Good morning everybody. Like always, it is good to be here. This morning our text is Romans 1:18-2:1. The title of my sermon is Passing Judgment and The Mission of God.

In order to set up my text, I want to lay a little groundwork first. In Romans 1:16-17, Paul gives his thesis statement. His main reason for writing.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

He then spends the rest of the letter to the Romans unpacking the whole of the OT in light of those two verses. Who is the gospel for? All people, Jews, and Gentiles alike. And in light of the gospel and its power, how must we then live.

Romans 1:18 - 1:32 is mainly directed at gentiles / that is not-Jewish people. Pagans, who refuse to worship the one true God and instead worship gods of their own making. And chapter 2 beginning in vs. 1 until vs. 8 is of chapter 3 is mainly directed the Jewish people.

Not sure how many of you have heard of the doctrine of total depravity. But it’s totally true. First, the totality of the whole human race. All are sinful. Sin is not prejudiced, it has infected everyone. And 2nd. The totality of every human is corrupted.

Not every human is as sinful as they possibly could be. So, don’t think of total depravity that way. Think of it as the totality of who we are, is somehow, in some way tainted w/ sin. And this plague has infected every human being. Totally!

It’s what you have to understand in order for the gospel to make any sense. The good news of salvation is not good news unless you know what the bad news is. In order for a person to be saved, they have to know what they need to be saved from.

People need to be saved from the wrath of God against their sin. Ultimately it will be people thrown into hell. And it will be God doing it. And people need to know that. People don’t choose hell. People choose sin. And because of that, they will be thrown into a lake of fire under the just penalty of having transgressed God’s law.

People don’t go to hell because they reject Jesus Christ. People go to hell because they are sinners who use God’s air to sin against him every day. People go to hell because they deserve to go to hell. John 3:17 says, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

He didn’t come into the world to condemn it. Because the world was already condemned. He came to save.

Jesus is God’s remedy to the curse. So that God might be just and the justifier. As Romans 3:26 says.

And so, people need to be saved from God’s righteous anger against sin. And people need to know this. They need to change minds about sin and come to Jesus for refuge.

And this is why Romans 1:18 starts out the way it does. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”

God’s response to people's sin is wrath. And people’s reaction apart from the grace of God is suppression. There is a charge that people can get in trouble for in court. It’s called suppression of evidence. It means to hide or cover up. You see what that means. It means everyone knows there is a God. It’s just that people do not like that they know there is a God. They would then have to answer to him. So, they try to hide the truth. They try and cover it up.

Everyone knows there is a God. And everyone knows they know there is a God. God knows that everyone knows there is a God. But they hate what they know, so they suppress the truth.

And God’s response to people’s suppression of the truth is, “he gives them over”. vs. 24, 26, 28 “Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves”

vs. 26, “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature”

vs. 28, “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”

In other words, God says, you don’t want anything to do with me, then so be it, have it your way. The worst thing that God can do to any human being is to leave them alone with their own wants and desires. Some say that darkness is just the absence of light. And people without God are dark.

It is interesting, the first sin that men and women commit after being given over to their own sinful desires is sexual impurity. They begin worshipping created things instead of the Creator. And what immediately follows is homosexuality (vs. 26-27).

Almost, as if to say, if men and women are capable of this, they are capable of anything - and there is no limit to their sinfulness.

This is the pagan world, this is the non-Jews, this is the people during Paul’s day who were without God - this is who Paul was addressing here.

But starting in Romans 2 after indicting the gentiles for rejecting God’s clear revelation in chapter 1, he then shows the Jews that they also have turned from an even clearer revelation.

Let’s back up into vs. 28 of chapter 1 and read through to vs. 1 of Chapter 2 like it would have been originally written with no chapter break.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. (Romans 1:28-2:1)

Who are you passing judgment? All that horrible stuff I just mentioned. All those horribly depraved things. Because that’s what Paul calls them. The homosexuality. The murder. The gossips. The boastful. The disobedient to parents. Paul calls all of it depraved. So, it is not being approved of.

