

Do you see it?

6.2.24

Message 6

Romans 1:18–32 (CSB)

¹⁸ For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, ¹⁹ since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. ²¹ For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

²⁸ And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right. ²⁹ They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ senseless, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. ³² Although they know God's just sentence—that those who

practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

Introduction to the text:

A. I love playing hide and go seek with little kids.

1. When they get older, they start getting really creative.

a. Older kids hide to win.

b. So they climb into clothes dryers, or in a pantry, or somewhere impossible.

c. When they become teenagers, they become like some version of Bigfoot: you get rare appearances only when they are hungry, and usually, they just snarl and disappear.

2. But little kids are fun.

a. They go and hide while you count.

b. Then, as you start coming toward them, they will often start giggling or pop out shouting, "Here I am!"

3. Their joy at that age is not the hiding but the discovery.

B. As the Apostle Paul writes to Rome, he shares about a God who enjoys discovery.

1. God could be the master of hiding, yet He reveals Himself from heaven.

2. Humans would have never found God had He not revealed Himself to His creation.

3. This is the key behind the word "apocalypse."

a. Apocalypse means to reveal or show.

b. God delights in revealing Himself.

C. The good news, the Gospel, is that God wants us to see Jesus, He wants us to see our sin, and wants us to see how great a salvation.

1. So, instead of playing a masterful game of hide and go-seek like the gods of other religions, our God has plainly cried out, "HERE I AM."

2. Seek, and He will be found.

3. What has God revealed to creation?

a. We know about righteousness and wrath.

b. Two other aspects that God reveals are Truth and Glory

1. God delights in revealing truth.

A. This is an important understanding.

1. God loves showing His goodness and divine attributes.

2. God delights in His creation seeing, believing, and understanding.

3. God wants people to find Him

a. That's one of the problems I have with Christians who are writing books about mysteries that are only being revealed through them, and if you buy their book, you can know what they know.

b. The God Paul talks about in Romans makes PLAIN His truth.

c. In fact, God makes it so plain that no one has an excuse not to believe.

B. Notice verse 18 and verse 25.

1. Vs. 18: by their unrighteousness, they suppress the truth.

2. Romans 1:25 (CSB)

²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

3. Paul is saying humanity is not living in ignorance; he says they are living in rebellion.

- a. The difference between ignorance and rebellion is understanding and will.
- b. When I don't know I'm breaking the Law, I'm in ignorance even though I'm guilty.
- c. I'm in rebellion when I know the truth and "suppress" it.

2. What truth is being suppressed?

Romans 1:20 (CSB)

²⁰For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

A. The Apostle said it's the truth about God.

- 1. There are two types of revelation:
- 2. General
- 3. Special

B. General Revelation is what Paul has in view here.

1. **Psalm 19:1–4 (CSB)**

¹The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands.

²Day after day they pour out speech;
night after night they communicate knowledge.

³There is no speech; there are no words;
their voice is not heard.

⁴Their message has gone out to the whole earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.

2. General revelation is what can be known about God without Scripture and spiritual means.

3. When we stare up at the night sky and see the beauty of the cosmos, the response we should have should lead us to believe that there must be a God.

a. When you look into a baby's eyes and behold the beautiful complexity of human life, that truth should point us toward the belief that there has to be more to life than random chance.

b. All of the beauty we see around us is designed to show God's glory and to bring Him glory.

1. An imperfect illustration:

2. I like having a nice yard at my house:

a. The bushes are cut, the deck is painted, and it looks pretty.

b. I do that for two reasons.

c. The most important is because I want it to give me pleasure.

d. The second is I want people to see it, and it gives them pleasure.

3. When God created the Universe and all that is in it, the first purpose is for God's pleasure.

4. The second purpose is so that we might look, be amazed, and praise God for being so masterful.

c. The Apostle Paul said that what can be known about God is revealed in creation, and we are therefore without excuse.

