

The voice on the radio referred to it as Mark Zuckerberg's big blind spot.

Mark Zuckerberg (the founder/CEO of Facebook) has been very clear that to him, Facebook is much more than just a company.

Last summer when Facebook hit 2 billion users Mark Zuckerberg wrote: Our full mission statement is: give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together... our lives are all connected. In the next generation, our greatest opportunities and challenges we can only take on together – ending poverty, curing disease, stopping climate change, spreading freedom and tolerance, stopping terrorism. No single group or even country can do that alone. We have to build a world where people come together to take on these big and meaningful efforts.

Here's where the blind spot comes in. It's not that I doubt his desire to make Facebook a way to pursue these very good things. The blind spot is this: from hate groups, to terrorist groups, to Russian meddling, the headlines of the last year make clear that the connectivity that social media like Facebook provides is not only allowing kind people to connect accomplish good things, it is also allowing bad people to connect and accomplish evil things.

In essence, the blind spot that some have identified in Mark Zuckerberg is that he is at heart humanist. Humanism is a religion that believes that people are basically good and if we work hard enough and well enough together we can accomplish anything.

Mark Zuckerberg has infused Facebook and a world connected with Facebook with utopian ideals.

But here's the problem. I don't think Mark Zuckerberg is a student of history and I also don't think he knows what utopia means...

In 1516, a churchman in England, Sir Thomas More, published a book called *Utopia*. It is a fictional work describing a perfect society: low crime, no poverty, minimal work, maximal happiness. The book posits the idea that if society could just get the right plans in place, life would be good and the future would be better (that sounds pretty similar to what Mark Zuckerberg hopes Facebook can help accomplish, doesn't it?).

But history doesn't give us much hope that such a utopia is possible. Let me give you just one example.

Four centuries after Sir Thomas More's book, at the dawn of the 1900's More's utopian ideas seemed to be on the verge of coming true. At the beginning of the 1900's the invention of the telephone and the radio made mass communication possible for the first time. The inventions of cars and airplanes made the huge world a much smaller place, connecting people who had never been connected before.

Technology and inventions were solving problems of labor and poverty. Medical advances promised to greatly improve health. There hadn't been a major war for almost a century.

Here's how one historian who lived through it described that age of hope, "We had expected that life throughout the world would become more rational, more humane, and more democratic. We expected that the progress of science and technology would make mankind richer. We had expected that this would all happen peacefully. In fact, we thought that mankind's course was set for an earthly paradise."

But you don't have to be a history buff to know what happened next. The century that dawned with utopian hopes, instead found itself known best for being the century of World War. In World War One humans used all of the advances in connectivity and technology and science to kill 10 million people. In World War Two some 80 million people became the victims of our advancing human society. Instead of peace and progress, science and technology progressed to the point of being able to break the world into pieces.

Mark Zuckerberg isn't the first to think that we humans can create a utopia. Unfortunately, history proves that to be a rather blind way to look at life.

Sir Thomas More understood that... that's why he chose the name he did for his fictional perfect society, Utopia. Utopia comes from two Greek words, οὐ τοπος- which mean "no place". If you are looking for a perfect life you there is no place you will find it in this world. The twentieth century provides graphic proof.

But so does our century, the twenty-first...

It seems that no matter how much the humanists of the world preach that greater connectivity and advancement in technology and science will fix this world and create a utopia, the next generation isn't buying it.

I read a recent Barna Research study on Generation Z, the kids born between 1999-2018. Their view of the world is very different. Here's how Barna characterizes Gen Z: "They are a generation who grew up with designated safe spaces and trigger free zones, but it's a generation who thinks that real safety is a myth."

Gen Z has never known a world where America is not at war, where the threat level was not orange, where the notion of bulletproof backpacks was not absurd. The kids are watching the news – they can't avoid it with the connectivity that social media provides. They see what is happening all around the world. They see what is happening in schools and concerts. Far from greater advancements in technology fixing the world, it has made the next generation keenly aware of just how broken the world is.

Can I read you a very telling selection of the most popular tv shows for Gen Z? The Walking Dead, Breaking Bad, American Horror Story, Sons of Anarchy, and Game of Thrones.

Far from utopia, the dominant themes in literature and entertainment for Gen Z are decidedly dystopian. Dystopia comes from two Greek words that mean “bad place.”

Now, I’m not up here this morning to bash Mark Zuckerberg. The fact of the matter is all of us are very busy in our own ways trying to carve out little utopias in this world. My hope is to get you to grapple with this world as it really is - broken. From sickness and disease to crime and poverty, from terrorism to mass shootings this is a deeply broken world, and each of us experience the brokenness of this world in our own way.

That’s all that Mark Zuckerberg is doing, he is grappling with the world as he sees it and trying to find a way to make it better. That’s also what Gen Z is doing by accepting the world as broken and trying to deal with it. It is something we all do.

My hope today is to help you in that grappling because there is a way to grapple with the brokenness of this world that doesn’t involve the naive blind spots of some utopian future, but it also doesn’t succumb to the pessimistic hopelessness of a dystopian future.

St. Paul addresses that way in his letter to the Corinthians. He said that if this life is all we’ve got to hope for, we should be pitied. If all I can hope for is for somehow humanity to figure this out and create a utopia in the brokenness, or if all I can hope for is to find a little fun while the world crumbles into dystopia, then I’m in for a pitiful life.