Is it always wrong to judge? Obviously not. Wouldn’t Paul be being pretty judgmental to cast all these things he speaks of in Romans 1 in such a horrible light? In fact, he says that people who give approval of these things are just as bad as doing them. It’s impossible to be neutral here.

I have often heard that Matthew 7:1 is the most popular Bible verse now, “Judge no lest you be judged”. But it’s completely ripped out of its context.

Just a few verses after the famous Judge, not verse, it says, “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.”

Now I how in the world could you say, “do not give to dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs” without making a judgment? Don’t you have to judge who the dogs and who the pigs are in order to not waste your time with them?

So, you see, this idea of never judging doesn’t make sense, even in the context and I think that is what we will find here, too.

Think about a society with no judgment. Anybody can do whatever they want, anytime they want, in any way they want. And no one has a right to say anything to anyone. Everybody just does what is right in their own eyes. You do what you want and I do what I want.  Friends, that would be a horror movie. You mix that with the sinfulness of man and that would be a horror movie.

So, there is a difference between the right kind of judgment and the wrong kind of judgment for just a second. One is needed. One is not.

One is godly and wise, the other is backed by pride, full of sin, and gives Satan great pleasure.

Think about it, if we really believe what we believe, that people are sinners and lest they turn from their sin and come to Christ, will suffer in the conscious torment of hell for all of forever.

If that is true and we believe that, how unloving would it be to not tell people? How unloving it, if we really believe that, to not call sin, sin and to not point out the remedy who is Jesus Christ.

Yet, how judgmental this is considered in our day and age? Not, only that, but just simple things.

How could we be parents, friends, teachers, counselors or anything? Oh, I guess I better not tell Sophie to not put that fork in the electric outlet, who am I to judge what she wants to do.

What if I were walking down the street and I saw a group of men attack a woman and begin to beat her up and rape her?

Am I just to walk away and ignore it? Am I just to think it is not right to interfere in other people’s lives and leave the situation alone? Who am I to judge?

Friends, the Bible very clearly says, “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (James 4:17)

The Bible also says in Proverbs 27:6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” You could almost replace that word ‘friend’ there, without almost any good and right and commendable thing. "Faithful are the wounds of a parent.”

“Faithful are the wounds of a pastor; Faithful are the wounds of a teacher; Faithful are the wounds of a counselor; Faithful are the wounds of a brother; Faithful are the wounds of a sister

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” Friends, this is true. You want to be just nice and kind to people all the time and never say anything offensive. The Bible says you are no better than an enemy.

Who are we to judge? We are no one but God is. And for those who are walking with God in humility and meekness. Being led by the Spirit, it is our obligation to.

It is our loving duty, to stand up and be bold enough, to be willing to not to be liked so that we can look out for the good of others even when they do not know or want to be looked out for.

So, there is a right kind of judging. A judging that calls sin, sin. With a response of love to those who are in the darkness of their sin. Not be like them. But not hate. Not condemn. Realizing that if it weren’t for the richness of God’s mercy and grace who knows what we would be like.

But there is also a wrong kind of judgment, and this is the kind it is talking about here in 2:1

As Romans 1 comes to a close, you can almost imagine the people Paul is about to address as being very self-righteous. He is about to address the religious people. At the end of chapter 1, Paul was addressing mainly to non-religious pagan people. And now here he is going address the Jewish religious people.

Imagine the self-righteous religious people, just overheard everything Paul said to the immoral godless pagan people.

And they are like, "Get em’ Paul, you tell it like it is. I sure am glad we are not like them…”

Almost like a younger brother or sister over-hearing their older brother or sister getting in trouble. And it makes them feel good. Puffs their little britches up. Because their older brother is getting knocked down a peg or two.

Except here it’s different, the religious people already feel superior. They already have a holier than thou complex. The world is filled with immoral sick and twisted slime and finally, somebody is telling them what God really thinks about them.

This is the mindset of the people that Paul is about to address here in vs. 1 of Romans 2. And this is the kind of judging that is wrong.

