

Who do You Say that I Am? Part IV

*The Transforming Christ*

Romans 5:12-6:4

Sermon

*Hobart, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013*

*Devonport, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

*Launceston, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

## **Romans 5:12-6:4**

<sup>12</sup> When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. <sup>13</sup> Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. <sup>14</sup> Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. <sup>15</sup> But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. <sup>16</sup> And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. <sup>17</sup> For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup> Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. <sup>19</sup> Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

<sup>20</sup> God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. <sup>21</sup> So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**6** Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? <sup>2</sup> Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? <sup>3</sup> Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? <sup>4</sup> For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

## INTRODUCTION:

### I. TODAY IS THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

#### A. THE TIME FOCUSING ON GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ALL OF HIS CREATION;

#### B. LAST SUNDAY WAS CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY OR REIGN OF CHRIST SUNDAY

1. In [Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Sweden](#), this day is referred to as **the Sunday of Doom**, previously centred about the final judgement, though the topic of the day is now *the Return of Christ*.
2. In the [Church in Wales](#), part of the Anglican Communion, the four Sundays before Advent are called the Sundays of the Kingdom and *Christ the King* is kept as a season and not just as a single festival.
3. [Feast of Christ the King](#) is celebrated on the Sunday before the first Sunday of [Advent](#). So it falls between 20 and 26 November.
  - a) The Roman Catholics used to call it *Feast of Christ the King* then later *Feast of our Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe*.
4. The celebration of Christ the King is deliberately placed next to Advent, reminding us of Jesus' central place in God's purpose for all creation

#### C. AT THE HEART OF JESUS' ROLE AS KING, AND AT THE CENTRE OF GOD'S PURPOSE IS TO MAKE ALL THINGS GOOD AND RIGHT

1. To bring all of us into loving fellowship and unity with himself
  - a) For us all to share in his loving nature, and live in peace and harmony with one another and the entire creation

**D. TODAY WE ARE CONTINUING TO LOOK AT VARIOUS VIEWS AND IMAGES PEOPLE HOLD IN THEIR MINDS OF WHO JESUS IS, AND WHAT HE DOES AND WHAT HE IS LIKE**

1. The more we know about Jesus the more we learn about the Father and his nature and his purposes for us and creation

**E. SO FAR WE HAVE LOOKED AT;**

1. ***The Divine Jesus*** and how important it is to see Jesus as also fully human, and not to see Jesus as separated and remote from our humanity, suffering and weaknesses.
  - a) Not to see the material creation as something evil to be disdained and escaped from
  - b) But to see life and the world around us as he does, in love and as one of us, not only in his life on earth, but as the risen, ascended glorified man that he continues to be, as well as in terms of his divinity as the Son of God.

***2. The Conquering Jesus***

- a) We looked at how seeing Jesus as a conqueror can lead us flying Jesus as a battle flag, focus on fighting for causes, and thinking God is always on our side against others,
- b) We then looked at how Jesus came as one of us, to conquer all that stands against us, and between us and our being in intimate, everlasting relationship with God
- c) And how he won victory through loving sacrifice and surrender, and God's restoring, resurrecting love and power

***3. Jesus as Judge***

- a) We saw that Jesus is the judge of all things, but that his judgment is in love, and to save not to condemn
- b) But that those who refuse God's love suffer automatically because they fail to avail themselves of Jesus' saving acts
- c) God's will is to set everything that is wrong, right again

**F. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT A FOURTH PICTURE OF JESUS;**

## ***1. The Transforming Jesus***

### **G. PRAYER**

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## **BODY:**

## ***II. THE ACCEPTING JESUS***

### **A. WE HAVE SKIPPED OVER ONE OF THE PICTURES OF JESUS THAT DOUGLAS JOHN HALL WRITES ABOUT**

1. That of “The Accepting Jesus” as it tends to duplicate much of what we have seen already, but it does lead well into today’s view;

### **B. SO LET’S HAVE A BRIEF LOOK AT “THE ACCEPTING JESUS”**

1. Hall brings out that this is a very common image in western societies today
  - a) Jesus is seen as all loving, all embracing and all accepting.
  - b) He is seen as warm and kind and as having no real issues or agendas other than being gentle and mild, caring and kind.
2. As with the other images of Jesus there is much truth to them.
  - a) God is love, Jesus lived that love of God as a human being
3. But Jesus doesn’t accept the status quo, and contentedly let everything and everyone just blithely continue on in their lives as they are doing
4. Hall writes;

Love doesn’t just accept everything. If it’s love, it cares about the real condition of the beloved; and if the beloved is in fact a distortion of the person that he or she could be, then the only role that true love can assume is one of truth and the intention to change.

**"Jesus loves me" does not mean that Jesus likes me, accepts me, and makes no great demands upon me. Jesus loves me--therefore I had better be prepared for some embarrassing moment of truth and some hard work!**

And Jesus, we say, is God's eternal pledge of love for *the world* (John 3:16). The Jesus who is not ready to accept me just as I am is not ready either to accept the world, our world, just as it is.

