

9.15 St Barnbas
11.00 St Marys

Romans 12.17-21

31/8/14

Pray

Our passage from Romans addresses a very interesting and topical question
So this morning we are going to think about
How can Christians overcome evil in the world?

There is evil in the world - and we see it on our TV's every day
as we hear about ISIS at war in Syria and Iraq
and we hear about evil
when we hear about Israel and Hamas being at war over the Gaza strip
and we hear about evil
when we hear about the Russian army being in the Ukraine

but to a lesser extent we also experience evil
when we come across divorce
or when I disagree with Alison
or when we disagree in church

Evil is real
Evil does hurt us
And evil does matter

So How can Christians overcome evil in the world?

And my first point is a question
What has God done about evil?

And I think you know about this already
So why don't you talk with you neighbour
And tell them how you would answer the question
What has God done about evil?

I would like to base my answer on an earlier passage in Romans
So turn with me if you will to *Romans 5* which you will find on *page 1132*
And I am going to read *Romans 5.6-8*
(6) You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.
(7) Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.
(8) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The message of the New Testament is that
God so loved the people of earth
That Jesus came down to earth at the first Christmas
And that he died on a cross not because he was selfish
But rather he died to take the punishment we deserve
and that by doing so
he opened a way for each and every one of us to be friends with God

and all we have to do is recognise that we are selfish
to say sorry for our selfishness and to ask for Gods forgiveness
and because he loves us God will forgive us
and give us a whole new start in life

and therefore there is a rescue plan which anyone can opt into
anyone who is willing to say
I know I am selfish and I am sorry
Please let me off and allow me to start all over again

So what has God done about evil?

God has made it possible for anyone
For the ISIS fighters
For Israelis and Palestinians
For Russians and Ukrainians
For me and for you
For everyone to be friends of God

All we have to do is repent and ask for God forgiveness

And my second point is a question as well

And that is

Is it possible to forgive someone who is not sorry?

and this is easier than the last question
so you are bound to know the answer
so please talk with your neighbour again

Is it possible to forgive someone who is not sorry?

The short answer is **YES**

In theory - it is possible to forgive someone who is not sorry
but in practice - it is difficult

so turn with me please to our passage to Romans 12.17-20

you will find it on *page 1139 - Romans 12:17-20*

(17) Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

(18) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

(19) Do not take revenge, my friends,

but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord.

(20) On the contrary:

If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.

Paul knew this was difficult

And so he starts with something easier

And he works towards things that are harder and harder

So what do we do in practice

- about a fall out, or a divorce or even about an enemy invasion

Verse 17 says ***Do not repay evil for evil***

Verse 19 - ***Do not take revenge***

Verse 20 – in Mike’s paraphrase – ***serve your enemy***

Paul starts with

Don’t make things worse

Don’t inflame a quarrel

And then he goes on to **do uncalled for acts of kindness**

Because the hope is that they might come to **repentance**

And eventually **be reconciled to God and reconciled to us**

Now so far my explanation has been mainly about the other person
or if you like it has been about loving our neighbour

but there is also a sense in which this is about loving ourselves
because choosing to forgive
is also about taking responsibility for our own emotional health
and refusing to let our future
be determined by an incident from the past

so my second point is

Is it possible to forgive someone who has not said sorry?

Yes

And this is good for the other person’s relationship with God and us

And it is good for us as well

And then my third point is

It is the authorities role to punish wrong doing

Our passage in *Romans 12.17-21*

Talks about what a private individual should do

So for example *verse 19* says - ***Romans 12:19***

(19) Do not take revenge, my friends,

but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge;

I will repay, says the Lord.

It is not our role in life to punish wrong doing

But rather it is the authorities role to punish wrong doing

So let me read *Romans 13.1-7 just over the page*

Romans 13:1

(1) Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

So we must leave room for God’s wrath

And the authorities are Gods appointed agents of wrath

So the authorities often MUST do what individuals MAY NOT do

Because the authorities are established by God to punish wrong doing

And perhaps a good example of this would be **child abuse in Rotherham**

It is not the role of any private individual

To take the law into their own hands and to punish the abusers

But it is the role of the police to bring the wrongdoers to the courts

And it is the role of the courts to punish the wrong doers

And if the authorities do not punish the wrong doers

Then the authorities themselves will be in trouble

So my third point is

It is the authorities role to punish wrongdoing

So....

At the beginning of this sermon I asked the question

How can Christians overcome evil in the world?

And I think *Romans 12.21* is a great summary of what Paul is saying

Romans 12:21

(21) *Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.*

So When we *Repay anyone evil for evil*

and when we *Take revenge*

THEN we have been *Overcome by evil*

Whereas

when we are careful to *do what is right in the eyes of everybody*

and

when we - *as far as it depends on us live at peace with everyone*

and

when we - *leave room for Gods wrath*

and

when we - *serve our enemies*

THEN we have *Overcome evil with Good*

So....

How can Christians overcome evil in the world?

We can overcome evil in the world

When we are not overcome by evil

And when we overcome evil with God

I am not saying it is easy

I am saying - with Gods help it is possible

Let's pray