

**6 Week Sermon Series**:

**Sermon 6:** Evil’s Ultimate Defeat

**Date**: Sunday September 18,2016

**Scripture**: Revelation 19:11-14, 20:1-2, 21:1

**Things I’d Like to Remember from Today’s Sermon:**

**Daily Study Guide**

**MONDAY September 19, 2016 Genesis 3:8-15 An archetypal foreshadowing of evil’s defeat**

In this archetypal story, evil entered the world when Adam and Eve, misled by the snake, ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Evil brought the human race terrible problems, but this was not a story of despair. The Hebrew storytellers were confident that evil would be defeated in the end. God firmly told the snake that, though he would strike humanity’s heels, Eve’s offspring (particularly Jesus, as it turned out) would strike (or crush) his head.

• When the first humans ate from the tree, the story said, they immediately noticed their nakedness (spiritual as well as physical). Their instinct was to hide in shame from God; God’s instinct was to seek them out. What makes you feel like hiding from God? Does your picture of God encourage you to a) remain in hiding? or b) come out of hiding and surrender your shame in God’s loving, forgiving embrace?

• Scholar John Walton pointed out places in Egyptian literature that spoke of treading on a serpent as a way of defeating it. So the reference in Genesis 3:15, he said, “reflects a potentially mortal blow to this deadly enemy.” How have you tended to think about the existence of evil? In what ways does faith that evil will end open the door for hope?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you that the darkness that often haunts human life has never put out the light of hope. Thank you for inviting me to erode the darkness in my life by choosing you. Draw me ever onward into the light of your presence. Amen.

**TUESDAY September 20, 2016 Luke 22:14-20 Jesus' confidence in the triumph of God’s kingdom**

The night before Jesus went to the cross, evil’s power looked unbeatable. Religious leaders in Jerusalem, who claimed to lead God’s people, were joining forces with the Governor from Imperial Rome to kill him. Yet Jesus, who knew suffering lay ahead (verse 15), boldly pledged that he wouldn’t eat or drink the Passover/Lord’s Supper elements again until the day when God’s kingdom had triumphed.

• It’s striking, given what Jesus was facing, that none of the gospels reports him as saying, “I’ll eat this with you again IF we ever get to God’s Kingdom.” His language reflected confidence that, in the end, good would triumph over evil, and God’s kingdom would become reality. Have you ever realized that when you take part in Communion, you are expressing your confidence in God’s good future?

• Probably the most commonly emphasized aspect of the Lord’s Supper is the one Jesus expressed in verse 19: “Do this in remembrance of me.” How does actively recalling (through Communion and other means) what Jesus did for you help you to build trust in what he will do for you in the present and in the future?

**Prayer:** Loving Lord, you faced the worst that evil could do to you with confidence, because you knew that the worst thing wouldn’t be the last thing. Grow that kind of resurrection confidence in my heart. Amen.

**WEDNESDAY September 21, 2016 Romans 12:12-21 Good can and will defeat evil**

Paul, drawing insight from Jesus' life, taught Christians in Rome how to deal with evil. It was thought-provoking counsel: “Bless people who harass you - bless and don’t curse them” (verse 14). “Don’t pay back anyone for their evil actions with evil actions” (verse 17). Paul said we can do that because we trust God to deal with evil in better ways than we ever could. So, he ended, “Don’t be defeated by evil, but defeat evil with good” (verse 21).

• Review all of the specific positive actions that Paul recommended to the Roman Christians in this passage. Which one or two of them do you find easiest to live out in your day-to-day interactions with others? Which one or two of them do you find most challenging? Who have you known who seemed most like this passage? How did that person’s presence affect you and others?

• When you run up against evil—unfairness, bigotry, hurtful name-calling, and the like—are you more naturally inclined to the view that good CAN defeat evil, or do you tend to see that as a somewhat naïve, unrealistic view of how life works? At times when you have returned hurt for hurt or unfairness for unfairness, how has that affected you? Has it tended to make the situation better or worse?