But... BUT he says, “**But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep.**”

There is the alternative to humans fixing the world or resigning the world to chaos: the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is the first fruits of a broken world being fixed.

First fruits: It’s getting close to planting season here in Wisconsin. Those of you with a green thumb understand how exciting first fruits are. You plant a tomato plant in the spring and as the weather warms you watch the plant grow. After watching it grow you see the first little blossoms and then from those blossoms the first little round ball of a tomato. Those first fruits are exciting to see because they are the promise, the indicator that you are about to start eating fresh tomatoes on an almost daily basis for the rest of the summer – the first fruits are an indicator of the abundant harvest to come.

Paul says that when Jesus rose from the dead that resurrection was the guarantee that something had fundamentally changed. No matter how broken this world and your life may seem, the resurrection of Jesus guarantees us that our future is not an unreachable utopia, nor an unavoidable dystopia. How? Listen:

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

The simple truth is, to successfully grapple with the brokenness of this world we need to understand the origin of brokenness and the end of brokenness. If you don’t understand the beginning of the problem of brokenness you are going to misunderstand the problem. And if you fail to look all the way to the end, you are going to misunderstand the solution.

First, let’s deal with the origins of brokenness:

When Paul says that death came through a man, he’s identifying the origin by talking about Adam – the first man. Adam had been created perfectly unbroken. But the Bible tells us he listened to the lies of the devil and fell into sin. When he fell into sin, he took the world with him. Unbrokenness gave way to brokenness. Life and peace vanished; sin and death rushed into the vacuum left behind.

Through one man death came to all. Through one man brokenness became the experience of all.

Adam sinned, and we, his descendants have kept at it. We haven’t stopped listening to the devil’s lies. Your conscience reminds you on a daily basis how you fall so short in so many arenas of life. Outside the church and inside we are people who are broken by sin – Adam’s sin and our own sins. That is the origin.

As Paul sums it up: **Death came through a man.**

Understanding the origin helps us identify the problem. The brokenness of life isn’t the result of not enough technology or connectivity. The problem is sin; which means no matter how much we advance as humans, as long as sin remains, the brokenness will remain – utopia will continue to be a pipedream.

But... but... here’s the most astounding thing: the fundamental truth about Christianity is that God doesn’t love people only when they are good. God loves the broken. And in his love he refused to leave us in our brokenness, so he made a plan – a plan to free us from the pipedreams of utopia and the hopelessness of dystopia.

Death had come through a man, so God’s plan was that the resurrection of the dead (the fixing of the brokenness) would also come through a man.

God’s plan is better than naively utopian humanism because it was a plan that doesn’t rely on humans getting better on our own through technology and science and connectivity, but it relied on getting better by fixing the underlying problem – sin.

God made a plan to fix the problem of sin by becoming a human himself, a human who would do it all right (because we don’t and can’t) and then would pay the penalty for all of us who did it wrong. Enter Jesus, who came into the world to do it right and pay the penalty for us who do it wrong.

When Jesus was on the cross, he was broken for my sin; he was broken for yours. The central message of Christianity is that God loves the broken. His promise to you is that your hope for a better future does not rely on your ability to make it right, but on Jesus and his ability to make it right by his life, suffering, death, and resurrection.

God's plan to fix the world is better than a utopian dream because it actually tackles the underlying problem of sinful humanity through the sinless life and death of Jesus.

That's God's dealing with the origin of brokenness: sin. Now let's tackle the future.

On that first Easter Sunday, the world saw that God's plan worked. Jesus, who died for our sins, did not stay dead. He is alive and because he is alive we know that God's plan worked. God's Easter promise is that your past, your sin no longer dictate your future with God.

You and I can't fix the brokenness of life by trying to hold the broken pieces together. So God sent Jesus to pick up your broken pieces and make you whole. And here is our hope for the future, as Paul puts it:

As in Adam, all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

This is the alternative to both blind utopianism and hopeless dystopianism.

Yes, my life on this earth will be filled with the brokenness of sin but, Paul reminds us that because of Jesus this life is not all we have to look forward to. He points us to what he calls *The End*. The promise of Christianity is that because of Jesus there will come a time when all the broken pieces will be put back together. The hard part is waiting for it. We want God to make everything better now. But have no doubt, God will make everything better. That's what the resurrection of Jesus guarantees. He is the first fruits and all the rest will follow - you, me, even this broken world, but... as Paul reminds us, each in turn: **First, Christ, then, those who belong to him.**

The resurrection of Jesus is the first fruits of a broken world being fixed.

We all have to grapple with the brokenness of this world in our own unique ways. What I love about Easter and Christianity is that they provide a way to grapple with the brokenness that identifies the real problem and the real solution.

A new age of hope dawned on that first Easter morning, an age of hope not based on human effort, how I feel today, or how life looks right now, but an age of hope fixed and founded on the fact that Jesus rose from the dead to save you from your sins and restore this world to the perfection with which it was first made.

If you look at your life now and see broken pieces and jagged edges, when you realize that you can't fix it yourself, when you are tempted to think that your future holds nothing but dystopia, Jesus comes and shows you his hands and his side, his broken body for you so that you can be forgiven. He lifts your chin, and directs your eyes away from the broken shards and shattered pieces of this life and points you to the horizon where the dawn of his new day.

The resurrection of Jesus is the solution to our brokenness, the source of hope and the certainty of peace.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

Amen.