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HOME GROUP & DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL “Evolving Love” by Jacqui Rivas – 06.06.2021

Sermon link: #SoundCloud
<https://soundcloud.com/gracepointsa/evolving-love-by-jacqui-rivas>

Scripture

Romans 8:1-22

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God’s word to you.

Observation

Paul’s letter to the Romans is both complicated and carefully constructed. This passage in chapter 8 is the culmination of Paul’s writings about the issue of having a right relationship with God. Paul asserts the only way to do this is to accept and believe what Christ has done for humanity, thus opening the door for God’s grace to restore such a relationship between humankind and Himself.

Paul uses the word ‘flesh’ often, not to describe the human body, but rather human nature which is weak and vulnerable to sin. Flesh is everything that humanity is without Christ.

He uses the word ‘spirit’ (*ruach*) in the sense of breath or wind. In the Old Testament *ruach* represents the power of God.

This passage in Romans focuses on the facts that all humanity is born into sin as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve; and all humanity can receive salvation through Jesus Christ. So, says Paul, there are two types of life. The one dominated by sin, where the focus is on self and God is excluded. Any life that excludes God is under the control of Satan.

The other is centred on the Spirit of God and focuses on Christ Himself as God draws the believer closer to Himself every day. The ultimate death that everyone will die is the doorway to heaven and eternal life for those who accept God. Paul writes that a person who lives the Christ-centred life is adopted into the family of God. Adoption under Roman law was a serious and lengthy business and was finalised in the presence of seven witnesses. This meant that the adopted person was assured of his place in the family and his right to any inheritance due to him as a true son. Paul states it is the



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Holy Spirit who is witness to the adoption of those who accept Christ into the family of God. The Christ-follower's inheritance is assured.

Paul then describes the state of creation. (Some commentators define 'creation' as those members of the human race, Jew and Gentile alike, who reject God; but many maintain it refers to the entire scope of creation – animate and inanimate). All around us the world's beauty fades and dies. But one day a new world will come into existence. This is a well-known Jewish thought and will take place on the Day of the Lord (eg Isaiah 65:17). In the meantime, nature has been wounded by the sin of humankind and Paul gives it human characteristics as he writes of the earth both groaning and anticipating redemption.

Humanity has only two choices – Christ or Satan. The one leads to life – the other to decay and death.

Icebreaker:

Life evolves. What is the biggest change you have had to deal with in the last year? How has it affected you? Was it a good change or one that has been a struggle? Share briefly with the group what you feel about it.

Application

- Change happens. Who are you becoming? What is your goal and how are you doing towards achieving it?
- How has Covid offered you open doors and new opportunities? In your family, your work, your church or any other area of your life? How are you responding to them?
- Four stages of change were identified for those who follow Christ:
 - Clean up – cleaning up areas of our lives that are tarnished in some way;
 - Grow up – growing in our faith and spiritual life;
 - Wake up – seeing life around us with a new awareness
 - Show up – working with others to embrace growth and change
- What stage are you working on at the moment? What changes is God asking you to make?
- If the world reverted to 'normal', what would that mean for you? Do you see this time as an opportunity to explore new areas of life or do you long for the return of 'normal'? Why do you feel this way?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, make us brave enough to see the changes in life around us and not to be part of the problem but rather the solution.

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

Service

What area of change do you see that is a struggle for people to handle? How can you, as an individual or a group, help those struggling to come to terms with that change and begin to see it as an opportunity for growth?

Bibliography

Barclay, William, The Letter to the Romans. The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1983

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