

Redeemed and Forgiven

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[0 : 0 0] we're going to read together from our New Testament scripture reading which is Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 to 14 and Lizzie is going to come and read for us.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also when you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation and believed in him was sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Amen. Two weeks ago we started a series on the letter of Paul to the Ephesians and so we're picking back up with that this morning. Paul writes this letter and in between 8060 and 62 he's a prisoner in the city of Rome writing back to a church that he had planted a few years before that and he really loved the Ephesians dearly and he wanted it he wanted this letter to be a letter that was meant for all local churches to read so it's called it we call it a circular letter so Paul really we know intended it to be copied and then sent around to all the churches near Ephesus and then beyond that and so when it says to the saints who are in Ephesus we said last time you can say to the saints by God's word who are in are in Edinburgh so it's written to the local church and that means because this is written by God to us it's to us today and it's a really important letter for us to study and think about part of the reason for that is because we are in a season of transition still and will be for a while we're in a new era here at St. Columbus after 22 years with Derek and Katrina and leading and right now it's a really important time to be asking the fundamental question that Ephesians asked which is who is the church what's the church what does the church do who are we gonna be in the future that's exactly what the book of Ephesians the letter that Paul's written here addresses and in this very long sentence that Lizzie read for us verses 3 to 14 Paul talks about that and it is a long sentence so in the Greek text it's one sentence there are multiple sentences here in your English Bible but in the Greek Paul just kept going and going and going it's one big long sentence and what this long sentence does is Paul is trying to get you at the beginning of thinking who is the church to take a God's eye perspective on it so he's trying to sort of pull us out of ourselves and say stop just simply seeing the world from your vantage point and see all that God is doing and up to in your life in the life of the church and life of the world from his perspective and his perspective starts from eternity from before time began we looked at that last time all the way to right now in this moment so he's drawing you up and every single week we will answer the question who is the church with a new answer and so we said he's already told us the church is blessed because we were chosen predestined in him from before the foundation of the world and then this week the next answer he gives us is that we're blessed because we are redeemed redeemed and forgiven so that's the focus verse just verses 7 to 8 and let's ask what is redemption what's the meaning of it the meaning of redemption and what are the gifts the blessings that come from it so those two things the meaning of redemption we'll spend almost all of our time on that and then lastly consider what are some of the gifts and the blessings that come from that that help Paul help you today to say blessed be God to worship like he does here so the meaning of redemption in verse 7

we've got just a few a clause in him in Jesus we have redemption through his blood and in every every single word that Paul writes right there there is something distinct and what he's talking about the idea of redemption from the way that modern

Western people are conditioned to understand redemption so what Paul gives you there is different from the way we've received the idea of redemption in our modern Western world this is a Greek word redemption that means that's the word *apolutron* in Greek and it means actually ransom so it can be translated either redemption or ransom and ransom ransom this first century idea of ransom means that you a person that needs ransom or redemption you are totally incapacitated you are completely imprisoned you have a debt that you can never pay you are dead and you cannot make yourself alive and the idea of ransom is that somebody has to come and pay every single debt that you owe so that you might be released from your bondage so deep in the heart of the idea of ancient ransom or redemption is an exchange and it's an exchange that you are not involved in it's an exchange that takes place completely apart from anything that you do now the reason that this strikes against the modern notion of redemption is because we have so many great stories so many great tales books

TV film that are redemption stories redemption stories are probably the most classic and popular genre of literature and film that are out there and there if you read film critics literary buffs about redemption and story in modern story redemption typically takes place in a couple of ways there are redemption characters that have big redemption arcs Severus Snape Ebenezer Scrooge Oscar Schindler Anakin Skywalker Darth Vader if you don't know Boromir Katniss Everdeen Woody Toy Story hopefully there's something I believe there's something there for everybody these are redemption characters with redemption stories and big redemption arcs sometimes about multiple films and books and when you look at redemption characters in our time there are basically two ways that redemption happens in most stories one is that you are born into or find yourself in the midst of really hard circumstances so you know that you might be born in it as an orphan and you you overcome that that circumstance and you you seek your destiny and against all the odds you finally you get there remember Bambi you remember Bambi Bambi that little deer that fawn Bambi this is the book version by the way was meant to be a great prince of the forest his father was but he never knew his dad and he was so attached to his mother and he had she was all he had but the evil malevolent force that enters into the woods is man and man hunts deer and man shoots kills [8 : 20] Bambi's mother and he's orphaned and all he has left in the world is his little rabbit friend Thumper and against against every expectation Bambi grows up he has a wife and there's a moment where his wife is surrounded by hunters and Bambi could have never saved his mother when when he was too small but now he has that opportunity and he comes in and he saves his wife from the hunters and he gets shot but he survives it and he overcomes and against all odds the orphan Bambi becomes the great prince of the forest now that's a redemption story and it's a redemption from horrible circumstances or from a circumstance of deep loss or pain or overcoming the odds that's one type of redemption arc that we find in modern story the other is the most the most common and that's redeeming yourself after the midst of great failure after a great failure you know it's the story of redemption because of something you've done that you've made horribly wrong but you get a second chance and that's the story of