**Prayer**: Lord Jesus, I’d like, to the best of my ability, to live at peace with all people. Send your Spirit to guide me in the hard work of reshaping my inner attitudes and fears to make that more and more a reality in my life. Amen.

**THURSDAY September 22, 2016 1 John 4:4-10, 5:1-4 The triumph of faith and love**

On one hand, John’s churches faced teachers who used Greek philosophy to deny that Jesus was God. On the other hand, brutal Roman persecution threatened to imprison or kill anyone who didn’t recognize Caesar as “Lord.” In that hostile world, the only “weapons” Christians had were trust in Christ and love for each other. That was enough, John said—it would defeat the world.

• “Christ” was a title, not a name. The Greek *christos*, like the Hebrew *messiah*, meant “the anointed one.” John stressed Jesus as “the Christ” because some in his churches taught, per Plato, that God couldn’t have contact with the corrupt physical world, that Jesus could not have been God. How has trusting the evidence of eyewitnesses like John (cf. 1 John 1:1-3) about Jesus’ life and identity strengthened your faith that love will triumph over evil?

• Most Romans (we still have some of their writings) were scornful of a statement like “this is the victory that has defeated the world: our faith.” We, on the other hand, have the record of over 2000 years of history. How did the faith and love of those early Christians not only survive, but ultimately triumph over, the Roman Empire’s military and economic power? Can those forces still “defeat the world” through our lives today?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you showed the transforming power of love and faith. Grow in me the kind of love and faith that can change the world around me for the better. Amen.

**FRIDAY September 23, 2016 Revelation 12:1-12 A vision of Christ’s decisive victory over evil**

In Revelation’s vivid imagery, verses 1-6 depict Jesus being born into the world. Revelation piled up phrases to capture all the malevolent power of evil arrayed against Jesus: “the great dragon … the old snake, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.” But Jesus won a decisive victory over evil, and a loud voice from heaven declared God’s victory.

• The loud voice in John’s vision declared, “Now the salvation and power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ have come.” In what ways have you experienced the salvation and power of God’s kingdom in your own spiritual journey? Are there areas in which you would like to more fully claim and tap into that power as you continue to grow spiritually?

• Rome exiled the seer of Revelation on the small Mediterranean island of Patmos. Part of his message, in coded images (something like an editorial cartoon today) was to identify the real spiritual force behind Rome’s actions. In what ways does that same force operate in our tolerant society to discourage faith? When have you faced “the deceiver of the whole world” as you have sought to live out your faith?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, Revelation portrayed your authority over evil, which I see in so many of the gospel stories, on a cosmic scale. I ask for your power and authority over evil to touch my day-to-day life with grace and victory. Amen.

**SATURDAY September 24, 2016 Revelation 19:11-16, 21:1-7 A vision of evil’s ultimate defeat**

Some images change little over time—good guys, for example, ride on white horses. Others take a bit more thought—the sword from the victor’s mouth is a symbol for the power of God’s word (Hebrews 4:12). The big message the seer of Revelation was sending to his friends in Asia Minor, and to us, was that evil is not forever. The story’s glorious ending is: GOD WINS!

• God’s victory is not just for God—it is God’s ultimate gift to all who follow him. The triumphant rider on the white horse, seated on the throne in Revelation 21, said, “To the thirsty I will freely give water from the life-giving spring.” In what ways is your spirit particularly thirsty today? Open your heart to the reality that evil is already defeated, and to the hope and promise of John’s vision of ultimate victory. Let it refresh and sustain you, as it has the hearts of millions of Christ-followers through the centuries.

**Prayer:** Dear God, you will dwell with me, and I will be one of your people. You will wipe away every tear from my eyes. There will be no mourning, crying, death or pain anymore. I can hardly wait, Lord. Thank you for this glorious hope. Amen.