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Christ the King & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Cody & Powell, WY

Lent I – Midweek

February 21, 2024

Text: Genesis 3:1–21

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to understand the world rightly without Genesis 3. It provides the foundation upon which we understand life in this world, our Christian faith, and the hope of the world to come. This year's Lenten journey to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ begins at the right place. Genesis 3 describes man's fall into sin as well as the actions God has taken to redeem His people from their own folly and misery.

The Lord God created Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life; Adam became a living, embodied soul. Man alone has both a physical nature and a spiritual nature. Eve was created by God from one of Adam's ribs, thus sharing equally in his human nature. Though they shared a common human nature, Eve was woman, feminine humanity, Adam was man, masculine humanity. Both possess the image and likeness of God reflecting the love, authority, and dignity of God Himself before all creation. Adam is the head over God's creation; Eve is the mother of all human beings.

But the devil, in the guise of the crafty serpent, raised doubts about God's good creation, about their place in it as God's image bearers, and the fellowship every man, woman, and child was created to have with God. The doubt came with a question, "Did God actually say...?" This is not what Christians through centuries has said is "faith seeking understanding." Those kinds of questions about God's Word don't call into question the truthfulness of God's Word nor the truthfulness of God Himself. To this very day, we Christians rightly question our Biblical interpretations and conclusion by asking, "Did God say this in the Bible?" In the Garden, Satan is not exemplifying faith seeking understanding. Rather, his approach is doubt

seeking dominance over God and His world. Satan's question challenges her faith in God and the truthfulness of God's Word. Notice the demonic twist. "You will not surely die...For you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (vs. 4-5). Here is the beginning of all "God is dead" type conclusions. We don't need God; we can be our own gods.

Satan not only appealed to Eve's mind and intellect to challenge her faith in God and His Word, but he also used her human nature against her. Adam and Eve had normal, human desires informed by their physical senses. "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" (vs. 6). The devil tempted Eve by using both her non-material spiritual capabilities (thought, mind, intellect, reason, etc.) and he tempted her with her physical senses (a joy to the taste buds, a delight to the eye, and desirable for wisdom). At this moment, our full human nature was corrupted with sin, material body and immaterial soul. What God declares to be good is now tainted.

And notice the immediate results. They saw their nakedness not as God's glory manifested to the world and each other through their male and female bodies but as embarrassment and shame that must be covered. They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths (vs. 7). Later, God will clothe them garments of skins (vs. 21). The various issues about appropriate clothing began in the Garden. I think all you moms and dads can readily relate to this particular struggle as they teach their children how to dress modestly in order to reflect that they are Christians whose bodies are created by God, redeemed by Christ Jesus, and sanctified for glory by the Spirit.

The effects do not stop here. The sound of the Lord God's presence in the Garden – notice here, our physical senses were initially in tune to experience and know God! – that had before created delight now creates fear. Adam and Eve hid themselves; Adam answered God's call by saying, "I heard the sound

of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself” (vs. 10). Those man-made fig leaves could not cover their fear and shame.

But the Lord asked the key question, “Who told you that you were naked?” I didn’t. Where did this come from? You ate of the fruit of which I said, “Don’t eat.” “Adam, you listened to the voice of your wife above Me. Eve, you listened to the devil’s voice above that of your husband who spoke faithfully My word. Now you are experiencing the world in a way you were not created to experience.” This is death and separation. From each other as husband and wife. From the creation they were intended to enjoy as God’s representatives. From God, who created them to know and experience the fulness of my love and fellowship. In this this death and separation, you will also know physical death. For you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

As you well know, Adam and Eve began to accuse one another. The woman gave me the fruit. The serpent deceived me. Fingers are pointing. It’s not my fault! Later in the Bible, Satan is called the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). At least in this limited sense, Adam and Eve became little devils, accusers and fault finders. They did not become repentant, falling before God confessing their sin and pleading for mercy individually and for one another in sincere intercession. Repentance, faith, and intercession will be learned in time, through God’s Word, and by His superabundant mercy.

God pronounced other curses. For Adam, the ground is cursed and must be worked in pain and adversity. For Eve, she will give birth to children in pain and sorrow. The blissful marital union will now be marked by strife as the woman desires for her husband will be disordered and he must rule over her.

We must quickly turn to God’s answer to their sin, accusations, fear, shame, and death. God cursed the serpent still possessed by Satan. What God speaks to the devil as his ultimate, final defeat is the first promise of a Savior for us. God said, “I will put enmity between you (i.e., devil) and the woman, and between your offspring (i.e., devil) and her offspring; he (the woman’s offspring) shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (vs. 15). The

seed of the woman is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father born of the Virgin Mary.

Here, in these words, the Christian faith was born. God will not abandon His creation. Instead, He will take upon Himself our fears, infirmities, sorrows, sufferings, sins, and death. Our journey to the cross of Jesus begins here, in Genesis 3:15. A Savior will reverse the tragedy of the Fall. As the Lord God gave a word of promise in the Garden, so the bright light of His Law and Gospel goes out into the world. God has become one of us, sharing in our human nature. Jesus redeems us from lies, shame, fear, sin, and death while promising to exalt us in body and soul at the end of time to the highest heavens.

We read Genesis 3 with a mixture of regret and great hope, a hope that is greater than our sorrow. I want to close with a quotation from C.S. Lewis' novel, *Prince Caspian*. When the young prince learned his ancestors were mostly criminals, pirates, and murders, he expressed his disappointment about his human lineage. Aslan, the figure of Christ in the novel, said:

“You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve,” said Aslan. “And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth. Be content.”
(*Prince Caspian*, CS Lewis)

Be content. We know who we are, sinners. But gloriously we know we are redeemed by the blood of the God-man. Our future in Christ is bright. Be content.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.