

Victory of the Lamb // Pastor Forrest Bivens //

Genesis 3:1-15 (Victory of the Lamb, December 6, 2020)

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” **2** The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3** but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ” **4** “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. **5** “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. **9** But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” **10** He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” **11** And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” **12** The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” **13** Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. **15** And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

This morning we start a new series of messages grouped around the concept of **Light in the Darkness**.

So today we start in the darkness and will focus a lot on the need for the light. By the end of the month we'll be enjoying a greater focus on light, with great joy!

Mark Twain: “It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me; it is the parts that I do understand.” He never claimed to be a Christian and often criticized God when God did not approve his own value system. Twain had an ego and likely never understood the gospel, so he poked fun at God. Regarding Genesis 3, we can be sure he would not have appreciated it. He would not be alone. Many, many people have no love for this chapter – and that includes professing Christians. This might surprise you, but even theologians and preachers tell us that they do not appreciate Genesis 3 much at all.

Here is a sample of the kind of preaching I'm thinking of from a prominent preacher I won't name:

“We were beautifully and wondrously made. That’s our identity. We are NOT broken and sinful people as described in Genesis 3. When God looks at us, he sees his children, not a corrupted creature. Stop seeing yourselves as failures. Start seeing yourselves only as children.”

There are beautiful words here. Words we would agree with to a degree. BUT we need a more accurate view of Genesis 3. And the best way to gain that accurate and helpful view of Genesis chapter 3 is to learn from the 1,186 chapters that follow it in the Bible. There are many references to the event recorded here. There’s a lot more information to help us appreciate this “unpopular” kind of chapter. These tell us how important this event is and continues to be for us and for everyone, worldwide.

Here’s are the main points we’ll focus on this morning:

- **Look closely at the Darkness. What do you see?**
- **Then look closely at the Light. What do you see?**

The first part of this chapter explains how God’s perfect creation became imperfect and how the human race lost paradise and ended up in darkness rather than perpetual light. The devil’s use of the snake, the forbidden fruit, the temptation, the disobedience, the guilt and shame – it’s all here.

Main takeaways here include the following:

- The serpent, as created by God, was apparently different than it is today. After the disobedience of Adam and Eve, we are told: **14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.”** It wasn’t just the snake, of course, but the fallen angel known as Satan or the devil, who used the serpent and its cleverness for wicked purposes. And God then used the serpent for his good purposes, by confining it to crawl on the ground as a perpetual reminder to humans of how it was used by Satan.
- The skill of Satan at tempting people is also clearly on display and good for us to remember. Key aspects of devilish temptation may be mentioned:

Satan is not straightforward, but devious and creating doubt.

Satan challenges the character of God and truthfulness of God’s Word.

Satan contradicts God’s warning and judgment.

Satan promises pleasure without pain, leaving out the truth.

- **He’s not straightforward, but devious and creating doubt.** “Did God really say this? Really?”
- **He challenges the character of God and truthfulness of God’s Word:** “God said you would die, but you won’t die; that’s a lie. God’s keeping something from you.”
- **He contradicts God’s warning and judgment:** You not only won’t die, but you will be blessed and like God, knowing good and evil.

- **He promises pleasure without pain.** “The fruit is tastes good and looks good and will give you pleasure and wisdom” – but leaving out the price to be paid for rebelling against their Lord and Creator.
- The disobedience of Adam and Eve immediately changed them in horrible ways in their relationship to God and to each other.

Their relationship of love for and trust in God was gone.

Their relationship with their own consciences was ruined.

Their relationship with each other was also spoiled.

- **Their relationship of love for and trust in God was gone.** They were now afraid of God, tried to avoid him.
- **Their relationship with their own consciences was ruined.** Being naked brought shame and a sense of guilt.
- **Their relationship with each other was also spoiled.** They immediately begin to play the blame game, accusing others rather than taking responsibility with integrity.

It’s easy to find lists of important historical events. Some events changed the world. Maybe it was a war or an invention or someone’s life or death. Think of the use of the atomic bomb; The Black Death in Europe; Columbus sails to West Indies; invention of Gutenberg press; Luther’s 95 theses; Sputnik ; 9/11. We would quickly add Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection – and the fall of humanity into sin. It changed everything important! It brought the worst kind of darkness into the world – the darkness of sin, guilt, shame, and the loss of fellowship with our loving Creator.

