

“We wait for you Lord;  
Our Soul waits;  
In your word is our hope.” AMEN!

“We are facing the worst plague in decades.”

This report comes from Australia  
where millions and millions of mice are  
infesting and wiping out crops and  
causing sickness to the human population.

The blame is thought to be on the  
uncommon wet weather that is providing  
ample food for the rodent, as well as  
from the lack of a natural predators.

The thing is...  
just about any meat eating animal  
will eat a mouse so we beg the question:

Why aren't they feasting on the mice?

Though the answer is complex and  
certainly cannot be meted out in one sermon,  
we find that the reason is, at least,

partly contributed to human beings destruction  
upon forest land that causes the animals

to be forced to migrate or die.

Natural predators of mice are fewer in number  
and cannot keep up with the fast  
reproduction of the mice.

You might imagine the remedy then is  
to use poisons to kill the mouse infestation,  
but then the reality will be that other  
animals will consume the poison and die,

those same animals could be eating the mice!

It is a conundrum and  
a classic problem of  
the human condition.

When we consider the human condition  
we think of our tendency  
to do the wrong thing.

Buddhism teaches that suffering is  
a perpetual cycle that can be remedied  
eventually by reaching  
enlightenment and awareness but  
that may only occur over  
many lifetimes.

Christians believe that humans are

born with a sinful nature or condition to  
choose the wrong or unhealthy things  
that lead to our demise.

Each of the major religions all speak of  
how these unhealthy behaviors or  
hurtful tendencies will always bring  
suffering into our lives.

The gospel for Christians is to know that  
we require salvation from an outside source,  
that is, through Jesus Christ. (Pause)

In our lesson this morning from Genesis,  
we read of an example of Judaism's way  
to explain why the earth and humankind  
are cursed.

Their (and our) condition is that  
we are born into a broken world and  
we find in Genesis a way to explain  
how that has come to be.

This section is often referred to as The Fall Story.

But, we should know that this account in Genesis  
is not really about eating forbidden fruit  
nor were the tellers and then  
writers of Genesis meaning for later

generations to take  
the account literally.

Instead the Genesis account is about  
intimacy, presence and the coming of age.

It is about intimacy as an intimate God  
walks the garden where the humans dwell  
and the people whom God created  
discover that this truth is a mixed  
blessing.

Comfort and presence of God is wanted but  
only on our terms, right?

So, there is also the reminder for us to know that,  
as humans, we cannot hide from God.

Some may be comforted by that  
and others anxious, but what is not talked  
about enough is that these two humans  
were coming of age.

We tend to do that, come of age,  
as we grow and mature.

It is good to know we move from  
childish behavior and thinking, but  
that also means we experience  
a loss of innocence that comes

with growing up and then we  
become aware of the realities of our brokenness,  
realities of the human condition.

Too much emphasis is placed on who's fault it was.

Adam blames Eve and  
Eve blames the snake,  
and finally they blame God.

What if the tellers of the story in Genesis  
really meant for us to hear the lesson  
about the importance of adults being able  
to accept responsibility?

Responsibility for actions as well as  
responsibility for the people around us.

Isn't this the lesson to what it means  
to be human and live in a broken world?

To admit that I have problems,  
you have problems, and  
the world has problems.

It does us no good to blame others  
but that's what we often do.

We blame others and search for a human being to rescue us and hope that person becomes the president.

The point of this story in Genesis is that the world and the humans need a Savior not another demigod.

Putting all our faith in human leaders will cause more problems.

I wish I could think of an example of a hurtful cult of personality in contemporary times. :-)

These demigods divide and lead people to distrust and attack one another.

Men, in particular, are infamous for thinking and acting smarter and stronger than we really are.

Men, by majority, have caused hate crimes, incited violence, uplifted white supremacy and discriminated against people of different gender and sexual orientations.

All the while using scripture like this as ammunition to point blame.

All beginning with Adam blaming Eve.

But, doesn't coming of age and becoming responsible mean that we also take responsibility for our own actions?

Sure it does, scapegoating or blaming others solves nothing.

We can't hide from God, but instead find that the image of the Lord God walking in the garden reminds us of continual presence, even with flawed and vulnerable human beings,

God remains engaged. (Pause)

So we are broken and the world is broken and we need a Savior.

Not of human origin...

It is with that admission that we once again return to Mark's Gospel after the Easter hiatus.

We reacquaint ourselves with Mark recognizing the continual theme in the gospel to be

that the God-time is fulfilled now  
with Jesus coming near,  
repent and believe in the good news.

The account we read today comes right after  
Jesus called his 12 disciples to follow him and  
be with him and to be sent out  
to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ.

They have returned home to Capernaum and  
are gathered in a house  
with a crowd around them.

Like we are, they are broken people  
in a broken world and Jesus is helping  
them come of age.

Teaching them to be responsible  
for their actions and for one another.

He is making an example of a new family  
that is connected by belief and purpose.

A new family connected by belief and purpose.

It was revolutionary and Jesus' immediate family  
heard about it and thought he was crazy.

"He's gone out of his mind," they said.

Then the scribes chime in and said,  
“He’s possessed!”

We stand back thousands of years after  
this encounter and consider that Jesus’ family  
did not even recognize who Jesus was nor  
did the temple scribes recognize  
the Son of Man among them.

On the edges of this witness are the  
familial concerns and the desires of  
the religious order pining against Jesus

but there, in the center is the real power struggle.

The power struggle between Jesus and  
the strongman who rules with greed  
and selfishness.

In rare clarity, Jesus proclaims how he will tie up  
the strongman and plunder his house.

It is odd to consider here that Jesus is  
referring to himself as the home invader,  
but it was a common apocalyptic image.

Jesus here admits he is the Messiah that  
no one expects and like the Lord God

in the garden that can be a mixed blessing.

Comfort and presence but also the knowledge  
that we cannot hide from the Spirit of Christ.

When we come of age, we discover  
there is no need to hide.

God is nearby and already mixing it up  
with the forces that bind, divide, blame, and hurt.

We can take comfort from that, I sure do,  
but I also keep trying to make positive changes  
and standing up for justice even though  
the world is entirely too broken  
for any person to fix.

But that's what it means to take responsibility  
for ourselves and it is what it means  
to be responsible for other people.

Today we are offered to accept that responsibility  
and admit we'd like to improve it. (Pause)

Together, we can.

We cannot ignore our responsibilities to care  
for neighbor and creation or else these  
plagues will continue.

Mice, COVID, war, heaven knows what else...

Then Jesus said,

“The kingdom of God has come near,  
repent and believe in the good news!

AMEN!