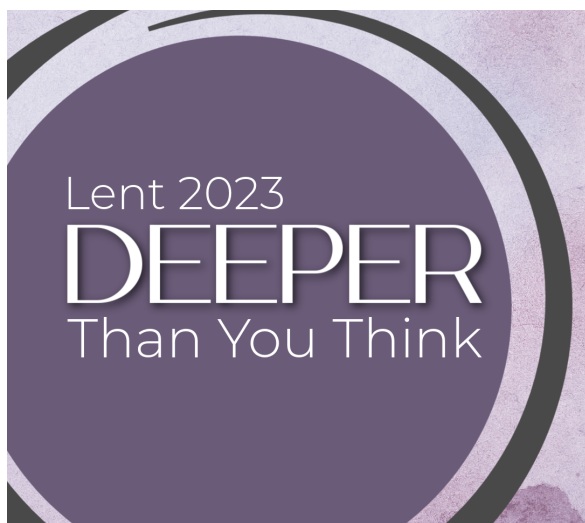


DEEPER THAN YOU THINK: Original Sin

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Michael Swartzentruber, Senior Minister



ROMANS 5:12-17

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— 13 sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14 Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. 16 And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings

justification. 17 If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. **What does it mean to you when Paul says that "all have sinned"?** Do you think this is an accurate way of talking about the human condition? What is your understanding of the word "sin"?
3. Paul sees the grace of God in Christ not just as an equal response to sin and death, but as an unequal response. Grace doesn't just balance the scales, it tips the scales toward a healed, whole, and abundant life, the one God dreams for all creation.

What does *grace* mean to you?

In what ways and at what times in your life have you experienced grace? Have you ever experienced grace as "tipping the scales" toward a more healed, loving, and fulfilling life?

South Elkhorn Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

4343 Harrodsburg Road, Lexington KY 40513

859-223-1433 southelkhorncc.org

4. **Paul leans on this idea of comparing “types” (see verse 14).** *This does not require a literal interpretation of Genesis 3.* It can be a way of saying that what the story of Adam shows is a universal human experience (mistakes, sin and death), something we all experience as part of our human condition. And what Christ is and does for us (free gift of God’s grace) not only belongs to every human person as much as sin and death, but is more powerful and more lasting. What do you think of how Paul interprets the story of Adam and then of Jesus? Does it surprise you that there are non-literal ways of interpreting scripture *in scripture*?

5. **The Church’s traditional doctrine of Original Sin** is not just the belief that every human is flawed or imperfect (ie, “all have sinned”), but that everyone is born fundamentally bad, carrying a “sin nature” that God despises and rejects (and thus separates us from God). What do you think of this doctrine and why?

6. **Original Blessing** is the idea that God first blesses us (see Genesis 1:28) and sees creation with humans in it as not just good, but *very good* (1:31). It is the idea that we are first and forever worthy of love and God’s care, even if we make mistakes

and go wrong along the way, which we do. Jesus comes not to erase a sin nature, but to show us more clearly our blessed human nature and enduring belovedness. Jesus then helps us live out our original blessing more fully and faithfully: toward ourselves, toward others, and toward creation. What do you make of this idea?