If we can trust any of the illustrations of God's love for the world that we find in the continuity of the two testaments, we must conclude that this love, far from accepting the status quo, wills to alter it drastically--and especially amongst those whose economic and physical well-being makes them prone to believe they are already the accepted and approved of God!<sup>1</sup>

### **C. SUMMARY OF THE FIRST FOUR IMAGES OF JESUS**

1. Hall brings out how each of these four images of Jesus contain

"misleading elements that must be assessed critically . . . because they appear to distort or obscure certain essential emphases of the gospel."

2. The core aspect of who Jesus is, and thus who God is that gets distorted by these images of Jesus; is God's view of, and relationship with the world.

3. Hall says that one of the vital aspects of the gospel, which these images "distort or obscure", is the orientation toward the world to which Christians are called. He writes,

"Each of these images of the Christ can draw upon aspects of the christological tradition; but each of them is also a distortion of the best biblical and post-biblical traditions concerning Jesus Christ. And their distortions show up particularly in the attitudes they foster towards the world.

"The first [The Divine Jesus] approach encourages world denial and evasion of creaturely responsibility;

the second [The Conquering Jesus] a triumphalistic bid for worldly power;

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas John Hall, *We Would See Jesus*

the third [The Judging Jesus] outright rejection of the created order, and the fourth [The Accepting Jesus] an uncritical acceptance of the status quo.”

4. Hall’s central point is that;

“in our particular socio-historical context, what we need most of all to see when we think of Jesus is the One who intends to transform the world.”

5. So let’s look at that image;

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### III. THE TRANSFORMING CHRIST.

#### A. THIS IS THE IMAGE DOUGLAS JOHN HALL SEES AS THE MOST APPROPRIATE AND ACCURATE FOR US TO FOCUS ON.

1. He gives several reasons why he finds it more helpful than the other four images;

In criticizing these particular images of the Christ, I have of course been assuming an *imago Christi* myself. My picture of the Christ is subject to the same necessity and the same limitations as any other: I cannot *not* picture Jesus Christ, as a person of faith; but I know that Jesus Christ also transcends my image of him. Too much of "me" and of my "here and now" are in this image for it to be thought eternal.

But I do not want it to be eternal, in fact; I want it to be timely! And in our particular socio-historical context, what seems to me most timely is to “see Jesus” as One who intends to transform the world. To transform something means to change its form, shape, direction; to turn it towards a different goal; to reorient it.

Against the image of the divine Jesus, I think Jesus does not want to take us out of the world but to put us into it (how we resist that!), and with a mind to mending it.

Against the conquering Jesus “my” Jesus doesn’t ask us to take over the world but to befriend it. How friendless is the world today!

Against the judging Jesus, I do not see the Christ as gathering about himself a band of nihilists who are ready to “push over what is falling”

(Nietzsche); rather, he recruits reconcilers and stewards and poets of creation.

And against the accepting Jesus I “see” a Jesus who calls human beings to responsibilities they would never dream of undertaking otherwise, given the fatalistic assumptions governing the thought of individuals and minorities in our time. Precisely *not* to accept the violence, injustice, inequality, and degradation of our social and natural environment: that is discipleship today.

If we are serious about seeing Jesus here and now, I suspect we shall have to jettison most of the other images of the Christ that circulate in our midst and prepare ourselves to meet the transforming Christ who calls us to participate in his transfiguration of the creation.

## 2. As we read last time in John 3;

- a) Jesus didn’t come to leave the world as it is, in darkness and sin, living apart from God and destined to death and oblivion
- b) He came to save it, to change and transform our lives
- c) To rescue us and bring us to the Father, so that we may be transformed by the renewing our lives in him and through the Spirit.

## 3. In his letter to the Romans, Paul works through this at length.

- a) He starts off in the early chapters showing the problem that exists as a result of our living apart from God
- b) He then goes on to show how all that is wrong in our world, all that is wrong—in our lives, in our societies, in our relationships, in our hearts and minds—is transformed and made right in and through Jesus Christ.
- c) Particularly through Jesus’ death and resurrection

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## IV. ROMANS 5:12-6:8

### **A. IN ROMANS 5 PAUL GOES BACK TO THE BEGINNING OF THE PROBLEM**

*Adam and Christ Contrasted*

<sup>12</sup> When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. <sup>13</sup> Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break. <sup>14</sup> Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come. <sup>15</sup> But there is a great difference between Adam's sin and God's gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ. <sup>16</sup> And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but God's free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins. <sup>17</sup> For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.

### 1. Robert E. Webber describes this ultimate transformation, of our being made right with God as the heart of God's vision for the World

God's embrace of the world and its recapitulation was at great cost to God's Son. It was accomplished by his own blood, the giving of his soul for our soul, his flesh for our flesh, and the outpouring of his Spirit in order for us to embrace God.

This was done in the flesh.