Woody in Toy Story Woody Woody is selfish ego maniacal and when when Buzz Lightyear comes into the scene you know he takes away from Woody the one thing Woody is always priced and that's the love of Andy and so Woody pushes Buzz out of a window and through guilt and shame and eventual repentance Woody rescues Buzz the man who tried to kill Buzz goes and realizes he has to rescue Buzz and Woody you know Buzz gets rescued but who is it that's redeemed it's Woody he's redeemed from his selfishness and he becomes friends with Buzz and he gives Buzz a share in the leadership of all the toys now this is the second type of redemption story it's when you've failed greatly in your life you've really messed it up and you've been imprisoned or some other cost has come into your life but you get a second chance and you redeem yourself Flannery O'Connor the great southern fiction writer in the United States she wrote a little essay in the mid 20th century called thinking about books and she really saw the problem of modern stories of redemption and she really nails it here this is what she says she says the reader of today is indeed looking for redemption aren't we all and rightly so but what she has forgotten is the cost of redemption and she goes on she says the reader's sense of evil is lacking so lacking in the modern world so diluted that he has forgotten the true price of restoration and redemption now there's a lot

of great redemption stories and maybe you have one in your life you've you've overcome stuff in your life that put you against the odds of having any success or you came back from a great failure and you had a second chance and you seized it but let me say that the only way that these stories actually find meaning and the only way that they truly can give you a sense of fulfillment at last is if you see them in the light of the great redemption story and these stories are mere shadows little flickers and glimmers of something so much bigger so much better so much greater something that's capital R redemption and that's what Paul and God are talking to us about in this letter and we have to see in it the big differences between the way we often are taught to think of redemption and what redemption really means and here we have it Paul says first in Jesus in him we have redemption and when he says that to us he's he's pushing against every sense of modernity where redemption means when you get a second chance you better grab it when you get a second chance you better lift yourself up by your bootstraps and instead did you hear what Paul said he says in Jesus we have redemption and that means Paul is saying that if you want real redemption it's not something you can accomplish it's something that you have to receive you see what he doesn't say we can achieve redemption he says in him we have it in other words he's pointing to the fact that redemption if you're really gonna have it it has to be given to you it has to be found in him outside of you and be given as a gift to you you may you may have in your life so far a pretty good redemption story very those are great overcoming a failure but you know let me just this is what you came for today remember Bambi still died and so did his wife and toy you know have you seen toy story too what he was still selfish he overcame his selfishness for a moment and then it came right back and you know you see the thing is is that the great problems that we need redemption from we cannot redeem ourselves in him we have it we don't achieve it you can't you can't get it yourself you have to find it from the outside this is actually embedded into the myth the myth of the Western mindset from the time of the Enlightenment forward the Enlightenment in large part began on the Royal Mile right outside and the Enlightenment was a time of introducing modernity and modernity is a time where we as humans believe we can progress we can achieve we can reach utopia and one of the fundamental heartbeats of that movement was what does it look like for us to redeem our city redeem our nation redeem our society redeem in all sorts of ways and people have in modernity have said well you know if we're really redeeming society we need a classless society if we're really gonna redeem society we need bigger government if we're really gonna redeem society we need smaller government if we're really gonna redeem society we need we need better access to therapy we need better education systems and what we have after that entire movement is the same exact problems that were identified from the beginning and the true story is contra every modern sensibility you can't redeem yourself you can't redeem the city you can't redeem society the same problems will always come back redemption has to come from outside now the second thing Paul says here that's a different that's different from our modern mindset in him we have redemption the word redemption apollutron this Greek word which means ransom remember it means to be purchased or to be exchanged for this is my last literary slash film reference of the day redemption in the Bible is much less like Bambi and much more like the story of Jean Valjean Jean Valjean from Les Miserables and if you've seen it you'll know if you haven't you'll get this remember Jean Valjean prisoner number 24601 he was imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread for his family 17 years hard labor and he was released in France and he became homeless and he's on the streets he's in parole and he's invited one night into the home of a bishop in France and the bishop feeds him a hot meal for the first time in years he gives him a bed to sleep in and in the middle of the night with the Jean Valjean do he steals all the silver from the home and he runs and you know he he stole to give food to his family in the beginning but he really became a thief in prison and after that he still is a thief and he steals and the police catch him and they bring him back to the bishop and they say you know here he is the thief he's on parole he's done this before he's gonna get life in prison for this in 18th century France and the bishop says to the police this man did not steal my silver today I gifted to him and then he turns to Jean Valjean and says with this silver with this gift I have redeemed you I've ransomed you I've bought you back and that's ransom that's redemption that's the biblical idea it's more like you're standing in a prison cell and the guard comes and releases you and says go and be free and be transformed and you say why and the guard says because somebody else has given enough to pay your debt and set you free it's being redeemed by a debt that somebody else has paid for paid for your debt has put something in the place has paid for you so that you could go free that's

