

GREATER THAN: Everything
Leviticus 17:11ⁱ

MEMORIAL DAY PRAYER TIME:

Tomorrow is Memorial Day. It is a day our country has set aside for us to reflect upon and remember those who have paid the ultimate price, sacrificed, for our freedom. I want us to take a moment to pause and pray together this morning.

Father, it is with extreme gratitude that we take advantage of the freedom we have to gather in worship this morning. We recognize that freedom to worship You without fear came at a great price. Men and women, throughout the history of our nation, gave their lives for our freedom. Our assembly this morning is not taken for granted. It is Your Word that urges us to give honor to whom honor is due. So, this morning we, we honor those who have given their lives in service to our country. We remember this day the families that have felt the weight of that sacrifice. Children who lost their parent and parents who lost their children. As we enjoy a day off from work and routine tomorrow, I pray you give the families that Memorial Day offers a painful reflection, grace and peace and Your presence.

Lord, as we now turn our hearts and minds toward You in musical worship, I pray that we would do so with the gratitude for another kind of freedom we enjoy, freedom from our sin because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You tell us in the Scriptures that You inhabit, You dwell among, the praises of Your people. We ask You to stir in our hearts, stir our affections for You. I pray the costly freedom we have been given as a country to gather in worship would then enthrone our singing and our worship of You. We exalt You in this place, grateful for Your presence. Thank you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you. To those of you that are guests, we say a very special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited you are with us today. On behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to be able to connect with you. You can let us know you are here in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When

you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area. We have a gift we'd like to give you there. Again, we look forward to connecting with you.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We have been in a teaching series that we have entitled "Greater Than" over the past several weeks. At this point we have discussed how Jesus is greater Than the grave, greater than our worry and anxiety, greater than grief, than family challenges, our failures and even relational conflict. Today, we will be discussing the fact that Jesus is greater than everything.

ILLUSTRATION: My Dad is Bigger Than Your Dad

Do you remember when you were a kid and you would get in arguments with your friends? And then the game of comparison would begin. You know, "My dad is better than your dad." Remember those days? Well, today is going to be that kind of message. Our Heavenly Father is bigger and better and greater than everything!

And this message is going to be different from my typical messages. Typically, we have a certain text that we are examining and then there are at least three points. Cathy makes fun of me. She says, "Your points then have sub-points and nobody knows the point!" Well, today is going to be different. We are going to talk through the entire bible this morning as we see that our Heavenly Father is awesome.

Now, I know some of you are thinking, "The entire Bible?! What time are we going to get out of here?!" I promise I won't hold you much past 1 o'clock. Just kidding. Today is going to be a quick overview of the Bible. We will stop off at a couple of key verses, but I mainly want us to see a common theme woven throughout the entirety of the Bible.

In 2014, LifeWay published a short book entitled, "The Scarlet Thread Through the Bible."ⁱⁱ That is what I want us to see today. The Scarlet Thread.

You know, there is a question that seems to reoccur in my conversation with people over the years. Why did Jesus have to die? Couldn't God have found

another way to purchase our salvation? Seems kind of a gruesome way to show His love for the world.

Look with me at Leviticus 17, verse 11. *11For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.* Today, as we survey the Bible, I want to show you the scarlet thread of atonement through the bible.

MESSAGE:

At some point in eternity past, an angel of God, by the name of Lucifer, which means morning starⁱⁱⁱ, fell from Heaven. Isaiah tells us that he thought himself to be God.^{iv} Revelation, chapter 12^v, says that Lucifer was cast out of Heaven along with one-third of the fallen angels.

Then, after these events, God created the heavens and the earth. That's Genesis 1. In 6 days, God spoke everything into existence. Now, side note, I believe in a literal 6-day creation. That everything was created, by God, in 6 24-hour time periods. And at this point, time began.

Now, there are believers that hold to what is called the Gap Theory. That theory suggests that God created the heavens and the earth, the raw materials, and then there is a gap of time between that creation and the first specific day of creation. Some would even suggest that there was a significant amount of time that passed. I'm okay with that. But, because of my high view of Scripture, I am going to hold to a more literal translation of Genesis 1 that when God began to create, He did so in 6 24-hour time periods and then rested the 7th.

All that to say, that what God created was perfect. We have recorded, in the Genesis account, that God saw all that He had made, and it was good. That is, it was perfect. And this creation is referred to as the Garden of Eden.

On the 6th day, God created both man and woman, and He did so in His own image. Now, this is why life is important to God. Every person, regardless of age, ability, race, or location contain within them the very image of God. Nothing else in all creation is said to be created in the image of God. Only humanity. You have an intrinsic value. In other words, you are extremely valuable, because you are made in God's image. And God then placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Everything was perfect.