C. Special revelation is the purposeful revealing of who Jesus is.

1. The primary means of special revelation is the Gospel.

- a. Jesus points us beyond the recognition that there is a God.
- b. Jesus shows us how to draw near to God and have a relationship with Him.

2. No matter how long we stare at creation, we will never come to the knowledge that Jesus came from heaven, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, was crucified, resurrected on the third day, and ascended to heaven.

- a. This is why we needed God's special revelation.
- b. This is why Jesus became flesh.
- c. This is why the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures and has kept them to this day.
- d. This is why we need missionaries and pastors and disciple-making believers to tell the world about Jesus.

3. All of creation is without excuse, but they don't all know the way to God.

- a. The general revelation of God is enough for people to stand condemned, but they need the special revelation to receive salvation.
- b. The world does not need a new revelation from Jesus; we need to understand the one we already have!

D. A danger in today's church is the seeking of new revelations of Jesus.

1. That is what the religions of the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are based on:

- a. They say the revelation of Jesus that we have is insufficient, and we need their mediation.
- b. They claim that we need them otherwise we cannot know Jesus.
- c. This is dangerous but not new.

2. Paul wrote in Galatians

Galatians 1:8–12 (CSB)

⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, a curse be on him! ⁹As we have said before, I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, a curse be on him!

¹⁰For am I now trying to persuade people, or God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

¹¹For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. ¹²For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

3. Be careful of this in the modern church too:

a. Through the Bible, we have a perfect revelation of Jesus.

b. You do not need to chase other revelations because, as the Apostle Paul said, we already have a special revelation of Jesus that is not from human sources.

c. Yes, the Spirit still speaks to people and through.

d. But He will never contradict what is written.

e. The Revelation of Jesus that we have in Scripture is clear and perfect.

f. The rejection of truth leads to godliness and unrighteousness.

3. God's Glory is Revealed

A. What is glory?

1. Verse 20 says it is God's Invisible attributes, His Eternal power, and divine nature.

2. The Hebrew term *kābôd* has the root sense of something weighty which gives importance, e.g., wealth (Gen. 13:2; 31:1) or honor (Gen. 45:13).¹

a. In relation to God it denotes that which makes God impressive. Since God is invisible, it necessarily carries a reference to his self-manifestation.²

3. **Glory is the effect and accumulation of all that God is.**

a. To use a more human illustration, glory is a lot like reputation.

b. Our reputation consists of everything about us:

1. It's our integrity, our character, how we dress, how smart we are, our relational intelligence.

2. Our reputation is not any one thing but the sum total of all that we are.

c. Glory is like that, except on a greater scale.

4. When God showed Moses His glory, Moses responded with fear, and his face literally glowed.

a. When the prophets like Ezekiel or Isaiah saw God's glory, they struggled to express in human words the full beauty and power.

b. When God inhabited the Tabernacle and later the Temple, smoke and fire were visible.

c. In the Book of Revelation, John is consistently amazed and overcome by the Glory of God.

B. In Romans, God's glory is front and center.

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 178.

² Ibid.

1. Romans 3:23 says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

2. Glory is all that God is.

2. Glory is also something we give to God.

a. When we give God glory, we honor Him, we celebrate Him, we attribute to Him all of the good attributes.

b. Just as our reputation is the sum of what we are, it is also the full sum of what people say about us.

c. If you talk positively about me, celebrating my achievements, hard work, faithfulness, etc., you are advancing my reputation or giving me glory.

d. When we celebrate God, praise Him for His faithfulness, goodness, love, and all of those things, we are giving God glory.

C. Human sin and unrighteous behavior begin with rejecting truth and denying God's glory.

1. Vs. 21 Though they knew God, they did not glorify him or show him gratitude.

2. Vs. 22, they exchanged God's glory (which is immortal) for mortal images.

3. When we give glory that belongs to God to someone else, we commit idolatry.

a. Idolatry and adultery are siblings.

b. Adultery is to give affection that belongs to your spouse to another.

c. Idolatry is to give worship and glory that belongs to God to someone else.

d. And we will begin to see the connection:

1. When humanity gives away God's glory, we fall into all sorts of sin, much of which is sexual in nature.

2. And sexual sin makes us stupid.

4. Suppression of truth and misplaced worship damage our thinking and our feelings.

Romans 1:21–25 (CSB)

²¹For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves.

