

“Already Approved” (Merry Christmas)

December 18, 2016

Ecclesiastes 8:15-9:12

#10 in our series from Ecclesiastes

Peter Hiatt

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Prayer

Lord God, we desire to sing your glory this morning with the sermon, with prayers, with the songs, with everything that we have and everything that we are. We pray that the song would never stop. I pray that we would sing your glory and that we would love you with all our heart, with all of our mind, with all of our soul, and with all of our strength.

Lord, I pray for our minds this morning because we're ten sermons into Ecclesiastes and Father, the book is a bit mindboggling to me. So I need to love you with all of my mind and I pray that you would help us to love you with whatever mind we've got and that through your Spirit you would connect the dots. We thank you that you have already told us how they all connect. They all connect in Jesus, whom we wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in a manger. Amen.

Message

Kimberly Weynen sent me this video last week:

Christmas Everywhere

A person wrapped in Christmas paper is in a bed. He wakes up and rips the wrapping paper off his face and he shouts, "I'm alive! I'm alive!" He sits up in bed.

His wife is also wrapped in Christmas paper, still wrapped up she calls out, "Doug."

He turns to her, "Christine! You're here too!"

He looks at her and declares, "I love you!"

She responds, "I know."

A children's voice is heard, "Dad!?"

The couple turns towards their bedroom door.

There are two children wrapped in Christmas paper, still waiting to be opened.

One has managed to unwrap his face and says, "What's happening?"

The other wrapped child scooches along the side of the wall trying to find his parents.

The father walks into the bathroom.

The light fixture is wrapped up as well.

He switches the lights on and off and exclaims, "Honey the power works! It goes on and off whenever we want! Hah!"

He moves over to sink, which has a bow on it: "We've got clean water! That's great! Look at that."

He then turns around and sees the shower all wrapped up as well.

He reaches to turn it on: "Oooh! I bet I know what this does!"

The scene pans out to a steamy bathroom and you hear a humorous male voice singing from the shower: "Bring out the glorious water."

The father then puts on his shoes, which are also wrapped.
He looks gleefully at the camera and says, "Shoes!"
He runs with joy into the kitchen.
He joins his kids at the table and opens a box: "What do we have here guys? Food! Mmmm."
The smallest child pulls out a wrapped briefcase and says, "And this!"
The father looks at his son and with a mouth full of food says, "What? . . . Is this a briefcase?"
The child smiles and nods yes. The father says, "You mean I have work? That's awesome!"

The older child pulls out a stocking. The father reaches into the stocking, still with his mouth full of food and says, "What's in here?" He pulls out keys. "Keys? . . . to what??"
The father runs out the door filled with excitement and delight.
His wife, with the kids by her at the door calls out, "Dad, be careful!"
The dad runs to a huge wrapped car and with open arms and sheer delight says, "I have a car! Did you guys see this?"
His wife enthusiastically responds, "Yeah. You have a car!"
She hands him a wrapped mug and says, "And don't forget your coffee."
He pokes a hole in it takes a drink and says, "You're the best!"
She smiles warmly. He runs to the car. Laughs in excitement as he enters it.
The camera fades while holiday music plays in the background.

The short film ends with the following words on the screen:

"This **Christmas**, may you be grateful for all the gifts around you!"

Isn't that great?

It reminds me of what Solomon said in Ecc. 2:24. "*There is nothing better [towb: "more good"] for a person [ha adam: The Adam] than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment [literally: "see good] in the soul in his toil."*

Ten sermons ago, we preached on Ecclesiastes chapter two.

You may remember that in chapter 2, verse 1, Solomon says in his heart, "*Come let me test you with pleasure* (also translated "joy") *and see the good,*" which is a lot like saying, "Let's take the knowledge of the good and see if it makes us good."

So, Solomon set out on a journey as if he was climbing a ladder. I brought a ladder. Do you remember? On the first rung, Solomon took and consumed the good to make himself good; he drinks all he wants, eats all he wants, he copulates with all the women he wants, but he finds it's vanity and striving after wind . . . and not what he wants.

On the second step, he takes knowledge of the good to make himself good—he takes Wisdom, but it's like the Wisdom dies—it's vanity and striving after the wind . . . and not what he wants. Wisdom dies, and he dies.

He can't take the good without killing the Good, but then, he's surprised by the Good.
He can't take beauty, but he's surprised by beauty.
He can't take joy, but he's surprised by joy.
He can't take Wisdom, but he's surprised by Wisdom—as if it rises from the dead.
He can't capture the Wind (*ruakh—the Spirit*), but the Wind captures him...
And his sorrow turns into joy.

And then he writes, "*Nothing is better—'gooder' for the Adam, than to eat and drink and see the good in all his toil.*"

Nothing is better for the Adam, than that he should just enjoy his sandwich.

- Solomon finds joy *not* in what he takes.
- He finds joy in what he's always been given.
- He finds joy, not at the top of the ladder, but at the bottom . . . where he started

It reminds me of this poem by TS Elliot:

*The drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

Talk to old people, they'll say things like,

"Youth is wasted on the young."

"If I had my knees back, I'd enjoy them—I never appreciated my knees."

"If I had my eyesight back, I'd enjoy it for the first time."

"If only I had my children back, I'd love them as I never did before."

"If only I had my life to live over, I'd enjoy it for the first time."

In Ecclesiastes 2, it's like Solomon gained the world, then lost it, then arrived back at the sandwich and enjoyed it for the first time . . . enjoyed the sandwich . . . enjoyed the bread . . . enjoyed the wine.

