I love the outdoors, especially if the sun is shining. I prefer warmer temperatures than cold, but even if the temperature is below zero, but the sun is out; I have to be outside, at least until I start freezing! Conversely, it’s agony for me if it’s a bright, warm day and I’m stuck indoors!

For much of my childhood, my family lived in the countryside. We had a huge yard and several outbuildings and barns, surrounded by several fields. It was a taste of paradise for me!

Given my love for the outdoors, my bucket list is loaded with treasures in nature. I look forward to seeing New England in autumn, Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, and the giant redwood trees in California. I simply love God’s inanimate creation!

But, God’s animate creation is just as stunningly beautiful – azaleas blooming, daffodils sprouting, peonies shooting up out of the ground, trees, shrubs, and bushes budding – nature in springtime surely reflects God’s glory and is a glimpse of heaven!

Such thoughts flooded my mind as I pondered today’s sermon text. I reflected upon John Milton’s classic poems – *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. As we worked through the opening three chapters of the New Testament book of Romans last fall, we learned of mankind’s desperate condition from conception. The ugliness and depth of our sin affect every part of us – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. We are desperately wicked, and we are hostile to even the thought of the existence of a holy God that must punish sin.

This depraved condition is the direct result of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden as *Genesis Chapter 3* teaches. They disobeyed the command of God not to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And in eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve sinned against God. Instead of being holy and happy as God created them, they became sinful and miserable. The effect of their sin is that every person is born in a state of sin and misery. Paradise was lost!

That means you are born with a sinful nature! Each of us comes into this life with the sentence of eternal death. Though we have natural life, we are dead in our trespasses and sin. *Since that is true according to Scripture, what can be done to correct our desperate situation?* Today’s text points us to the answer. Paradise has been regained for us because of the Person and works of the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world – Jesus Christ!

After a Sunday last week examining the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and its implications for all of us, we return today to our sermon study of Romans. We left off studying *Romans 8:18* two Sundays ago. I’ll read that verse along with today’s text, *Romans 8:19-25*. In reverence of Him Whose Word this is, please stand, as you are able.
Romans 8:18-25:
“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us.” (Here’s today’s text):
“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.”

Three points stand out from this text:

MP 1 – The Curse’s impact on Creation;
MP 2 – The Wishfulness of Waiting;
MP 3 – Hopefulness is a Habit.

We begin, as Paul does, with creation – and the impact of the curse upon it. The word “creation” appears in this passage four times in the first four verses (19, 20, 21, and 22). Verse 22 teaches us further that creation “groans.” It’s important for us to understand what part of creation is referenced here.

It cannot be angels. They’re perfect in their holiness, around the throne of God. No reason for them to groan...

It cannot be demons or unbelievers. There is no liberation for them; hell is where they’re headed, so right now is the best for them. They’re not groaning for anything...

It cannot refer to Christians. In verse 19, “creation” is pictured waiting for the sons of God; those are Christians. Some other form of creation must be pictured here.

That leaves what one commentator calls the “the non-rational creation, animate and inanimate.” (Murray, quoted in Boice, 302) The Apostle Paul here is talking about the physical world of matter, plants, and animals. It could be summarized in the word “nature.” What does it mean that creation (nature) “groans?”

We must revisit the Scripture Meditation at the opening of this service of worship – Genesis 3:17-19. That passage reveals that God cursed the physical creation because of Adam’s sin. Even, the dirt was cursed. It would be hard labor to work for our food. In toil, we eat what the ground produces. In the sweat of our brow we eat bread. The ground brings forth the fruit of its curse, but only through blood, sweat, and tears.

When, as a child, I wandered about the fields surrounding our home, I often, unintentionally got into a patch of cocklebur, the dreadful enemy of hair and clothing! Cocklebur grows into little round spiky balls of sharp needlelike tines. These balls hook themselves onto clumps on people and animals. Not
only would I get them in my clothing, especially my socks, our dogs would get into them. And the only way to rid their hair of cocklebur was to cut them out. Nettles, poison ivy, oak and sumac are more evidences of the fall of creation – ugh!

Verse 20 says that it was God who subjected creation to this futility (frustration). The ground didn’t sin, Adam did. But, the ground paid a price.

Verse 23 says that we, Christians, also groan. Jan says I’ve groaned most of our married life; I make all kinds of noises. Certainly, as we advance in age, our bodies produce weird noises – creaking knees, popping ankles, stiff backs, and swelling feet. We moan as our bodies suffer the effects of age while living in a fallen world.

Spiritually, we groan over the presence of sin in our lives, and for persecutions suffered for the sake of our witness to Christ. Further, we desire to be finished with the life of this world in order that we may enter into the reality of the life of eternity; “we wait for the redemption of our bodies.”