²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

A. Knowing God and glorifying Him are not the same things.

1. All of creation, in some form, knows about God.
2. But not all people glorify Him or show him gratitude.
3. When we don't worship God, we worship something else.
4. False worship damages our thinking and feelings.

B. The Apostle Paul said that the result is worthless thinking and senseless feelings.

1. God gave them over to the worthless and senseless desires of their heart.
2. When we give into our thirst for godlessness and unrighteousness, our thoughts and affections degrade.
3. In fact, Paul said the result was this: **Claiming to be wise they became (fools) $\mu\omega\pi\alpha\iota\nu\omega$ $m\bar{o}rain\bar{o}$.**

C. When we do things our way, ignore God's truth, and deny Him glory, we do moronic things.

1. Our thinking is stupid and our feelings are stupid.
 - a. At this point, you can't trust your thinking or your feelings.
 - b. It's like a tree rotting from the inside.
 - c. Long before the limbs begin to show sickness, inside the trunk there is already rotting and hollowing.
2. Even worse, not only do we naturally decline apart from God but God takes an active response in our decline.
 - a. Paul says that God hands us over or delivers into greater levels of sinfulness.
 - b. And God delivered them over in the desires of their sinful hearts...
 - c. Three times, Paul says God hands us over.
3. Sin is like a slide on a playground.
 - a. Gravity will naturally take us from the top of the slide to the bottom.
 - b. But we get there much faster if someone gives us a push.
 - c. When we reject God, we are on the decline.
 - d. But Romans says that God gives us an extra push.
4. If we refuse to see God's reality and nature, we will experience greater levels of sin, futility, and foolishness.

Apply: Do you see it?

A. First of all, do you see that we are lost and hopeless apart from God?

1. As long as you think everything is good, you will act like everything is good even if you are sliding into the very pits of sin and death.

2. Do you see that you are without excuse, judged already on the basis of God's revelation to us?

3. Do you see that, if unchecked, we are all sliding into ever darker depths of sin?

B. Second, do you see the evidence of God around you?

1. Humans need to explain.

2. The deeper we dig into this universe God created, the more evidence we see of God.

3. One of my favorite illustrations is this:

If I put ten pennies in my pocket and number them 1 to 10, then put my hand back in my pocket, my chances of pulling out the number 1 penny would be one in ten. If I place the number 1 penny back in my pocket and mix all the pennies again, the chances of pulling out penny number 2 would be one in a hundred. The chances of repeating the same procedure and coming up with penny number 3 would be one in a thousand. To do so with all of them (1 through 10 in order) would be one in ten billion! Noting the order and design of our universe, Kepler—founder of modern astronomy, discoverer of the "Three Planetary Laws of Motion," and originator of the term satellite—said, "The undevout astronomer is mad." David sang:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. (Psalm 19:1, 2)³

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 34.

C. Do you see Jesus' love for you?

1. That God could have remained hidden, but He didn't.
2. Instead, God put on human flesh and became God with us.
3. that God did not leave us clueless but instead He covered the impossible gap and met us on our turn.
4. Therefore, our lives are not hopeless and condemned to decline and death, but we all can have eternal life through Jesus our Lord.

Do you see God's love for you? Do you see God shouting from every corner and every instance, saying "Here I am, believe in me!"

Prayer Points

A. If you are far from Jesus and have been rejecting Him, today's the day for that to change.

B. Second, if you are feeling fuzzy and unclear right now, I want to pray that your spiritual eyes will be opened to God's love for you, His power, and His might.

C. Third, it's a great day to give God glory by thanking Him for all He is and has done.