that's probably one of the most plausible lies there is. If I do this, then I'll be able to provide for them better. And so there is something of a truth in it. But there's a lot of falsehood. Someone else. Right. So I'm good at this. And I want to. It's best for them if I do what I'm best at. And so I'll pursue a career. Anything else?

[16 : 28] There's a glory there, isn't there? I want to look good. And to some extent, I will look good. So we trade a smaller glory for God.

And for something that's really much, much better. And that's what sin is. The man has to see in some way that there is some sort of lesser glory in a career than in a family. And the whole thing, it's full of plausible lies. Things that you could tell yourself. And they're almost true, but they're not. And so a young person will trade enjoying God and delighting in God for the approval of his peers.

And a wife will find her identity in her husband instead of in her God. And another man will trade food.

He'll trade food for satisfaction in God. And another man will trade pornography for true intimacy with his wife. We're very good at trading down.

[17 : 36] And we give up the glory of God. We give up things that are real and good like family. And we trade it away for something worse. And so we're all good at dabbling in lesser things.

And so we shrink our worlds down. We shrink our lives down until they're very little and really quite pathetic in a lot of ways. And so we begin living for this tiny, pathetic little kingdom of just my desires and pleasing me.

Well, this is a familiar quote from C.S. Lewis, but I think it's very, it's just really relevant for what this is about.

This is from C.S. Lewis. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak.

And we are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered to us. And like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.

[18 : 56] We are far too easily pleased. We are far too easily pleased. God tells us to seek his kingdom and his glory.

And instead we seek our own little kingdom. We revel in our glory and then we fall in love with my little kingdom. And you might say, okay, I think I'm pretty good in some of these areas that you're talking about.

Nothing seems way out of line in my life. And that could be true. But the real danger is not in the big things. That happens to some people. The real danger is in the little things.

Like that conversation that Paul Tripp recorded. Just a drive and a little argument and a heart is exposed. How many of you this morning had a little tiff with your wife for no good reason?

Well, maybe you aren't trading God's glory for a career or for the approval of people or for pornography or anything like that. But if you're anything like me in a lot of ways in your life, just the little things, you're trading your kingdom.

[20 : 13] You're trading God's kingdom for your kingdom. So Israel is in the desert. And in the book of Numbers, it says they want to go back to Egypt. They want to trade what God is giving them and what God is doing them for slavery.

Do you remember why? Why do they want to make that trade? Yes. It was a matter of the menu. They didn't like what was on the menu.

And so they were willing to trade God's glory for food. Now, let me ask you, do you ever trample on your wife's feelings and argue with your wife and complain in your heart over the food God has put on your table?

So the Israelites are on the foot of Mount Sinai. And they make a golden calf. And they're trading God who parted the Red Sea and who did the ten plagues.

They're trading God for something that they just obviously made with their own hands. They're going to make that trade. Why?

[21 : 23] Do you remember? Moses was taking too long. It wasn't a matter of the menu this time. It was a matter of scheduling. They didn't like the schedule that Moses was keeping and that God was keeping.

He wasn't fitting into their timeline. Our schedule is important. Yep. But if your schedule means more to you, what you have to do in the time you want to do it is more important to you than what God is doing in your life.

Then you're making a big trade. You're trading God's kingdom, God's priorities for your priorities in your little kingdom. And we end up settling for less.

Well, we could say a lot more. But we have to move on to the second question. And the question is, how hard did we fall? How big was humanity's fall into sin?

And the short answer is that it was a total catastrophe. It was a total disaster. And why was it so great? Because we chose autonomy.

[22 : 33] We chose self-rule over God's rule. We decided that we were going to have our own little kingdom. And we put our little kingdom against God's kingdom. And in every aspect of life, our kingdoms started crashing into each other.

And because our kingdom and God's kingdom affects everything, everything was ruined in the fall. So autonomy, self-rule is what Satan offered to Adam and Eve in the garden.

You won't need God. You'll be like God. And so your kingdom will come. Your will will be done. And you'll be like God yourself. And you'll have your own glory. And it was all so good.

It seemed so plausible. And they made the choice. And they decided they pushed God out of the center. And they took the center place.