Well, that reminds me of that little Christmas video—enjoying electricity, hot water, shoes and toast...

Wasn't that great?

Or maybe you thought it wasn't great...

To be honest, I kind of thought both: It was great if it was real—just like Christmas.

And it was nauseating if it was fake—just like Christmas . . . and church.

You know what I mean, there are people that will watch a video like that and then fake a video like that—acting as if you are wonderful and everything is wonderful, because

they're desperately trying to make themselves wonderful . . . and using you to do it . . . and that's not wonderful.

Religious people are notorious for pretending everything is wonderful and ignoring evil . . . even in their own souls.

But *Solomon* doesn't ignore evil . . .

We're in Ecclesiastes 9 now and Solomon has elaborated on vanity, despair and evil, and still Solomon keeps returning to the same idea. I think the idea is Wisdom. Solomon asked for wisdom and he got wisdom and he keeps staring at wisdom trying to describe wisdom—what is wisdom?

I once heard someone say that Greek thought tends to be linear so St. Paul will describe theology in a linear fashion in his epistles to Greeks. However, Hebrew thought tends to be holistic—it's like Wisdom is a thing that Solomon is looking at and describing from all different sorts of angles . . . as if he's looking at theology . . . and not explaining it, but describing what he sees.

Theology—“*theos*” and “*logos*”—literally means “God Word,” and we know God's Word is Wisdom.

It's like he's looking at God's Word in the flesh and describing Him.

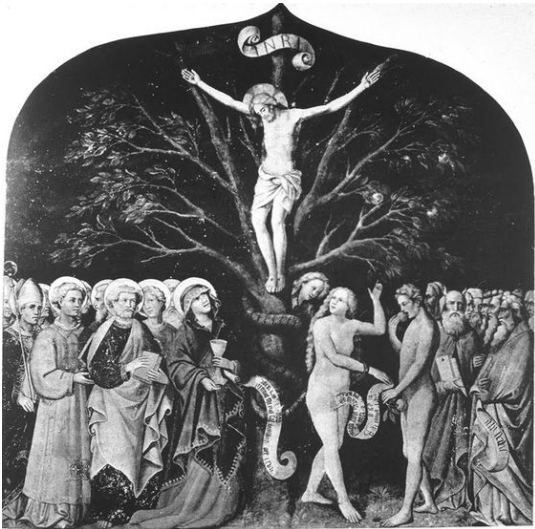


Figure 1 Image credit: Giovanni da Modena. Fresco from the Church of St. Petronio (Bologna, 1420)

He's looking at the Good—the Wisdom *and* the Life, hanging on a tree . . . and he's trying to describe what he sees . . . from all sorts of different angles.

He goes on a journey with Wisdom and returns to Wisdom and knows *it*...
or knows *Him* for the first time.

And now, he doesn't take Wisdom and kill it . . . in order to know it.

He doesn't take Life and kill Life. He's grateful for Life and lives it.

He discovers Wisdom in all the strangest places, and it gives him joy.

He doesn't ignore evil . . . he discovers Wisdom in the evil . . .

Like you might find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Well, last time we ended at Ecclesiastes 8:15. So, let's just keep reading:

*And I commend joy [also translated, "pleasure" and "mirth"], for man has nothing better [towb: more good] under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, then I saw all the work [ma'asah] of God, that man [ha adam] cannot find out the work [ma'asah] that is done ['asah: do, work] under the sun. However much man [ha adam] may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man [ha adam] does not know; both are before him. It is the same for **all**, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done ['asah: do, work] under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man [ha adam] are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope [or "trust"], for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever ['owlam: for age] they have no more share in all that is done ['asah: do, work], under the sun.*

— Ecclesiastes 8:15-9:6

That's rather depressing... Next verse:

Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

— Ecclesiastes 9:7

How's that for a life verse?

It seems rather dangerous...

*“God has **already** approved what you do.”??*

That’s about exactly opposite of the way I live my life.

I “do” in order to gain approval.

I don’t “do” because I’ve already been approved.

I do everything in order to be approved . . .

Well, except maybe eat a sandwich—I don’t expect anyone to say, “Wow, your really wonderful ‘cause you ate a sandwich.”

I do almost everything to gain approval . . . except . . . maybe eat a sandwich, drink some wine, party a bit and unwrap my wife and make love to her.

Go, eat your bread with joy [simchah: pleasure, mirth, joy], and drink your wine with a merry [towb: good] heart, for God has already approved what you do [ma’asah: work, doing]. Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

That means, “Put on your party clothes, some hair product and a splash of cologne.”

Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do [‘asah: do, work], do [‘asah: do, work] it with your might, for there is no work [ma’asah: work, do] or thought [“scheme,” reason, logos] or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

— Ecclesiastes 9:7-9

Yikes!

Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. For man [ha adam] does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man [ha adam] are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

— Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

Verse 10 again: “*Whatever your hand finds to do [‘asah: do, work], do [‘asah: do, work], it with your might, for there is no work [ma’asah: work, doing] or thought [“scheme,” reason, logos] or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.*”

- In the KJV Sheol is translated as “Hell” thirty-one times and as “grave,” thirty-one times.
- In the Septuagint, (which is the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament), Sheol

is translated as Hades, which is the word we find several times on Jesus' lips in the Gospels.