redemption and so thirdly Paul says in him something you can't do we have redemption and exchange that has to take place where you don't do anything your debt gets paid for from outside of you and then finally through his blood so what we learn is how costly this is this is what Flannery O'Connor was talking about the costliness of real redemption this is lost in many modern stories of redemption and what Paul tells to really make sense of this is he says the cost of redemption is his blood the blood of Jesus Christ and then he adds one little line at the end of that he says the forgiveness of our trespasses so he ties the spilt blood of Jesus to forgiveness and when he does that what you learn what you can see here is that to be ransomed to be redeemed means to be forgiven and how that takes place the primary idea is that when you are ransomed when you were exchanged when somebody else pays your debt and you're released being released is a metaphor for being forgiven in other words the most central problem that the Bible is talking about in the idea of redemption is that we are guilty people it's guilt it's not it's not just picking yourself up from your circumstances it's not just overcoming a bad being born into a really hard situation it's something much deeper much greater much more difficult to deal with much more costly of a price and it's the problem of guilt that's what he's talking about it's that somebody else has paid the price so that when you go free it is as if it is truly the case that your guilt has been washed away you're forgiven that's what he means here now think about this Jean Valjean you know who who forgiveness is not free forgiveness is never free where's the cost well the bishop is never gonna get a silver back he the bishop has to let it go he has to eat the cost of that it's an example let me give you another example to help you see this I heard this from someone else recently this is a this is a crime we've all committed it's a crime I've come I've committed in ministry here at St. Columbus once or twice you book to meet up with somebody for lunch for coffee and you're going about your business and all of a sudden you get that text message are you still coming and you realize that you never took the time to put it into your diary you know you said yeah we'll meet for coffee we'll meet on Thursday at 2 o'clock and that person has left their house they've traveled into the city 30 minutes 40 minutes they've set for 20 minutes at the coffee shop and you never showed up and they say are you still coming and what do you say you say I'm so sorry you know I'm so sorry I'm such a fool I didn't write it down I just I thought I would remember and I didn't remember we've all we've all done this the person you say I'm sorry the person says I forgive you what does it mean for them to forgive you truly it means does it mean that there was no cost no they've lost an hour and a half of their lives they'll never get it back you know you not only is there a cost of time there's a cost in the relationship you've actually burdened them you've diminished the trust that they once maybe had in your responsibility right and but here's true forgiveness true forgiveness is when they say I forgive you and they really do forget about it so that they don't walk around and say yeah you know

[20 : 54] I forgive you and then they go and say the the minister sometimes he doesn't show up for meetings you know he's not responsible and you know which may be true but the true forgiveness true forgiveness is when you actually forget and you say I'm not gonna go around and diminish your character for this it's gonna be between me and you and it's gone forever I see you the same way I saw you before I love you that's real forgiveness that's redemption when you're when the price of your debt has been paid to such an extent that you can be forgiven like that now listen forgiveness is costly and it is and at the same time it is true release from all of your debts the doubt of guilt let me move to the final point and our conclusion which is to say but before that let me say guilt is serious it's real guilt we are told here our guilt is human beings required the death of the Son of God the blood of Jesus and I just want to ask have you really seen this have you really wrestled with this have you really been willing in your life even as a father of Jesus to look at the cross and understand the crux of the cross the cruciality of the cross the fact that it is about your guilt that your guilt requires for the sake of forgiveness the blood of the Son of God to be spilled and that means that in our lives in every horizontal relationship we have self to other people self centeredness to our family members to our friends to the people we know in our neighborhoods every single time we are self-centered when we were meant to be selfless that there is a vertical sin that takes place not only towards somebody else but to God and every single time we are self-centered we revolve the world around our kingdom that is a capital crime before the Lord we have made a kingdom for ourselves that we do not deserve in the midst of