They were the sun. And God was the earth. And the result was their world came collapsing on them, crashing down on top of them. And we became the center in our own thinking.

[23 : 45] And God became the moon. He was revolving around us. And the center is the worst place for a creature like us.

We're hardwired for glory. It's the worst place for us to be. Because instead of getting to see more glory and enjoying more glory, we get less.

Our world collapses on us. And so Adam and Eve, they went for autonomy. They went for independent glory. And instead they got nothing. Satan offered them more and they got less.

And he offered them glory. And they were naked and ashamed. And he promised that they would be like God. And at the end of the day, they weren't like God at all.

And they were just broken statues. They're just crushed flowers of what they used to be. Mere shadows of what humanity was. And so instead of life, they got death.

[24 : 48] And that fall had earth-shattering effects. So when the head of creation, humanity, Adam, falls, all creation went into a tailspin.

And it was a total disaster. If you look around and you wonder why pollution and death and why people starve to death, it is because of this.

Because we fell and everything was ruined. And so humanity, in Adam and Eve, we used to enjoy God's creation. But now, the fruit trees don't bear fruit.

The trees start to die. Animals start to die. There's healthy trees. And now, there's trees with no bark. Have you seen those in your neighborhood? Just this thing, this skeleton of life that is just standing there.

And that's what's going on with creation. Paul said, the creation was subjected to frustration.

Everything in creation was frustrated. And then a few verses later, he said, We know that the whole creation has been groaning.

[25 : 50] Every part of it is groaning. And so the fall was complete. It ruined our environment. And it ruined our relationships. So Adam blames Eve.

And Cain murders Abel. And Eve wants to rule over Adam. But Adam will rule over her. And sometimes it's not a very nice way of ruling.

And so instead of using their words to worship God and to build each other up, they start passing blame and insulting each other and boasting.

And the saddest thing of all was that their relationship with God was severed. So God went walking in the garden and he calls the man, Man, where are you?

Where are you? And Adam answers, I heard you in the garden and I was afraid. Because I was naked. And so I hid. And that's humanity.

[26:53] We've been hiding from God ever since. Instead of openness with God, we feel guilt and shame. And so the fall ruined all the glory that God originally meant for us.

He created us with. And so we were separated from God and his glory. We were separated from each other. Instead of enjoying community, we all essentially became narcissists.

We love ourselves. We are infatuated with ourselves. And we hate others. And we are hated by others. And so instead of living with God's truth, with revelation in our ears, with God talking to us, our minds were darkened.

And so we lost it all. And it is crucial. This is absolutely vital to remember how great this fall was. Because only if you see how great the fall is, will you begin to see what God has planned in his redemption.

That, and this is our third question. How great is God's redemption? How great is the redemption? Well, we sing it in that Christmas hymn.

[28:06] He came to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found. And so redemption, it's deeply personal to us, isn't it?

And it should be. But it isn't just for us. God's plan of salvation embraces all of creation.

It embraces rocks and hills and trees. That's part of that song. And it embraces animals. And it embraces plants. And it embraces relationships. It embraces people.

God is gathering up all this blighted world. And he's going to put it right. And that is what redemption is. God's redemption is as big as humanity's fall.

And so it's cosmic in scope. It includes the whole world. And that's important to keep in mind.

Because only when we see how comprehensive the fall was, will we begin to see how comprehensive God's kingdom is.

[29:07] And what God has called us to live for. So here's this logic. The fall was complete. And the scope of God's redemption is just as big.

And therefore, we are called to live with the total restoration of all of creation in mind, in view. And so God's redemption covers everything.

And so we are called to care about everything. If our redemption was just personal. That God just saved me. And that was the extent of it.

And he saved individuals. But he doesn't have in mind bringing a restoration to all things. Then we could just sit down to our happy little kingdoms.

And we could enjoy our happy little families. And the fact that God has saved us. And that makes our jobs better. And our families better. And our relationships better.

[30:07] And we could settle for our little kingdom. But, and all those things are good. I'm not making light of those.

They're all good. They're all a part of the blessing of redemption. But God's plan is greater than that. He's working on a much bigger scale than just you.