Now, the Lord placed in the Garden of Eden a tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The only command given was to not eat the fruit of that tree. Now, I don't know what kind of fruit that was. I know tradition has used an apple to represent that. But I think it was an onion. I don't like onions. And yes, I know onions don't grow on trees, but I can't stand onions so much I picture it as an onion.

Now, here's another question that always seems to get raised at this point. If God is all knowing, and He knew that Adam and Eve would sin, and that sin would bring destruction, then why did He place that tree in the Garden? Well, I think God was giving Adam and Eve the opportunity to make a choice to be faithful to God or pursue their own sinful desires. See, without the tree, we had no choice to love God because the opportunity to choose differently wouldn't have been there. God doesn't force us to love Him. He doesn't create robots. He desires us to love Him, yes, but He does not force us to love Him. And the presence of the tree gave Adam and Eve that choice.

Now, enter in the fallen angel, Lucifer, and his fallen angel friends. Satan took on the form of a serpent and he had the ability to speak to the woman. He tempted her to eat of the forbidden fruit and she gave in. Adam, close by, saw that Eve took the fruit, and rather than live by himself, he chose to eat the fruit and die with her.^{vi} And sin entered the world and forever changed God's perfect creation.

After eating the fruit, Adam and Eve realized they were naked. So, they sewed fig leaves together, and the first fruit of the looms were created. Then, God came walking through the Garden and a connection to God had been broken. See, sin does that. Sin separates us from a Holy, perfect God.

After admitting to God that they ate the fruit, well it was a poor confession. Adam first said, "Lord, the woman, You gave, ate." Blame game. But eventually Adam confessed, and God then took one of the innocent animals that He had created and sacrificed it. He then took the coat from that animal and clothed Adam and Eve. That event is the first blood sacrifice that we see runs throughout the Bible. The scarlet thread. And then God kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden.

They then had children, Cain and Abel. Abel brought an acceptable lamb sacrifice and worshiped God. Cain grew to be jealous of Abel because his

sacrifice didn't measure up to his brother's. So, Cain killed his brother Abel. The scarlet thread continues.

The morality of the world then quickly disintegrated. By the time we come to Genesis chapter 6, the world is so wicked that God determines to destroy the earth by way of a great flood. But God found Noah to be righteous and asked him to build an ark. Noah and his family entered the ark and Scripture tells us that God sealed the door. It rained for 40 days and 40 nights and the earth was covered. Everything perished except that which was in the ark.

Once the ark came to rest and the waters receded, Noah and his family came out of the ark and built an altar to The Lord. He then took one of the innocent animals on the ark and sacrificed it on that altar. And the scarlet thread continued.

Then came Abraham and the promise of God to make him into a great nation by way of a promised son, even in Abraham's old age. That son we know to be Isaac. God then asked Abraham to sacrifice his son on an altar on Mt. Moriah as a test of his faithfulness to God. So, Abraham took his son and laid him on the altar. As he raised his arm to sacrifice Isaac, God stopped his arm. In the place of Isaac, God provided a ram instead. And the scarlet thread continued.

Fast forward to Moses. God raised Moses up to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt. Moses went to the Pharaoh and demanded that he let the people go. You know the VBS jingle, "Pharaoh Pharaoh, oh baby let my people go, uh." But Pharaoh refused and God sent a series of 10 plagues on Egypt.

The 10th and final plague was the death of the first born male. But God made a provision for the Jews. They were to sacrifice a spotless lamb and then wipe the blood of that lamb over their doorposts. By doing so, the angel of death passed over that home. The scarlet thread continued.

From that day forward, the Jews celebrated, Passover. This was a feast to celebrate and remember the deliverance from slavery and they would sacrifice a spotless lamb.

Now, here's what I want us to see. All of these things happened before God gave the Israelites the Law. The scarlet thread began well before the Law of God was given. We have a tendency to think that the sacrificial system started

when Moses gave the Law of God. But that's not the case. As we have seen sacrificial atonement began long before the formal Law.

The reason that it is important to realize this truth is that God has, since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, communicated His redemptive plan. **That plan is founded in the sacrifice of the innocent in the place of the guilty.** Very important. This revelation sets the stage for the sacrificial system and then ultimately the sacrifice Jesus made upon the cross, the innocent for the guilty. That's God's redemptive plan.

So, picking up from Passover, Joshua comes to Jericho, remember, he marched around the city walls 7 times and the walls came tumbling down. But prior to that event, two spies were sent into Jericho. You remember, Rahab, who lived in Jericho, assisted them. As a result, Joshua desired to save her from the coming conquering of the city. So, he instructed her to tie a scarlet cord in the window.^{vii} She did that and when the army saw the cord, they made sure she was saved. And the scarlet thread continued.

