**The Community of the Cross**

**The Word**

Read together Genesis 3:1-7 and Romans 5:18-21

**The Big Idea**

In the midst of a culture that is constantly grasping at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the church is called to be a community of the cross that offers a prophetic voice and radical alternative to the world.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. According to the gospel, identity is not something we create or discover on our own. Rather, it’s something given to us by God in Christ. Where do you continue to struggle to root your identity in Christ? What are you most tempted to look to as an identity outside of Christ?

2. It was argued that we all are born with disordered desires that we didn’t actively choose and yet are still called to deny. Do you agree with that? Is that a proper way to think of, for example, same sex attraction? If so, how does that impact your posture towards those who experience that?

3. On Sunday we discussed the idea of redemptive suffering. Describe a time when you watched someone in your life suffer redemptively. What did you learn through that?

4. Looking back on this series on the body, what has been the most helpful idea or new perspective that who want to hold onto moving forward?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. Romans 5 lays out two men (Adam and Jesus) who stood at two trees (the tree of knowledge of good and evil vs. the cross) who made two different decisions (grasping for life apart from God vs. surrendering his life to God in trusting obedience) that had two different results (sin, judgment, and death vs. forgiveness, freedom, and life)

B. Only as we learn to be a community that stands at the foot of the cross can we offer a prophetic voice to our culture as well as offer them an alternative way of being human that leads to true life.

II. A cross-centered view of identity

 A. The culture at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

1. “Did God really say . . .” The first temptation starts with distrusting God’s goodness and generosity, thinking that he is a withholder whose rules are restrictive and oppressive

2. “God knows that you will become like him, knowing good and evil.” Eating from this tree means not having to submit to God’s restrictive boundaries but being able to define for ourselves what is good and evil and charting our own way

3. Our current culture is showing us extreme examples of this: redefining marriage and even gender itself. Playing God with reality

4. Identity, culturally, isn’t something given to us by the creator, it’s something we create, define, and redefine: “a choose your own adventure self”

5. This identity-cut-off-from-all-limits promises freedom, but it doesn’t deliver. People are more confused, anxious, depressed then ever

 B. The community of the cross

1. “God did not withhold his only son”: the cross counteracts the lie that God doesn’t love us and is withholding good things from us. We can trust him!

2. Identity is something we don’t create. Rather it’s something received, given to us by God. At the cross we find our true identity

a. Broken, sinner, rebel, wildly imperfect

 b. Loved with an everlasting love

 3. We discover NOT who we are BUT whose we are

a. 1 Cor 6:19-20: You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

 b. In all my limitations, failings, gifts, accomplishments. I belong to God

 4. We have a prophetic voice in this restless world

= come and rest from your restless wandering. Receive your identity as God’s beloved as a sheer gift

 5. So are we a community that is finding our identity in Christ?

III. A cross-centered view of desire

A. The culture at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

1. Desires are self-authenticating. The fact that we have a desire justifies pursuing that desire. Especially if we were born with that desire and it is strong and persistent.

2. So someone with same sex attraction or gender dysphoria should be free to pursue those inner desires as they see fit

3. The problem is we become enslaved to our desires. God “hands us over” to our desires.

 B. The community of the cross

 1. God is the source of desires, but our desires are now disordered.

2. So we are called to bring our desires to the foot of the cross and crucify the disordered desires of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Gal 5:24)

3. Most of us didn’t choose the disordered desires we’d be plagued with throughout life. We were simply “dealt a hand” of disordered desires, and the issue is how to live faithfully to Jesus in the midst of that.

4. So are we a community that is regularly crucifying our disordered desires at the foot of the cross?

IV. A cross-centered view of suffering

A. The culture at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

1. Suffering is a waste. If the universe has no ultimate meaning, than we ought to pursue life in ways that minimize suffering and maximize pleasure and happiness.

2. To ask a person with same sex attraction or gender dysphoria to embrace the suffering that comes with faithfulness to Scripture sounds pointless and even cruel, especially if relief is right around the corner through transitioning or a same sex relationship.

B. The community of the cross

1. There is such a thing as redemptive suffering

2. The darkest day in history is also the day of salvation, and Jesus’ moment of greatest suffering and shame becomes his moment of glory.

3. Likewise, our suffering can have meaning

- It develops perseverance (Romans 5, James 1)

- It refines our faith (1 Peter 1)

- We experience the grace and presence of our suffering savior (2 Cor 12)

4. So we choose faithful suffering over making decisions that might bring relief but aren’t faithful to our calling.

5. So are we a community that is regularly embracing suffering for the sake of Christ?

V. Grace Resources

We have two people in our community who would like to offer themselves as a resource for any who need help navigating these issues for themselves or their children/friends

 A. Julie Bowling AnthroProf47@protonmail.com (562) 896-6459

B. Daniel Gehman: godanteum@gmail.com (949) 412-2697