In your little life. In my little life. So he's working on a kingdom. That started before time.

And it entered into time in Jesus Christ. And ever since that time. The kingdom has been growing.

And growing. And going to the ends of the earth. And it will last forever and ever.

That's what God's agenda is. This kingdom. And it's as big as that. So let me ask you. Is your view. Is your view as big as God's view?

[31:08] Are you joining him. And building his kingdom. Or are you working on your own little kingdom? Listen to how.

Trip. Closes this chapter. You have. Been chosen to transcend. To transcend the boundaries. Of your own hopes.

And dreams. To transcend. The boundaries. Of your own plans. And purposes. And to transcend. The borders. Of your own family. And friends.

You've been chosen. To transcend. The furthest reach. Of your own definition. Of glory. To be a part. Of a greater glory. The glory of God. And his work.

Of making. All things new. So as we close. Let me ask you. Are you. Are you settling.

[32:03] For less. Are you living. For something. That's too small. Even. This is very possible. We. Receive. God's salvation.

And we view it as. This is the answer. To all my problems. This. Will make my family better. This helps me. To be content. In a bad situation.

This makes my kingdom. Work better. Are you living.

For something. Too small. Or. In the midst. Of. Of this total. Disaster. That we're in. This total. Disaster. Of sin.

Are you settling. For good things. Like. Like family. And friends. And family. And those are good things. Don't get me wrong. But. Are you just settling. For them.

[32 : 57] Or. Are you. Choosing. To take part. In something. That's greater. Than all of those things. The kingdom of God. And what God is doing.

In the world. Do you feel like. My life. Is connected to that. Or. Are you still just. Focusing on. Your life. Your little kingdom.

Are there any questions. We have a few minutes. Or comments. Does anything need. Clarified. It is. It's frightening. To. Think about. My wife isn't here. But. This morning. We fought over. There was a mess. In the microwave. And. She's saying something.

And I'm like. No. No. And then I'm like. What am I doing? I have this lesson. In my mind. What am I doing? I mean. Why. Why am I arguing. With my wife. Over a little mess.

[33 : 54] In the microwave. We do have a tendency. To. To narrow our lives. Further and further down. Until they're just. Really small and tight. And they're under our control. And everything seems.

To be going great. And if. They're not. We. We take immediate action. And make sure that. Our world gets to that. Tight little thing. That we can control. And. God's agenda is a lot bigger.

And. Thankfully. His resources. Are enough. To. When we. Get expanded out. Into. Areas that we're not comfortable with. That's where he meets us.

And that's where he says. My grace is sufficient for you. Any other comments? We have about one more minute. I think the.

This is just off the top of my head. We're supposed to speak the truth. In love. We're not supposed to speak the truth. In. An effort to. Impose our will on someone.

[34 : 51] And to make me look good. Because we can use the truth. As. A lever. To lift up my pride. And I think that's what he was doing. In that situation. If there was a loving way.

That that argument. Could have gone down. Then. I guess that would be another situation.

Wouldn't it? And. And I just thought of something else. You know.

Proverbs says. It's your glory to overlook an offense. And sometimes that means just. Yeah.

They're wrong. But. You know. So what?

I guess I'm big enough to allow a little. A person to be wrong in my world. That's as good as I can do. Better than I can do. So. Let's pray.

And then we'll be dismissed. Heavenly Father. We do pray that you would just give us an awareness. Of ourselves. And what we're doing. So much of the time.

[35 : 50] We're. Building our own little kingdom. And. Wanting things to go our way. Father. Will you. Just give us grace.

Grace to overlook offenses. Grace. To see your glory. Grace. To live. According to the gospel. In every situation. Father.

Will you open up our eyes. That our lives would be. Completely. Given over to the word of God. And so that. It would speak to us. And the spirit.

The Holy Spirit. He would speak to us. Through the word. And that we would be. Transformed. By the renewing of our minds. Will you. Give us grace. To live for your kingdom.

And to seek your kingdom first. And your righteousness. And. Let all of our needs. Help us to give those to you. In Jesus name.

[36 : 48] Amen. We're dismissed.