This is the type of judgment God detests. This type of judgment we often saw Jesus reserved his harshest words for. It turns out that the end of chapter 1 is written to expose the idols of the religious person as much as those of the irreligious person.

So, it’s as if Paul turns to these self-righteous people that were over-hearing him condemn the godless sinners who don’t know God, and live like they don’t know him.

And says: “oh yeah, you do the same things!”

Romans 2:1 - “Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.”

The kind of judging we are to not do is to have an attitude which basically says; You are messed up. I am going make sure you know you are messed up. There is no hope for you. I don’t really want there to be any hope for you. And now I feel better about myself.

It is the kind of judging that makes you feel good about yourself by making others feel bad.

In all actuality, though, the people hearing this might have had an heir of superiority. They might have been saying, get em’ Paul. Get em’. While they were not really superior.

In a lot of ways Paul is using the same approach that the prophet Nathan used with King David. You know the story. King David had committed adultery and murder and the prophet Nathan came and told him a story about a poor man who owned a little lamb that was very dear to him. One day a rich man took the lamb away from the poor man so he could serve it his guest for dinner. King David was outraged: “the man who did this deserves to die”

Then Nathan said to David. You are the man. You are that man.

The same thing is happening here in Romans 1 and 2. After hearing of the terrible sins of the gentiles in Romans 1, the Jew says the man who has done this deserves to die. And in chapter 2, Paul says, you are the man.

“You have no excuse” This is the same thing that Paul said about gentiles in chapter 1 vs. 20. In Romans 1:20 the gentiles have no excuse because the creation around them gave them clear evidence that there is a God and he is powerful. But here in chapter 2, the Jews have no excuse because they have God’s law, so they know what is right and wrong, yet they still do wrong.

Jew and Gentile are both guilty and both without excuse.

“For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things”

When a person acts as a judge to condemn others for something he himself does he is in all actuality pronouncing his own sentence. In other words, if God were to use our own words at the judgment seat, we would, in fact, be convicting ourselves. We condemn others for gossiping, yet we gossip. We condemn others for lying, yet we lie. We condemn others for stealing, yet we steal.

Or what about what Jesus said in his sermon on the mount? Matthew 5:21-22, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”

Or “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28)

So, we think, I haven’t murdered anybody. But have had hatred towards a brother. I haven’t looked at pornography. I haven’t cheated on my wife. Yeah, but have you turned your head as another woman walked by.

Seriously, the rest whole rest of the chapter, there isn’t much good news. For now, and for the next chapter and a half providing an airtight argument that the religious Jew, or maybe more applicable to us. A good moral religious person is as just as much condemned before God as an immoral pagan who does not profess to know God. Paul setting the stage in the way Paul does best, for the good news that will come at the end of chapter 3, when he says: “For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus".

But I only want to draw out one application as pertaining to us. Do we have an air of superiority towards others? Do we look down at our noses at people who sin differently than us? Yes, sin is horrible. We should never approve of it. We should not make light of it. We should hate it.

Let’s think about it like this in light of our calling in this world.

Think about Jonah. You know the story of the big fish and the man who was swallowed by it because he refused to go to Nineveh. Jonah didn’t want to go to Nineveh because he was afraid the people would believe God and repent. These people were unclean horrible people. Gentile dogs. Jonah wasn't so much running from God as he was from God's mission.

But now fast forward to after the resurrection. To after Jesus went back to heaven, to the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came down. All the people who were there were Jewish. Jewish people still hated non-Jewish people. Gentiles were considered unclean. Gentiles were thought of to be the epitome of Romans 1 type people. Gross and disgusting.

I can’t even imagine what the disciples thought before the Holy Spirit came.

They were probably thinking. Did you just hear what Jesus said? Hehe. He said we were going to be witnesses of him to Samaritans. That Jesus, he sure is always saying strange things.

But when the Holy Spirit came down, and it changed everything.

Friends, the Holy Spirit should change everything.