Fast forward to King David. When God pronounced judgement on David's sin, David purchased Mt. Moriah and built an altar there. David would not be the one to construct the temple, but his son Solomon would. And what would happen in that temple? The continued required sacrifice of innocent lambs to gain atonement for sin. The innocent for the guilty. God's redemptive plan for humanity. The scarlet thread continued.

Then the prophecies throughout the Old Testament foretelling of the coming Messiah. What was their message? That there was the Chosen One, the Messiah, who we know to be Jesus, that would come and bring deliverance yet again. And consider the prophecy foretold about this Messiah. Isaiah 53:5-6. ***⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*** God's redemptive plan, the innocent for the guilty. And the foretelling of the ultimate sacrifice hundreds of years before Jesus' arrival.

Then Christmas. Emmanuel, God with us. Jesus, God taking on flesh and dwelling among men. Jesus came into the world to become the once and for all sacrifice for our sin. Remember what John the Baptist proclaimed of Jesus in

John chapter 1? ²⁹ *The next day he [John The Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* Jesus fulfilled that statement when he died on the cross at Calvary.

Do you know when Jesus died? Passover. As the bleating of lambs were being heard in the remembrance of God's rescue from Egypt, the Lamb of God, Jesus, cried out from the cross, "Father, forgive them..." It is by His blood that we are forgiven of our sins. It is by His blood that we are brought back into a right relationship with God, redemption. The scarlet thread.

See, all the animals sacrificed from Adam all the way to Jesus was a symbol. It was a picture to all humanity that in order for sins to be forgiven, the innocent must be given for the guilty. Hebrews 9:22, ²²*Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*" This is why Jesus had to go to the cross.

And the good news is that while the animals were just a symbol, Jesus was the real thing. Hebrews 10:11-14 says, ¹¹*And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*

The sacrificial system in the Levitical Law taught us the meaning sacrifice. It demonstrated the innocent dying for the guilty. And by so doing, prepared us for the significance of the cross.

From Genesis to Revelation, we see God's plan of redemption for fallen humanity. Revealing to us that in Christ, and only in Christ, our sins are forgiven, rescue is provided, and a relationship with God is restored. The scarlet thread through the Bible. Jesus greater than everything.

I think the timing of this message is extremely appropriate. On a day in which we remember those fallen on the field of battle, protecting our freedom, we remember Jesus dying in our place, purchasing our salvation.

CONCLUSION: So, as we come to a time of response, I want to invite the band to come back up and lead us.

I want to talk to two types of people in this room this morning. First, to those of you who have never given your life to Jesus. I hope today, you have come to understand the love of God. That even in your sinfulness, God loves you so much that He gave His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross in your place. See, my sin deserves punishment. Your sin deserves punishment. And part from Christ, we stand in judgment.

Consider Ephesians 2:1-9. ¹*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴[Oh...] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast."*

Salvation purchased at the expense of Jesus' death on the cross at calvary. Grace. Mercy. A gift. Have you been saved? Have you, by faith, trusted in the finished work of the cross? If not, I plead with you, receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior today. That you may know God and have eternal life.

In a moment, I'm going to pray, and we are going to stand and sing, and our elders will be here at the front, and we would love nothing more than for you to take us by the hand, simply say, "I need Jesus." We would love to visit with you about how you can know Jesus today.

Others of you in the room, you are saved. You've received, by faith, according to God's grace, the Lord Jesus. I want to encourage you, in this time of response, to prepare your heart for The Lord's Supper.

Following our time of response, we will partake in the elements of The Lord's Supper. [Set Up Lord's Supper]

[PRAY]

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: W.A. Criswell, *The Scarlet Thread Through The Bible*, LifeWay Press, Nashville, 2014; Troy Rackliffe, *Jesus is Greater Than My Sin (Part 2)*, co-writer of this sermon series with me, preached at Glade Community Church in Daniels, WV, Sunday, May 22, 2022;

ⁱⁱ W.A. Criswell, *The Scarlet Thread Through The Bible*, LifeWay Press, Nashville, 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ Don Stewart, *Why is Satan Sometimes Called Lucifer?*, article published by Blue Letter Bible, accessed: https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_79.cfm.

^{iv} Isaiah 14:14, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." ESV.

^v Revelation 12:7-9, ⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him." ESV.

^{vi} Quote taken from Dr. W. A. Criswell, *The Scarlet Thread Through the Bible*, sermon preached at First Baptist Dallas, December 31, 1995.

^{vii} Joshua 2:18-19, ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household. ¹⁹ Then if anyone goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be guiltless. But if a hand is laid on anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head." ESV.