

Kimura Memorial – May 28th, 2022
JESUS HAS PREPARED A PLACE

Prayer

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, our rock, and our redeemer.

AMEN

Sin is Real

In the reading from Romans, Paul quotes David from the Psalms as he writes about sin and forgiveness. If you know anything about David, the King of Israel, you'll know that he was both a sinner and a saint. The prophet Samuel recounts how, as King and already married to multiple wives, David committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his generals. Then, to make matters worse, once David discovered that she was pregnant, he tried to cover it up by recalling Uriah and imploring him to go home. When Uriah refused, David arranged to have him killed in battle.

The prophet Nathan confronted the King through a story about his actions, and David expressed righteous anger at the person who would do such things. Then, upon being told that he was the perpetrator, David repented of his actions and was forgiven.

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While God did forgive the sin, there were temporal consequences of those sins – the baby died, and David’s kingdom was no longer filled with peace. Instead, it was filled with conflict and strife, flowing from the sibling rivalries among his many sons and daughters.

God also redeemed the marriage, King Solomon, who is described as the wisest man who ever lived, had David and Bathsheba as parents. Just like David, you and I are sinners in need of forgiveness, regardless of whether the world sees us as good, evil, or somewhere in between.

Jesus has Prepared a Place

Turning to the Gospel reading, St. John quotes Jesus saying, “I am going to prepare a place for you.” I want to focus today on some of those preparatory steps.

The first step is a promise. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and caused the entire cosmos to become corrupt, God promised that:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. (Gen 3:15)

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The second step is a blood sacrifice. Blood sustains life – Rodney knew this well, as he spent his career working with blood as a phlebotomist (those people who draw and test your blood in clinics and hospitals). Without blood, we quickly die.

One of the earliest mentions of blood in scripture is as the 10th plague that God visited upon the Egyptians as he was preparing his people to journey to the promised land. In what is now celebrated as the feast of Passover, the Jews were to kill a lamb, and put some of its blood on the doorposts. In doing so, the Angel of Death would pass over their house and NOT kill all the firstborn of that family, both people and animals.

Once they had escaped Egypt, God gave the people of Israel not only what we know as the 10 commandments, but detailed instructions about a system of bloody animal sacrifices, to make atonement for their sins.

None of these were effective in satisfying our Holy God's need for justice, but were merely a foreshadowing of the future, ultimate blood sacrifice.

As we sang in the 3rd stanza of our opening hymn:

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But when I think that God, His Son not sparing, Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in – That on the cross, my burdens gladly bearing He bled and died to take away my sin.

And St. Peter (1 Peter 1:18-19) wrote in his first letter to the church:

knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Rodney the phlebotomist is covered in blood, not from humans or animals, but the precious blood of Christ, that washed away his sins, your sins, and my sins.

A Place for Us

Now that we understand the **process of preparation**, what about the **place** in Heaven that He has prepared for us?

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I've got a colleague who's a realtor, who just loves giving the keys to the new owner of a house – and I'm pretty sure God feels the same way about the place He has prepared for us. However, unlike the houses that my friend sells, we didn't buy the place the Jesus has prepared for us, nor did we earn it. It's not like all of our 'Good Deeds' are some sort of heavenly cryptocurrency, kept track of in the book of life, that allow us to buy our way into the heavenly estate. We don't even deserve it – all any of us deserve from our actions is a place in hell. But thanks be to God, who in His mercy gives us the keys as a gift, free and clear, no strings attached.

If you knew Rodney, you know that he liked to garden. The places that God has prepared for each of us will suit us perfectly, since He knows us better than we know ourselves. I'll bet that Rodney's new house has a garden for him to tend.

Let's offer our support and condolences to those who are left behind, remembering that the separation is only temporary, but let's also rejoice with the angels that Rodney has gone home. AMEN!