You don’t have to have been saved from some horrible life to understand the grace of God.

You do have to be born again though. You do have to be gripped by the gospel. The gospel tells us that we are so horrible the only way we could be saved is if the son of God died for us. But it also tells us, he did.

So, you see, the gospel has already outed us. In and of themselves, apart from Christ, everyone is unclean, the gospel tells us this. The gospel has already outed all of human-kind. Jesus said, I have not come to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32)

Why do we keep watching the news and reading the newspapers and keep getting appalled that not born-again people act like they are not born again?

The cross tells us that mankind is sinful. The Bible tells us that mankind is sinful. Every single day the news confirms what the Bible says.

It’s the foundation for why we are called to do what we are called to do. It means we have lots of work. Unless something drastically changes, as a Christian, we will not be out of a job for a while.

Jesus said in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you”

In Matthew 10:16 he said, ““Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

C.S Lewis said, “We must not suppose that even if we succeeded in making everyone nice we should have saved their souls. A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world—and might even be more difficult to save.”

We don’t want a world full of nice people because all we would have is a world filled with Romans 2:1 people. Nice and pretty on the outside and dead on the inside. No.

That is not what we want. What we want is a world filled with homes and churches that are filled with born-again people.

This is not too big to ask. But in order to do so, we need to get a realistic view of sin. And we need to sacrifice. And we need to be willing to bend our theology.

Just think if all Christians throughout history thought, well, this is the way it is supposed to be, so why try. We wouldn’t even have a United States of America. Why do you think the founders of the United States of America founded this country? Because they had the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They saw something within the pages of scripture and were willing to risk their lives for it.

If all Christians throughout history thought, well, we are in the end times, we might as well accept it. The gospel would have never left Jerusalem.

Because believe it or not, we have been in the end times for 2000 years. And I am not scoffing. Jesus is coming back.

One of the great and central truths of Christianity is that Jesus is coming back.

Acts 1:11, he will return in like manner

Revelation 1:7 - “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail[b] on account of him. Even so. Amen.”

2 Thessalonians 1:8 - when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels8in blazing fire. He will inflict vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the penalty of eternal destruction

The Apostles, the New Testament authors themselves knew they were in the last days. Listen to how the book of Hebrews opens up. “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

Listen to what Paul told Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:8, “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.” He was first and foremost talking to Timothy, and us 2000 years later, but also Timothy.

Or how Jesus responded to his disciple's question in Matthew 24:3-14, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” And Jesus answered them, “See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and there will be wars - rumors of wars. Famines and earthquakes.

You will be delivered up to tribulation and put you to death …. you will be hated. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

False prophets. Lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

What’s the main take away here? Preach the gospel to all nations. Things will be hard while you are doing it. But I am coming back. So, endure. This was his message to his disciples who were sitting in front of him that day, just as much as it is to us now.

Or what John wrote in the opening of the Book of Revelation vs. 9, “I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

It’s been 2000 years since the book of Hebrews has been written, and declared we are in the last days. It has been 2000 years since Jesus warned his disciples. Since Paul warned Timothy since John exhorted his readers to faithful endurance in the book of Revelation.

But this one thing is true. The gospel has spread. And it has been because Christians who have been living in the last days, and knew they were living in the last days, have been willing to go out into the world and pierce the darkness.

What if Jesus does not come back today or tomorrow? What if it’s actually 500 years from now?

Will we be ready for that? There could very well still be much work to be done.

Jesus could come back today, he could come back from 500 years from now.

We need to be ready and excited for both. That’s what Christians have always thought like.

Sometimes I think we have this idea that at one time all the world was Christian and now everybody has drifted away. No. My friends at one time no one was Christian.

Jesus entered human history into the midst of a culture based on a moralistic self-righteous rule keeping works based religion. That’s what Judaism had digressed to by that time in history.

And the whole rest of the world was pagan and dark. The world that Christ came into and that Satan was the ruler of was dark - real dark.

This world is still a dark. I'm the world we are called to go into as Jesus’s followers. It’s our mission field. And we can go because he has come and he has sent us. Ever since those first disciples were sent. Disciples are still being sent.