- In Numbers 16, Israelites are swallowed alive down into Sheol.
- In the Old Testament, everyone descends into Sheol.
- Jonah refers to the belly of the whale as Sheol.
- He prays to God in Sheol, which is a miracle, for there is no "work, thought, knowledge or wisdom in Sheol." So, how did that happen?
- In Psalm 22, someone descends into Sheol and before him "bow all who go down into the dust."
- We know that Jesus is Wisdom and The Life, and on the tree in the garden He descended into Sheol and preached to the spirits in prison.
- When Jesus cried out on the cross and surrendered his Spirit (in Matt. 27:50) the curtain in the temple ripped from top to bottom and the graves were opened and saints came out and walked around Jerusalem.

There's a connection between the temple—that is your soul—and Sheol.

Your soul can become Sheol, even while you're walking on the face of the earth.

Yet, Sheol is pictured as in the depths of the earth.

It's the dominion of darkness, of lies, the dominion of "what is not."

Sheol is a prison in space and in time—that is the age or ages of this world.

Solomon writes, "Sheol... to which y'all are going."

Now that's discombobulating for most folks.

Just look at what we've learned:

#1. All are going to Sheol (9:10).

#2. All are full of evil (9:3).

In verse 3, he said, their "*hearts are full of evil.*"

Verse 11, last chapter he said, "*man is fully set to do evil.*"

#3. We can't judge ourselves (9:1).

v.1 We don't know if it's "*love or hate,*" "*Wheat or tares,*" to use Jesus' terms.

#4. We don't know the time (9:12).

Last week, we learned the King knows the time . . . but we don't know the time.

#5. God has made everything beautiful in time (3:11).

In 3:11, we read: "*God has made (past tense) everything beautiful in it's time,*" which means that He has made you beautiful in time.

#6. Whatever God does is eternal (3:14).

In 3:14, we learned that "*whatever God does [‘asah: do, work] is eternal.*"

That means time does not affect it; it's always been and will always be.

Beauty, Goodness and Wisdom are eternal . . . and you are eternal.

That's discombobulating . . .

And especially discombobulating for religious folks . . .

Because it's so *non-transactional*.

It's not a contract between two parties but a statement of what reality is.
In biblical language, it's like a covenant where one party keeps both sides.
Wisdom is not telling us what to do in order to be approved. (You know that's the way the principalities and powers of this world operate—"If you do XYZ, you'll be approved.")

Wisdom is not telling us what to do in order to be approved.
Wisdom is telling us we are *already* approved, so go ahead and do.

There's a word for that, and that word is Grace.

*"By grace you have been saved through faith," writes St. Paul in Ephesians 2:8, "and this [faith] is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are **his** workmanship created **in** Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared **beforehand** that we should walk in them."*

That's Grace, but very few have faith in Grace. It's utterly discombobulating.¹
Discombobulating! And yet, it's profoundly simple once you see it.
The Bible teaches it from Chapter 1, verse 1: *"In the beginning, God created..."*
If that's true . . . What could not be Grace?

What could not be absolute gift, except . . . nothing?

Well, Grace sounds really good.... But faith in Grace is terrifying.

- Exposing your judgment to God's Judgment is terrifying.

¹ For 2000 years the church has talked Grace and then found ways to explain it away.
If I could sum up Western church history in a few sentences, I think it would be something like this:
1. For 350 years the church primarily taught:
You've already been approved, everything is gift and when you believe it, it will change everything you do.
2. When the church became a part of the principality and power called Rome, it began to teach:
You've already been approved and everything is gift IF you do what we tell you to do.
3. In the 16th century church reformers (like Luther and Calvin), began to teach:
You've already been approved and everything is gift IF you're one of the elect
And if you believe you are it will change everything you do . . .
But if by chance you're not, everything is a curse to make you hope and then deliver you to despair.
4. In the 17th century follower of Jacobus Arminius said, that's terrible . . . so:
You've already been approved and everything is gift IF you have faith.
But if you don't have faith before you die, everything is a curse to make you hope and deliver you to despair.

Well, my hope and prayer is that the reformation would continue
And we'd believe what the Bible has always taught . . .
And that is Grace—everything is gift.

- Taking the self that you think you have created, before the throne of The Creator is terrifying.
- It's terrifying because the person that you think you are will die.
- It's terrifying . . . and then eternally liberating, as you become, who it is that you already are . . . the One already approved.

If you don't know what I mean, take another look at verse 7.

I'm a bit terrified to preach on it, and terrified to trust it, for fear of what you might do . . . and for fear of what I might do.

Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 9:7:

"Go, eat your bread with joy [simchah: pleasure, mirth, joy], and drink your wine with a merry [towb: good] heart, for God has already approved what you do [ma'asah: work, doing]."

He doesn't say,

"Eat with joy and drink with a good heart and God will approve of what you do," which would be a nice sermon . . . and well received in many churches.

- We noted several weeks ago that Paul writes, *"Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected IF it is received with thanksgiving...* (1 Tim. 4:4)."

- That's a great message, profoundly true, and we already preached it.

"Eat with joy and drink with a good heart and God WILL approve of what you do."

But, Solomon doesn't say that. He says:

"Eat with joy and drink with a good heart BECAUSE God has already approved of what you do."

That sounds so incredibly "wrong," yet in another way how could it be anything but right?

"Everything created by God is good," wrote Paul . . . So what is there that God didn't create?

- *"In the beginning was the Word,"* John 1:1 *"and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made."*
- And not only *made* but *sustained*. Hebrews 1:3 *"He (Jesus) upholds the universe by his word of power"*—created through Jesus, and constantly, continuously sustained by Jesus—the Word of God who speaks a Word that sustains all things.

So, what's made that God didn't make? What's done that God didn't do?

Well some would say, "our choices."

But even if we make our choices, who makes the chooser that make the choices?
Our choices determine we do.