And, wait**ing** is the second point – from the curse of creation, we must move to the wishfulness **of waiting**. Nature is “earnestly expecting” and “eagerly waiting” for the sons of God to appear according to verse 19. It’s as if creation is on tiptoe, craning its neck in eager anticipation to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God come into their own. This appearing of the sons of God refers to the day of Jesus’ return to earth from heaven, when our bodies and souls will be re-united as heavenly bodies for all of eternity.

Verse 24 helps us understand what “the redemption of our bodies“ means. It refers to the resurrection of our bodies upon Christ’s return to earth.

Naturally, because of our fallen state, we don’t like to wait. Waiting is hard work; it’s much easier to expect others to wait on us than we wait on them. It’s painful to be in the slow checkout lane when the others are moving quickly. It’s difficult to follow behind someone in traffic who doesn’t have to be anywhere on time. If we’re not careful, it can be visibly frustrating to stand in line at a funeral visitation while friends remind each other of stories of the deceased.

A certain man went to the doctor and waited for over an hour to be called to the examination room. Then he waited in the exam room with the door closed for another 30 minutes. Finally, the doctor walked in, sat down, and asked, “How old are you?” The man answered sarcastically, “Do you want to know how old I was when I got here or how old I am now!”

Patience is not only a virtue, but it is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 23 speaks of Christians waiting for their adoption. A couple of Sundays ago, we studied the spirit of adoption that is ours as believers in Jesus Christ. There is a sense that our adoptions have taken place, and there is a sense our adoptions are also future.
As Christians still this side of heaven, we have not yet experienced the fullness of our adoption. Positionally, as believers, we are adopted. Yet, we haven’t received the full inheritance that is ours – 1 Peter 1:4 speaks of the inheritance that is ours as heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus. That inheritance – eternal salvation – is “incorruptible and undefiled, and it does not fade away; it is reserved in heaven for us!”

To wait for the fullness of our redemption is surely worth every minute of our time and every ounce of our effort.

This takes us to our final point - Hope is a Habit. “Hope” appears five times in verses 24 and 25 – four times in verse 24 alone! Such repetition as we hope should become habit for those waiting for the return of Christ from heaven and our subsequent resurrections.

Hope is one of the three great virtues listed in 1 Corinthians 13:13 – “faith, hope, and love.” “We use the term hope to express our desire for some future result that is at present uncertain, but the concept of hope in the New Testament indicates a situation in which the future is absolutely certain. It is faith looking forward.” (Sproul, 273)

“We know that we are not what we will one day be, that we do not already have all that we will one day have. All of our best days lie ahead of us…” (Keller, 38)

We persevere not for what we see, but what we don’t yet see. God has promised and He never goes back on His Word.

MP 1 – The Curse’s impact on Creation;
MP 2 – The Wishfulness of Waiting;
MP 3 – Hopefulness is a Habit.

If we make an acronym out of the first letters of Creation, Waiting, and Hopefulness (hope), we have CWH – Christ We Heed. And, this same acronym – CWH – provides us three brief applications of today’s text.

1 – Commit. The Christian life is an ongoing commitment to Jesus, a daily turning to Him in repentance and faith as we await the fulfillment of our citizenship in heaven. If you haven’t yet become a believer in Christ, then make that commitment! Do so today – contact me if you’d like help sorting through that.

2 – Worship. Set aside a part of each day for personal worship with your Bible and a good devotional guide. For many, this should be easier because they’re presently working from home, or they have unexpected time off. If you have children still at home, teach them about worship by having a daily devotional time, reading a passage of Scripture, praying, maybe singing a hymn or Christian song together. For heaven’s sake when these restrictions to human contact subside, commit to be in church on Sundays for worship! Livestreaming of worship on
the Internet is a suitable substitute, but it is only a substitute, and it cannot replicate human fellowship demanded of us to gather together for worship!

3 – **Humble** yourself. Consider others as better than yourself, and their needs more important than your own. These stimulus checks from the government – some don’t need them. All receiving them should set aside at least 10% and give it to the general fund of the church (church expenses must still be paid!). Use those funds to bless others in need, and remember to support your church’s benevolence (deacon’s) fund, or mission fund. The local food pantry could also use your financial help.

In doing such things as these, we point to Paradise that has been Regained.

It’s not often that I get to, but today I’ll close by looking to the wisdom of eminent theologian Theodor Geisel, you know him better as Dr. Seuss.

In one of his books, Dr. Seuss has a poem entitled, “The Waiting Place.” It reads like this:

“Waiting for a train to go,  
Or a bus to come, or a plane to go,  
Or the mail to come, or the rain to go,  
Or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow,  
Or waiting around for a yes or a no,  
Or waiting for their hair to grow,  
Everyone is just waiting.”

**Psalm 27:14** –

*Wait on the LORD; be of good courage,  
And He will strengthen your heart,  
Wait, I say, on the LORD!*