...God created a world as a habitation for himself and creatures as his family. Just as the fall was a real, embodied experience that occurred in the flesh and blood of Adam and Eve... so the reversal of their sin, the redemption of all creation, is accomplished by God made flesh in Jesus.

He reversed the fall in his suffering on the cross and resurrection from the tomb.

He reversed the sin that separates us from God, and he has united us again to God by the Spirit.

He has won back the world and its creatures and made them new again.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Webber, *The Divine Embrace*, p. 141

<sup>18</sup> Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

<sup>19</sup> Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

<sup>20</sup> God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. <sup>21</sup> So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Sin's Power Is Broken*

**6** Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? <sup>2</sup> Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? <sup>3</sup> Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? <sup>4</sup> For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

<sup>5</sup> Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. <sup>6</sup> We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. <sup>7</sup> For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. <sup>8</sup> And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him.

<sup>9</sup> We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. <sup>10</sup> When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. <sup>11</sup> So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> Do not let sin control the way you live;\* do not give in to sinful desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. <sup>14</sup> Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

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\* Or *Do not let sin reign in your body, which is subject to death.*

## **B. THIS MESSAGE OF GOD'S TRANSFORMATION OF OUR LIVES CONTINUES THROUGH THE REST OF ROMANS**

1. Romans 8 talks about the role of the Holy Spirit and Jesus resurrection in our transformation

a) And how we are transformed into God's children

### **Romans 8:9-14**

<sup>9</sup> But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) <sup>10</sup> And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life\* because you have been made right with God. <sup>11</sup> The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, dear brothers and sisters,\* you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. <sup>13</sup> For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature,\* you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children\* of God.

2. Webber describes God's actions and the transforming effect they are designed to have on our lives;

I did for you what you simply could not do for yourself. I became one of you. I took your rebellion into myself. I died to overcome the power of sin that has led to his awful separation between us. And I rose victorious over death, breaking the power of all that is death in the world and grip in which it holds you. I overcame death and began a new creation; I opened up the way for you to live in my embrace of you and the world.

Through my Son Jesus and by my Spirit I have embraced you so that now, united with me, you may embrace me as a child learns to embrace a mother because the mother first embraced the child.

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\* Or *your spirit is alive*.

\* Greek *brothers*; also in 8:29.

\* Greek *deeds of the body*.

\* Greek *sons*; also in 8:19.

Now go and live the spiritual life, embrace me and my purpose in creation you and putting you in this world to be the priests of my creation. Make your life and this world the theatre of my glory.<sup>3</sup>

**C. ROMANS 8: ALSO TALKS OF THE FUTURE TOTAL TRANSFORMATION OF GOD'S CHILDREN AND ALL OF CREATION**

**Romans 8:19-23 The Future Glory**

<sup>19</sup> For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. <sup>20</sup> Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, <sup>21</sup> the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. <sup>22</sup> For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children,\* including the new bodies he has promised us.

1. This new life and our new bodies will still be part of creation—we will not be removed and separated from the world.
2. Our new transformed life with God will continue on here, not wafted off away from his good creation
3. We will share in his work of transforming the creation to be what he intended from the beginning

**D. ROMANS 12 TALKS ABOUT THE TRANSFORMING OF OUR MINDS AND HEARTS**

**12** And so, dear brothers and sisters,\* I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.\* <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing

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<sup>3</sup> Webber, p. 142

\* Greek *wait anxiously for sonship*.

\* Greek *brothers*.

\* Or *This is your spiritual worship*; or *This is your reasonable service*.

the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

1. He then goes on to talk about the way we live the new life in contrast to the old, summarising this ongoing transformation in Romans 12:21

<sup>21</sup> Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

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## CONCLUSION:

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### **E. SO WHEN WE PICTURE JESUS**

1. let us keep in mind that he always acts in love
  - a) He is always seeking to turn people around and bring them to trust in him
  - b) Always seeking to heal our hearts, our minds and our lives
  - c) Particularly our relationship with the Father and with one another and the world around us
2. This is how Jesus lived and acted in all his roles
  - a) This is how we are all being called to think, live and act as well
  - b) To always be seeking to participate in Jesus' work of setting the world right
  - c) Of healing and restoring that which is broken

### **F. SO YET AGAIN WE SEE HOW JESUS REVEALS THE FATHER, WHO GOD REALLY IS**

1. And the life and work we are called to participate in now, and forever
2. Advent is a time to think, pray and live out the ultimate purpose of God
  - a) To transform the world through love, so that all might live in the love of God and share that love and the results of that transformation among one another

3. It is good to take time at this time of year to consider how we are impacting those around us
  - a) What impact we are having on our family members
  - b) On our neighbours
  - c) Those we interact with in our daily routines
  - d) And those we are able to help in other places
4. And to think and pray about where Jesus is working, and how he is working with these people and the future he has for them
  - a) And how we can work with him and the Holy Spirit in helping in God's work of transforming their lives, no matter how small a way that might be.
  - b) As we look towards that time when all people and all creation are transformed by Jesus to be God's children, in glorious freedom, totally free of death and decay

**G. PRAYER**

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