In 11:5, Solomon will write this: "... *You do not know the work* (the "doings"—*ma'asah*) *of God who makes* (literally: "does"—*'asah*) *everything.*"

If God does everything, the only way you could do anything is if God does it through you
...

As if He were the chooser and you manifest His choices,
As if you were His Body, and He were the King in your heart.

In her famous vision, Julian of Norwich saw Jesus enthroned in the human heart ordering all space and time and she wrote, "I saw that there is no doer, but God."

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, Saint Paul writes, "*God made Jesus our wisdom, our righteousness sanctification and redemption* (all things we think we have to do!). *Therefore it is written, 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'*" (RSV)

- "*God is Love,*" writes John. And Paul writes, "*Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*"
- Which means it is the end and is eternal... you can't take from it or add to it...
But Love can add *you*, to *it*, in time.

"*It is no longer I who live,*" writes Paul, "*but Christ in me.*" Christ!
You know, God approves of Christ—a lot: "*This is beloved son, in whom he is well pleased.*"

- You may remember that God says that audibly, from heaven, as the Spirit descends, just before Jesus is tempted by the devil and begins His ministry . . .
BEFORE Jesus does anything. He hears it!
- And when He is tempted by the devil, Jesus replies: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*"
- The last word to proceed from the mouth of God was: "*This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*"

You see, Jesus knew He was already approved . . . and that Wisdom manifested in everything He did.

Right before He was crucified and delivered up His Spirit, He said to His disciples, "*I am sending the spirit...and He will take what is mine and declare it to you.*"
Eternal approval belongs to Christ. And *The Spirit* declares it to you.

In Ecclesiastes 8:7 the word translated "approval" means deep delight.

- It's used of the very best sacrifices consumed by the fire of Love, which is God

Himself.

Well, we were saying, “Of course God already approves of what you do, because only God does anything that’s actually done...”

AND YET, God doesn’t sin... So what about sin?

In 1373, Julian of Norwich had her famous five-day vision and at one point she asked the Lord this question.

She wrote, “I saw that he does all that is done... and I thought ‘what is sin?’”
And she wondered why He hadn’t prevented sin writing:

...He answered with this assurance, 'Sin is befitting.' With this word 'sin' our Lord brought to my mind the whole extent of all that is not good: the shameful scorn and the utter humiliation that he bore for us in this life and in his dying, and all the pains and sufferings of all his creatures, both in body and spirit... But I did not see sin; for I believe it has no sort of substance, nor portion of being, nor could it be recognized were it not for the suffering which it causes. And this suffering seems to me to be something transient, for it... makes us know ourselves and pray for mercy... He supports us willingly and sweetly, by his words, and says, 'But all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.' . . . 'What is impossible to you is not impossible to me. I shall keep my word in all things and I shall make all things well.'"

—Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), pp. 12,21-22

In Romans 7:19-20 Saint Paul writes: *“For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”*

He’s saying: *“I didn’t do it... but it does it... whatever it is... or isn’t”*

I used to read that and think Paul was smoking dope, but now I think he had the Wisdom of Solomon...

For what is sin? Isn’t sin choosing evil?

And what is evil? Isn’t evil the absence of the Good?

And what is the Good? God alone is good, said Jesus.

The Good is God, who is “I AM.”

SO . . .

- Evil is the absence of the Good, like
- Death is the absence of the life, like

- Lies are the absence of the truth, like
- Darkness is the absence of the light, like
- "I AM not" is the absence of "I AM."

Sin is choosing "I AM" *not*.

Sin is choosing *non*-reality.

Sin happens when a person chooses darkness, death, and lies.

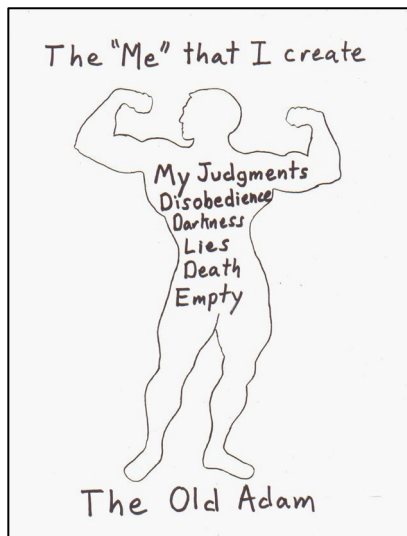
Sin happens when I choose Evil.

But when I choose evil, I choose nothing,

So, sin is not something that is *done*, but something that's *not* done.

When I choose evil, I make nothing... and call it something.

When I choose evil, I make the "Old Adam, the old man, the false man,
the shadow man, the vanity of vanities—the idol I call 'me.'"



But when I choose the Good... the Good is choosing me.

And when I do the Good... the Good is doing me.

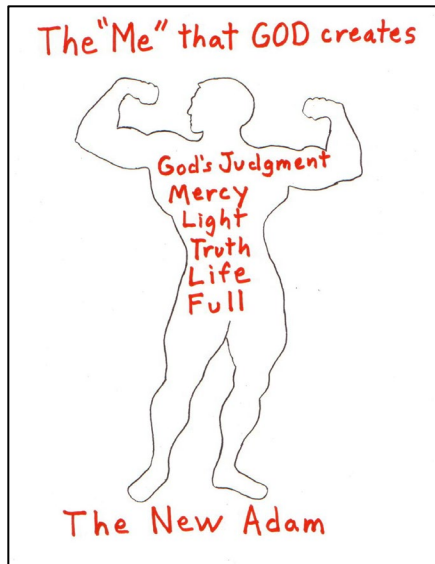
The Good is God... and God does everything that's anything.

