

Romans 8:18-25  
Pastor Steve  
Proper 17 A  
8/30/2020

### **This Isn't It**

Let's be real. Three words you use to cut through all the fluff. No small talk about the weather. No fake niceness needed. Straight to business and right to reality. When you speak these words or hear them, your adrenaline kicks in. You sit up and focus. Something real is coming.

Real is rare in our world. We like to live or think we live in the way things should be and not the way things actually are. That's why today and for the next few weeks, God calls out to us, "Let's be real." You can be open and honest and genuine. God calls Christians to be real.

So let's be real. It's safe to say that this isn't how you wanted 2020 to play out. This was not your New Year's resolution. In what ways has this pandemic made your life as a Christian tough? Well, the family God gave you to love and serve, you're around each other much more and you probably sin against each other more. Maybe you lost work and income and you're still supposed to praise God for all the things he gives you. Maybe you had dreams of getting out into our community to invite people here, and those dreams were put on pause for a long time. Let's be real: you wanted something better.

Sometimes what's worse or better is obvious. Last night we experienced better. We got food from RJ's meat market and it was good. Jalapeño cheddar, pepper and blue cheese, and classic brats all of them were better than any generic brand. Joanna opened the bag of buns and it smelled better and tasted better too. A better meal made

on a better grill than what we had before. In that first bite it was obvious. RJ's is worth it.

St. Paul makes a point of letting Christians know what's better and he's up front about it. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The struggles we go through in our lives don't come close to the good things God will give us later. The difference between the rough right now and what's to come is massive. How bad these sufferings get can't compare with the good later. The glory will be so much better, too much better. But that doesn't mean God doesn't want us to compare. Let's be real: **this isn't it.**

We know it. We know what Paul says in verses nineteen and twenty is true. The created world around us is messed up. Can you remember all the natural disasters that have happened in the last year? When a new one happens monthly or weekly, we forget the destruction from before. Do you remember the massive Australian wildfires? They started just last August. We continue to see a crumbling creation that is not heading in the right direction.

Did you know God is the one who allows it to be like that? He is! When Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, they brought the effects of sin onto the world too. God made it perfect but now creation groans as it falls into decay. And God leaves it that way. Why? So that we would know **this isn't it.** God doesn't want our hearts longing after right now. He wants them looking forward to the future.

And even though it's obvious, we don't get it. Suffering comes now. The glory comes later. But that's not how we like to live. We love to work hard to make this world into the glorious place. We love to avoid suffering at all costs. You'll have so many less issues with your friends and family and coworkers if you hide your faith a little. Less explaining,

less rejection, less being labeled. So sometimes we fake who we are. Where's your focus lately? Are you focused on getting society to change its morals to fit with Christianity because right now it's harder to live as a believer? It looks good on the outside. But is your care and concern for an unbeliever's eternal soul or an easier life here? A part of us doesn't care about others. And the blessings God gives for us to enjoy? Aren't they an easy escape? When tough times come, you can always get away from it all for a while. Let's be real there's a part of us that does anything and everything to avoid suffering right now.

Thank God, **this isn't it.** We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship. The world around us and the sinful part inside of us reveal that **this isn't it**, we're waiting for something better.

Jesus gives us something better to look forward to! Creation will be freed from decay and God will make it perfect again. We won't have to watch anything wear out because nothing will! When we serve God and honor him, it won't ever be half-hearted. It will only come with joy and happiness. We will find our hopes fulfilled with what they've always been longing for. Jesus, our brother, suffered the wrath of hell. What he experienced is worse than any pain we have gone through on earth. God the Father turned away from him and stopped showing his love to Jesus. And his body was left hanging as a sign pointing to the truth that this world isn't it.

Jesus gives us something better to look forward to: heaven! **This isn't it** but heaven is. And heaven is ours because of what Jesus has done. It's something that can't be taken away from us. It's what creation, what our hearts long for.

Do you remember what it was like to have a heart filled with excitement around Christmas? You knew your parents got you exactly what you asked for and you couldn't wait to open their gift. Then

Christmas Day came and you opened the gift and you played with it for a few hours. How would your life change if you looked at things like a kid on Christmas Eve? Let's be real and do it! **This isn't it.** Heaven is.

We see how creation is messed up easily. And that can help shape our perspective in the right way. But Jesus knows us too well to stop there. He gets personal. What does he tell us in the Gospel? If you want to follow me, you have a cross to carry. And here's the other way God helps you keep the right perspective: he puts crosses in your life. The ways that you suffer for following him are all signs pointing you to the truth that **this isn't it.**

**This isn't it** because we have hope. In this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? Our hope isn't that we stop all suffering in this world. Our hope is for the better world to come.

Let's be real: **this isn't it.** Live your life longing for the glory that will be revealed in you. This isn't it for you, Jesus made sure you have something better to look forward to. Amen.