God's world and it requires do you see how serious it is how the necessity of the cross screams at us and says our guilt requires the blood of the Son of God to be spilled because God is holy he

can't he doesn't just forgive sin willy nilly and because God is love he desires so much to pay the price and so in the cross we have redemption why because God's justice and his love and his mercy all meet they all kiss in that moment and redemption pours forth into the world forgiveness is so difficult it costs so much and until you see that you don't really understand Christianity until you see the reality the crux of the cross the real cost of it you've yet to have your life transformed to see the pain of the cross and the love of the cross and the justice of the cross for your redemption modern people we as modern people and maybe today you're coming exploring the claims of faith as a modern person in the secular West and you might say I don't know that I really feel like I'm in a person in need of redemption you know I don't have a hard circumstances story I don't have a great failure story and I don't yet see I don't know that I believe that I have a vertical dimension to my action that my selfishness is actually sinning or committing an offense against the living God the only thing I can say about it because of time is this we all face a choice and this is the choice either either either God exists there really is divine law there really is such a thing is right and wrong and that you can transgress it or God doesn't exist and there is no meaning in this world either God exists and there really is divine law and there really is right and wrong and there really is a moral order and you can transgress it or there is no meaning the moral right and wrong is nothing but subjectivism it's nothing but feelings it's nothing but a construct it's one or two it's the only options Friedrich Nietzsche the great atheist philosopher of the 19th century he saw that he admitted it Bertrand

Russell he saw it great thinkers of our time that did not believe in God admitted it they knew either God exists divine law is real or there is no meaning in this world and that's the choice you have to face either Jesus Christ had to die on the cross for their forgiveness or sins or there or there is no meaning it's that big it's that serious it's that it's that real it's that necessary the cost of our sins is the price of redemption is the blood of Jesus now lastly let me bring this home by saying that means that when you when you see this when you grasp this there are blessings that come into your life their gifts and let me just point out four of them real quick and we'll be done let me say first this is so anti-modern this idea this so it doesn't matter if you're from a Western tradition or an Eastern tradition this morning what's so anti-modern about this is there's a total relief in the need to redeem yourself so every single culture that we come from gives you ways gives you opportunities to redeem yourself to become a better person to pick yourself up and whether it's Western whether it's Eastern whatever culture it may be American Scottish German it doesn't matter what what the gospel comes and offers you today is an opportunity to have total relief from the need to redeem yourself we have redemption in Jesus Christ if you come today saying I have a redemption story you know I have become become something out of the midst of hard circumstances and failure can you see can you say today can you see today how temporary those redemption stories are that you can't you can't redeem yourself from death you can't redeem yourself from the great problems you have Woody was still selfish and Bambi still died and all of this is temporary you need redemption that's so much greater so much bigger than that and if you're coming today as a follower of Jesus I just want to ask one more time are you are you are you transformed by the redemption that's purchased in the cross of Jesus Christ in your life and I know that that a lot of us we do believe this we do believe this intellectually we believe it and we in our hearts we believe it but we might find ourselves right now in a season where our life is just not transformed by it and one of the ways to break through that and to become a person who does what Paul does here and says blessed be God in worships is to look once more look every day at the cross are you looking at the cross are you seeing the cost of redemption and the love that's been poured forth at the cross you'll if you if you can see it if you'll look at it if you'll make it the object of your focus every day you'll break through you'll break through a season where you're lacking transformation in your life the second thing afford that the benefits the gifts that were told about here when you if you're a follower of Jesus this morning when you see the truth of redemption there is a beauty in it that means that you have not only been known and loved predestined and chosen from before the foundation of the world but that you've also been redeemed from before you were ever a twinkle in your parents eye so in Ephesians 1 we're told that God from maternity past for ordained predestined and shows his church from before time ever existed you read 1 Peter 1 very similar to Ephesians it says that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was foreknown and planned from before the foundation of the world to and here in our text it says that God has done this with all wisdom with all insight which are words of craftsmanship and that means that if you come today as a follower of Jesus Christ do you know that God redeemed you from before you were ever even a thought in any human