When I do the good, The King is doing the good through me.

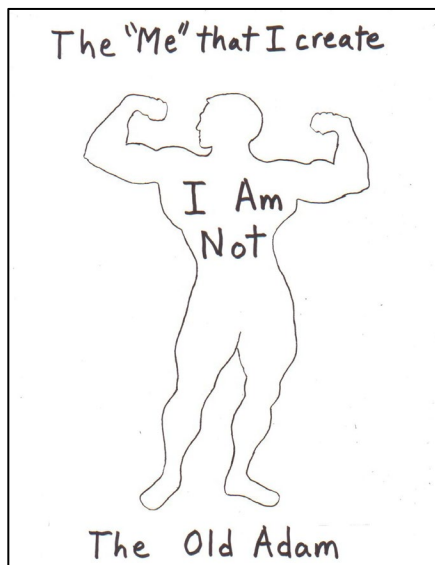
When I exercise good Judgment, God is judging through me.

Actually, God is creating "me" with His judgment.

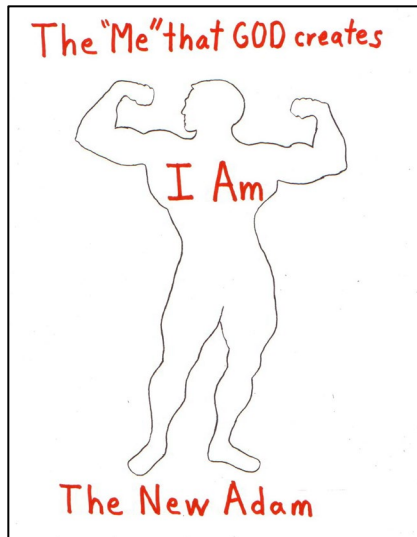
This is the new Man, new Adam, the "Me" that God creates in time.



The old Adam is "I AM not"



The new Adam is who "I AM"



Now that should send shivers down your spine...

I don't really know how to explain it, except to say,

- You actually are the temple of the living God.
- You actually are His mobile sanctuary, His tabernacle.
- You actually are the Body of Christ.
- You actually are the Bride of the King enthroned in your heart.

I hope you remember what we said a few weeks ago:

"You cannot *make* good choices...

But you will give birth to good choices in time."

All your good choices can be summed up in one word, and that word is "faith."

Faith, trust, belief—Faith in Love, and God is Love.

Faith is the fruit of standing naked before the great Bridegroom sitting on the throne in the sanctuary or your own soul and allowing Him to *adore you* and *impregnate you* with His own life, such that you bear the fruit that is your life . . . and has always been your life.

Jesus is *the* Life and that's how He gives you your life—a communion of Life.

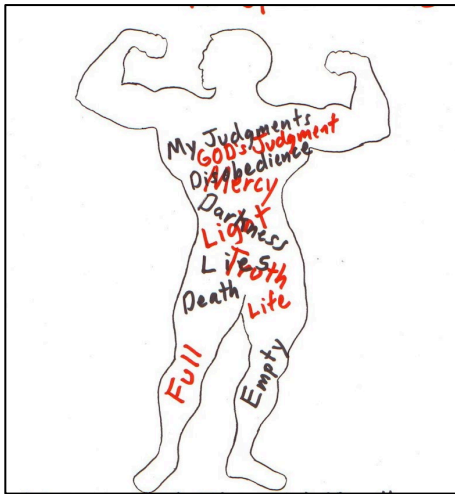
Jesus is your life . . . and He's already been approved.

If someone said, "Who are you? Tell me about your life."

You'd probably describe a bunch of choices in time.

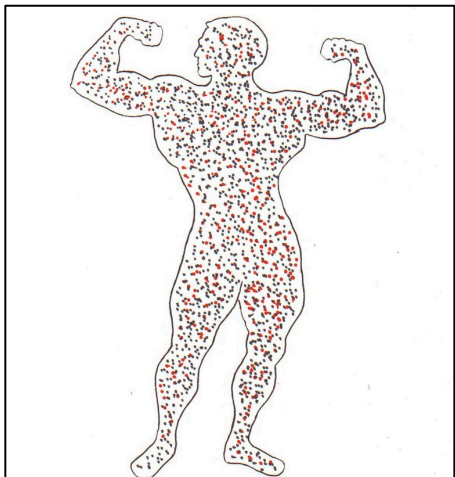
We naturally think we are the sum total of our judgments or choices, in time.

And so we look some thing like this:



See the mix of good and bad judgment?

Or better, we look some thing like this:



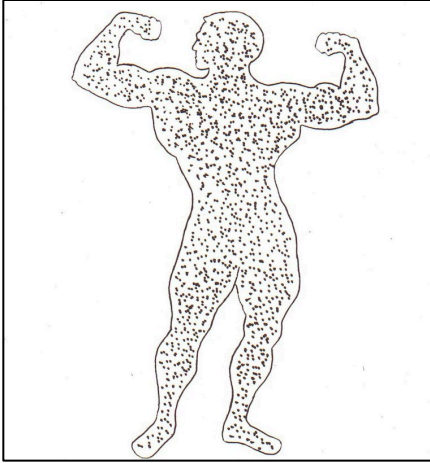
Red dots are good choices and black dots are bad choices.

Red dots are love and black dots are not love.

We desperately try to sort them out, but we can't sort them out—it's like a field of "*wheat and tares*." We can't sort them out, but God will sort them out.

- Most folks think if they have more red than black, they will be approved and get in.
- And if they have more black than red, they will not be approved and are forever out. And that can actually stress you out.