I was giving an illustration in Sunday School last week. I will change it a little. Imagine a semi barreling down the highway out front … Imagine someone running towards the road … going to fetch, say a ball … and they aren’t paying attention and you know that about the time they get to the road is about the same time the semi will be in that spot.

You have the ability to stop it. At least the possibility. Now imagine, that person is whatever kind of person you have the hardest time dealing with. A Muslim. A Homosexual activist. A Liberal politician. Religious Right conservative politician. An anti-American athlete. What do you do?

Who could we beat our chest and say we are so glad we are not like. That my friends are our mission field.

We need to be willing to lay down our lives for all those who are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness, just like Romans 1:18 says that every unbeliever is doing. It doesn’t mean do not stand against the tide of evil. It doesn’t mean do not stand up for the oppressed and for justice and for those who are being carried away to the slaughter.

But it does mean keep the gospel the main thing.

People rarely change their minds about God by themselves. Oh, it can happen. God can speak to people through dreams. God can knock people off horses.

He can split Red Seas. God can do anything he wants, anyway, he wants, anytime he wants. But it’s not normative. We should not expect to cross every body of water we come to like that. God has normal ways of doing things. The sun sets in the west and rises in the east.

And likewise, God’s normal way of doing things is through people. Often, I hear people say, it is not my job, it is the Holy Spirits job. Friends, it is precise because it is the Holy Spirit’s job, that it is our job. There is a reason God has given us a great commission. And it is not because it is the Holy Spirit’s job, not ours.

Friends, the Holy Spirit indwells his people. So, when we say it is the Holy Spirits job to do it. What we should mean is that is God’s people’s job to walk by the Spirit, live by the Spirit and rely on the Spirit for everything.

This is how God intends his message to go in and through the world. Yes, it is the Holy Spirit’s job to bring people to Christ. And it is the Holy Spirits job to transform us.

But he does it through his people. How do you think we got our Bibles? Do you think God just sent lightning bolts down, and wallah? We have Bibles. No, my friends, it’s through people. God’s normal way of working is through people.

Acts 4:2 says, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the increase” But that doesn’t mean Paul didn’t plant or Apollos didn’t water.

We are the means by which God has said he is going to work. We are the God-ordained ways.

Friends, grace is not opposed to hard work.

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”

It should not shock us that unbelievers act like unbelievers. Sinners sin. What do we expect? And sinners who love their sin, and do not see anything wrong with their sin. Well, they really sin. The problem is, this is our mission. field. God has already told us what it is going to be like.

It’s the way it was 2000 years ago. And it’s the way it is now. Jesus is not trying to pull a bait and switch. Paul is not trying to pull a bait and switch. In fact, one of the main reasons that Paul is writing this letter to the Roman church is to see if he can help, possibly support to make it to places where the gospel hasn’t been preached yet.

That’s what Romans 15:20 says, “and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named”

Paul spent his whole live trying to reach people like the kind of people he is describing in Romans 1.

“Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Timothy 2:10)

I have become all things to all people, that by all means, I might save some. (1 Corinthians 9:22)

And despite what sometimes might be a misconception. People are not just poor lost sinners, waiting for someone to come tell them about Jesus. Oh, people are poor lost sinners, the problems are they are usually hostile. There is a reason why the Apostle Paul spent so much time in prison. There is a reason why he was eventually beheaded.

Because the people he was carrying the gospel message to didn’t want the gospel message carried to them. And it’s the same in our day.

It’s not wrong to judge. But are we judging in the right way? It’s not wrong to call sin, sin, but remember where we came from and where we would be if it were not for the grace of God. And do we remember that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?

The world stands under God’s judgment and he has commissioned us, those who know him to be his ambassadors. To carry the gospel message into the world. First, that people would realize the predicament they are in, in their sin, and 2nd, that they don’t have to stay there. That they can lay down their arms and come to the king. There is a way of escape. His name is Jesus.