mind when did he do it he did it in the middle of history and so when Jesus Christ came to the cross in the middle of human history Hebrews tells us it was the joy set before him that he endured the cross what is that joy we're told he was thinking of every single one of us in the middle of human history when he went to the cross to redeem us you were redeemed not only from maternity past but in the middle of history and also now in your present life it's that big it's that old it's got that much that much craftsmanship that much architecture to all that God's been up to in the middle of history I love the way one writer puts it he says the God who hung the stars the God who hung the stars was hung upon the cross with you in his heart that's how far back redemption goes third that means worth being told here that redemption has been accomplished we have it it's over with and so Paul uses the language that he has lavished this gift of grace upon you and so let me just say that because redemption has been accomplished the language of Paul is that he actually today wants to God want God wants to pour redemption over you he is not a God that is withholding he wants to he's just he's desiring so much to give this to you to lavish you with his grace like treasure he just wants to bathe you in it he wants to give it to you now if you're on Twitter X if you are in the midst of the modern business world if you are studying in the university if you're if you're a student right now in the midst of school or in primary school you will know that sometimes in the modern world when you make a mistake there is no forgiveness that when you make a big mistake and you come on Twitter and people find out about it that you're never gonna be forgiven you're only going to be canceled and let me say that unlike human beings unlike the people of modernity unlike the modern West the God of the Bible comes to redeem you and forget about your sins forever and to do it really to do it truly you know the modern world will never forget the things of your past but God actually does God dismisses your sin from his mind as far as the East is from the West he will never remember the sins you really can be redeemed you really can be guilt-free you really can be forgiven and then lastly the last one is Paul is teaching us here about the church who is the church the church of the redeemed we sang Psalm 107 a moment ago let the redeemed of the Lord say that we are redeemed what is the church who are we so if you're a follower of Jesus say who are you and Paul is saying to us today that you are the redeemed the family of God the family of God the church is the people that have been redeemed saved are you saved are you redeemed and if you are then you are the church you're you're of the church you're in the church you're part of the church there's a wonderful hymn 1866 by Anglican minister S.J. Stone the church is one foundation the church is one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord he bought her by his blood he bought her by his blood he bought her for her life he died now that means do you see that the church is the biggest longest running institution and body and all of human history it began in Genesis 3 15 and it's still going and it's gonna go all the way into everlasting life every single empire every single nation every single kingdom every single government are just small little things the church is the biggest institution the longest lasting institution in all of human history and it will never go away and it was the church on the cross that Jesus lifted up his eyes and was able to endure because of joy for her love for her now Jesus loved the church so much that he wants to redeem her he wanted to and he did and that's that's me that's you that's the bride of Christ and so let me just ask do you love the church do you love the church like Jesus loves the church the church is the family of the redeemed and so you know you can't just come and say I go to church you can't just come and say I come to church here and there I'm a part of the church are do you do you know you are the church the church the family of the redeemed and in that the invitation of redemption is that the one who died for his bride to the uttermost where she was the joy in front of his face he says now step into that love the church as much as Jesus Christ loves the church there are a lot of great stories of redemption every single modern story of redemption wants to be this story it never will be but they will all find meaning if they find their meaning in this story Jesus Christ the Redeemer he he is somebody worth living for his church is something worth living for living in and living for Jesus [34 : 59] Christ is the Redeemer that we all need today let's pray Father we ask that you will teach us the meaning of redemption and we thank you that you purchased us by your blood we thank you Lord Jesus that you exchanged us in your death that we might have freedom we thank you Lord for the great exchange so Lord we just asked now that you would cast away our our boredom with the gospel we asked that you would cast away our the scales that are over our eyes when it comes to the cross and its meaning and its power we asked Lord that we would cut through that we would be diagonalized that we would see the beauty and the power of the blood of Jesus spilled for us we thank you for redemption redemption read we thank you for our exodus story I just asked today I believe today that there is somebody there are several here who need to find the truth of

redemption for the first time so I pray and ask for that Lord I pray also Lord for all of us who may be struggling to actually be redeemed in our lives to live transformed lives because of redemption so wake us up and shake us up we ask and we pray this in
Christ's name amen