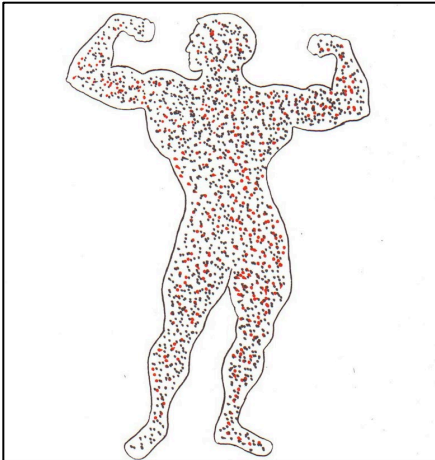
We try to sort them out and we try to make them—good choices.
Yet, if you think that you yourself have made your good choices they are not good choices, but all bad choices.



They're bad choices, because:

- You're not grateful for your choices; you're proud of your choices.
- You're not grateful for your life; you're proud of your life.
- You're not grateful for Love; you think you created Love . . .
When in fact, Love is creating you. That is . . .
- You're self-righteous.

Well, the truth is that we're probably all a mix.



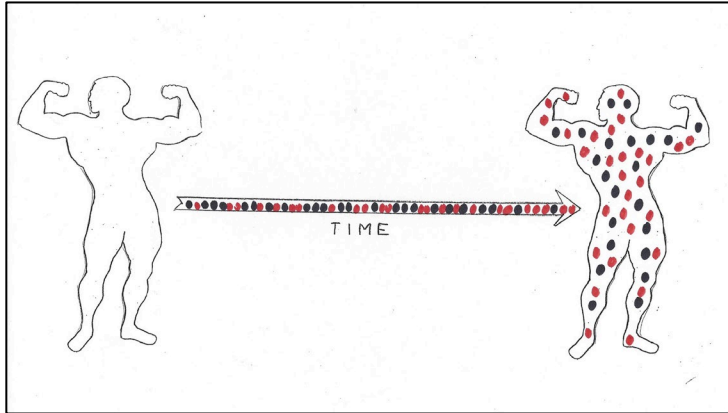
- Even the worst sinner can't help but love a dog...

- And the greatest saint can't help but have a little pride.

Whatever the case, we all tend to think that we make ourselves Good, by taking knowledge of the good, and using it to make good choices in time.

For some reason, we all tend to believe that we're the sum total of our choices in time.

Like this:

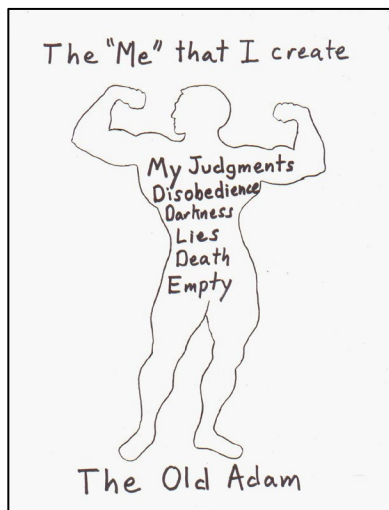


As if we're born empty of worth, then make choices in time, which create our worth, and if it's enough worth, we're approved.

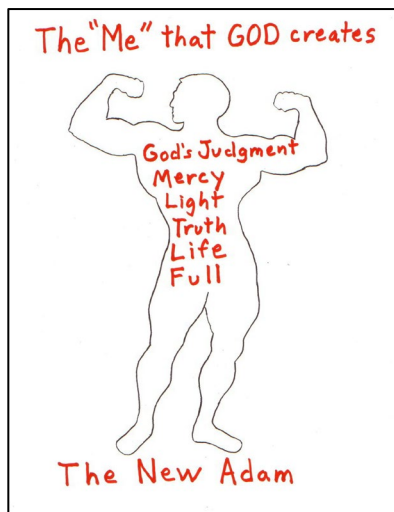
Yet if we think we create our worth, we're not approved.

For all we have created is a lie, the false self, the shadow man,

The "me" that I think I create



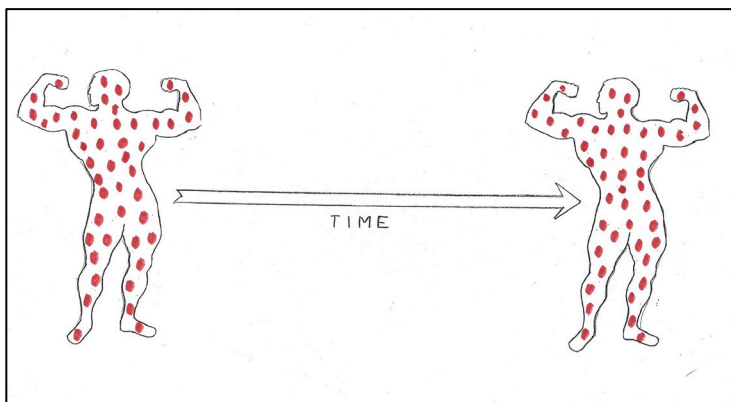
But what if I am not the "me" that I think I create,
What if I am the "me" that God creates with His Judgment.



Well, God's Judgment is eternal; Wisdom is eternal.
What if Life is eternal?

What if, I Am... *"created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that I would walk in them?"*

If . . . I am, then I come pre-approved.
Something like this:
Beginning and End—Pre-Approved



Then I'm not the sum total of my choices in time.
I'm the revelation of God's eternal choice in my time.
I'm the Body of Christ rising from the dead in time.

Then I'm not proud of myself, ashamed of myself, afraid for myself or in competition with any other self. I'm not responsible for myself . . . I'm just infinitely grateful for myself—my fully awesome self.

You know why I don't get up every morning and thank God I'm alive, and that the light switches work, and there's such a thing as toast, and I get to wear shoes?

The Unwrapping of Peter Hiatt Part 1 Clip

[A wrapped figure walks into the bathroom. The gift slowly struggles to unwrap itself. Finally a male figure appears; it's Peter Hiatt. Peter looks in the mirror and signs a disdainful sigh. He continues to look into the mirror as if he wants something to change.]

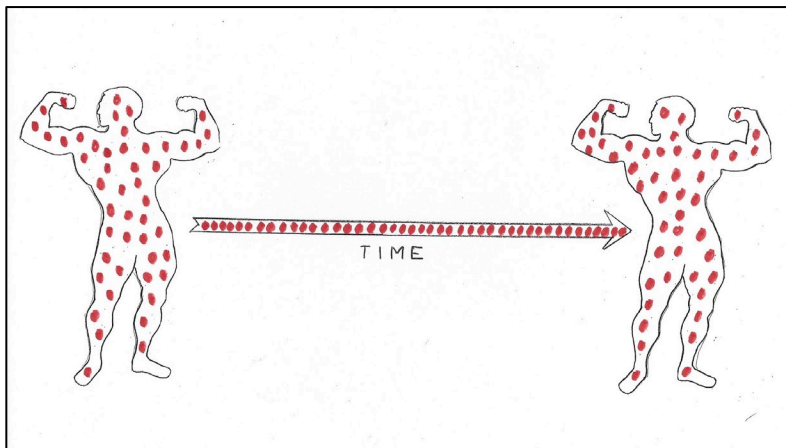
See? The reason, that I don't "*eat my bread with joy and drink my wine with a merry heart*" is that I think I'm responsible for creating "me," in the hopes that I might be approved. I think I'm responsible for "me." And I think "me" is responsible for creating my life, and paying the electric bill, and providing the toast, the coffee, and the shoes.

I think I'm responsible for "me." And "me" is responsible for the bread and the wine.

Maybe if I thought I was already approved, I wouldn't feel responsible for "me," but grateful for me, grateful for my wife and my kids, and that I got to pay the electric bill, make the toast, and provide shoes.

Maybe I'd be grateful that I got to Love, because I enjoyed Love, for I knew that I was loved—eternally loved.

Maybe if I believed that I Am my Father's beloved son, in whom He is well pleased—eternally pleased . . . it would change everything I do . . . and that would be my life . . . eternal life revealed in my time.



Eternal Life revealed in my time—If . . .
If I believed, but how do I believe? How do I get faith?

Well, my faith doesn't create God's Grace. We saw that in Ecclesiastes 1.
But God's Grace creates my faith in time.
God's Grace is God's Judgment, and God's Judgment is His Word.
We've discovered that:

God's Judgment is revealed in the garden on the tree guarded by the Cherubim.
God's judgment is revealed on the ark in the temple between the Cherubim.
God's Judgment is a slaughtered lamb standing on an altar that is a throne.
God's Judgment is body broken and blood shed in the temple that is you.
God's Judgment is Christ crucified and rising in you.

Faith is the fruit of standing naked before the great bridegroom sitting on the throne in the sanctuary or your own soul and allowing Him to *adore you* and *impregnate you* with His own life, such that you bear the fruit that is your life and has always been your life.

Faith is dying with Christ and rising with Christ.
Faith is surrendering your old man, the lie that you thought was you.
Faith is surrendering your old man and receiving the New Man.
Faith is hearing the Word of the Father,
"This is my beloved son (or daughter) in whom I am well pleased."

How God feels about Jesus, is how God feels about you—the true you.
How God sees Jesus, is how God sees you.
How God delights in Jesus, is how God delights in you.
How God approves of Jesus, is how He approves of you.
Jesus is glorified (said Jesus) because the Spirit takes what is His and declares it to you.
That's what *He* told us. You are the glory of Jesus.
Jesus has the eternal and absolute approval of God His Father.

Faith is looking in a mirror, that is your father's eyes.
Deut. 32:10—you are the apple of his eye². You are the *"ishown"* of His eye.
It means "little man" reflected in the pupil of His eye.

Faith is standing in front of the mirror and saying, "Thank you God for me."
And, standing in front of the mirror and saying "Thank you God for me," will produce Faith in you: "faith to faith," as Paul says. It will crucify the old man... and reveal the New Man.

² You are the "Israel of God."



- It turns out that you can't sincerely say, "thank you for me" and mean the old man, for the old man is the man you thought you made.
- And therefore the old man is the man for whom you cannot be grateful.
- The new man is the man you did not make and for whom you can only be grateful.

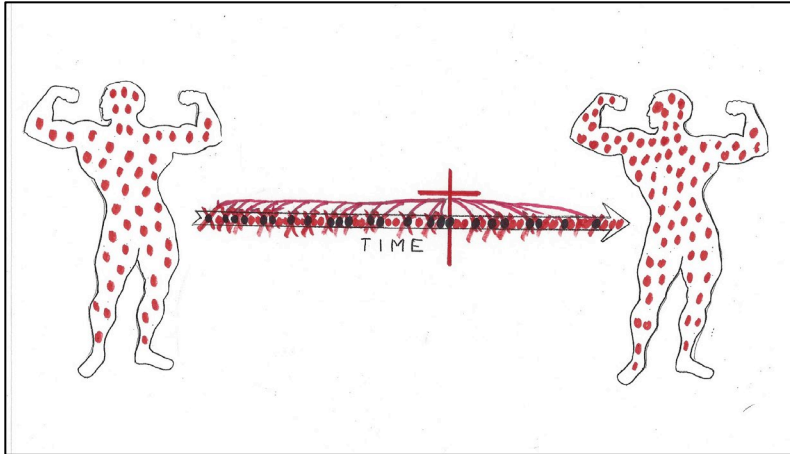
If you have trouble standing in front of the mirror and thanking God for you, it's your old man keeping you from your New Man. And your New Man is remarkable. You live in a world ruled by satan. Just the fact that you would smile at someone and mean it is a miracle. Just the fact that you keep walking and haven't shot yourself amazes angels. It's the New Man—New Woman in you. And you must be grateful.

- The New Man is Christ... and Christ in you is faith.

Jesus is the "*author and finisher of our faith... beginning and end.*"

He is the King enthroned in your heart and like we said last time:
From that throne in your heart He rules all space and time.

You see faith not only changes this moment right now,
But it changes the past and gives birth to your future.



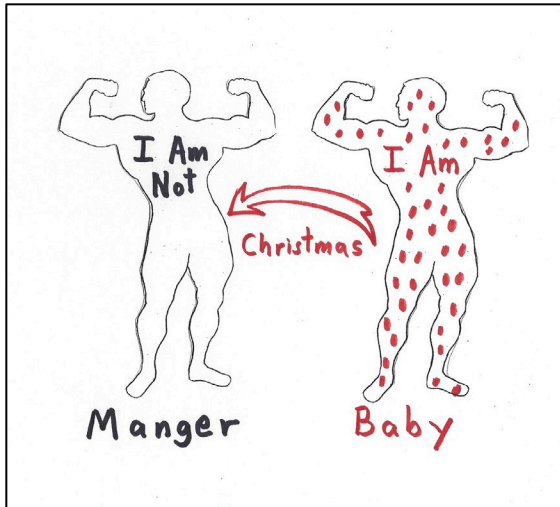
Faith applied to your past turns resentment into forgiveness.
Faith applied to your future turns despair into hope.
Faith applied to every decision in your life turns chaos into Gospel.
Faith changes the meaning of every moment in your time.
Faith is Christ living His Life in your time,
 Making all your moments beautiful in your time.

To use the words of TS Elliot: "In faith, you will return to all your moments and know them for the first time. You will enjoy them for the first time."

In other words, God justifies you, by living your life on the stage that is your time³.

Eternal Joy is finding Jesus in every moment of your space and time . . . like the shepherds found Jesus in that manger.

³ You are "justified by faith," for faith in you, is Christ in you.



Your old man is the manger and your New Man is Christ.
 So every good decision in you... is Christmas.
 And every good decision reveals who you truly are.

Your life is one long experience of unwrapping your true self.
 And when you see your true self you will never be able to stop praising God for who it is
 that you truly and eternally are: "Thank you God for me and my life!"

At the start we said that Solomon is looking at something . . .
 And the something is Wisdom and so that something is Jesus . . .
 Do you see that we are also seeing that the something is also you?
 And so that something is Solomon's true self.

- Solomon was also named Jedediah, which means beloved of the Lord, and Jesus is beloved of the Lord.
 - Solomon was the chosen son of David, and Jesus is the chosen son of David.
 - Solomon built God's stone Temple, and Jesus built God's living temple out of Solomon.
 - Solomon married a thousand brides and Jesus married all of us.
 - Solomon means Prince of Peace, but he wasn't always that peaceful.
 - Solomon means Prince of Peace, but Jesus is *THE* Prince of Peace.
- So maybe God had approved of what Solomon would do—choosing peace.
 - And even what Solomon would *not* do—the times he didn't choose peace.
 - For those times made Solomon and all Israel long for the Christ.
 - So those times make Solomon and all Israel enjoy Christ for all eternity.
 - Those times are the manger that is now filled with Christ.

This is '*the plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ...and fill all things*

with Christ—so everything is Christmas...

Including the manger that you call yourself.

Communion

So, on the night that Jesus was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body which is for you; take and eat." And in the same manor He took the cup saying, "This is the new covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you and do this in remembrance of me."

Do you see what this means?

It means:

You are already approved.

So, eat your bread with Joy and

Drink your wine with a merry heart.

Merry Christmas.

Benediction

He is beautiful, and when you look at Him you discover something and that is that *He* is looking at *you*. And there's a little man in His eye an *ishown*—a little woman in His eye—that's you, and the King is starring at you—wide eyed and mystified at the beauty of His creation, which is you.

Now, I'm serious, I want you to stand in front of the mirror, look yourself in the mirror and say,

"Lord God, thank you for me and my choices..." Thanking God for them means you see them as they truly are—a gift—even the bad ones that prepare a place for the good ones.

I believe when you do that, that will burn up the old man and expose him and it will reveal the New Man. It may expose the old man in old places, things that you feel shame about or guilty for, well, forgive yourself or speak forgiveness over others and the New Man is born in that very spot. It may expose anxiety about the future...and in that place of anxiety the Christ will be born, and you'll begin to see Jesus.

If you think the point of this sermon was "*Sin that grace may abound more...*" just forget it. You didn't hear anything I said. But look in the mirror and say, "Thank you God for me and my choices."

It will burn away sin and expose grace. Then say, "Thank you God for me and that I am nobody else but you." Jesus has a white stone and no one knows the name on the stone except Him and He gives it to you. It's His name and your name; it's a communion of life.

Believe the Gospel. Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.