So let’s pause for a moment and focus on the darkness that entered the world in Genesis 3:

Look closely at the Darkness. What do you see?

There are at least three things here.

Look closely at the Darkness. What do you see?

1. It is universal sinfulness

2. It is total corruption

3. It is deadly

Adam and Eve were not only two humans, but the start of the whole human race. When they fell into a sin and lost the original relationship with God – humanity also lost it. One term used for this sad reality is “original sin” (referring to the sin of our “origin” – something we are conceived and born with). The other is “inherited sin,” that we inherit and never had a choice but to have it. This inherited sin involves two horrible things: guilt and corruption. Yes, we come into this world carrying guilt before God even before we commit sins on our own. And we come with a corrupt sinful nature that only knows how to put sins into practice in our thinking, speaking, and actions. And this applies to every human being, past, present, and future, on planet earth, other than Jesus of Nazareth. It is universal. As verses in Romans 3 drive home by repeating OT verses:

There is no one righteous, not even one;

- 11 **there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God.**
- 12 **All have turned away,
they have together become worthless.
There is no one who does good,
not even one. . .**
- 17 **and the way of peace they do not know.**
- 18 **There is no fear of God before their eyes. . .**
- 22 **There is no difference,** 23 **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

Let's move to the second truth about the darkness of sin in this world. It is a total corruption in all of us by nature. We're not just wounded, we are dead in sins.

Look closely at the Darkness. What do you see?

1. **It is universal sinfulness**
2. **It is total corruption**
3. **It is deadly**

Jumping from Genesis 3 to chapter 6. Here is what Genesis 6:5 tells us about humanity leading up to the universal Flood at the time of Noah:

Genesis 6:5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

The message in the New Testament is the same. St. Paul, in his Letter of the Ephesian Christians, reminded them of the way they were by nature and before being brought to faith. It tells us the way we were after being born but before we were born again:

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins

We're not just "wounded," "weak" or "sort of sinful" partially good and godly at the same time. And the mention of the word "dead" leads to the third ugly truth about our darkness of sin: It is deadly. It brings death with it.

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Romans chapters 5 and 6 use clear language about what happened in Genesis 3:

Romans 5:12 . . . sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.

Romans 6:23 23 For the wages of sin is death.

Death carries with it the idea of "separation" and there are different kinds of death that sin brings. The separation of the soul from fellowship with God is "spiritual death." The separation of the soul from the body is physical death, and the eternal separation of the soul and body from God is eternal death. Unless a remedy is applied, all people die spiritually, physically, and eternally.

Is this enough about the darkness? I think so. So it is time to hear happy news – the happiest news of all. In the world of darkness a ray of light was immediately revealed to Adam and Eve. It's the last verse of today's text, verse 15. God is still speaking to the serpent and Satan who used it to tempt our first parents:

Genesis 3:15 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

Clearly, this is picture language. God is talking to Satan and says he (God) will put enmity or hostility between Satan and the woman. Strange? Remember that at this moment Eve and Satan were sadly best of buddies since Eve (and Adam) had chosen to trust and follow Satan rather than their loving Creator. But God says he will change that by creating friction, separation, hostility between them. And then God expands that thought: He will put enmity between the offspring (literally “seed”) of the woman and Satan. And suddenly this comes to a climax:

He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

The picture is clear. A descendent of Eve will step on the snake's head, crushing it, but in doing so will be severely hurt in his heel. Satan will do real damage to the Seed of the woman, but the man will crush or destroy the devil's power permanently. And notice the Seed is a “he” one male descendent. This is the first promise of a coming Savior! There's the Light!

Then look closely at the Light. What do you see?

- 1. It is totally undeserved**
- 2. It is totally a free gift**
- 3. It is totally talking about Jesus**

So in the darkness of sin, shame, guilt and alienation from fellowship with God, a flicker of light bursts forth! And we notice three things about this Light. First, it is totally undeserved.

Then look closely at the Light. What do you see?

- 1. It is totally undeserved**
- 2. It is totally a free gift**
- 3. It is totally talking about Jesus**

What did the Creator owe Adam and Eve who brought disobedience and shame and disrespect into the Garden of Eden? Nothing but punishment! Death, eternal separation from God's gracious presence. But – it's a miracle! – God gives them a promise of something good and wonderful. Totally undeserved, but totally real. And a totally free gift.

Then look closely at the Light. What do you see?

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- 2. It is totally a free gift**
- 3. It is totally talking about Jesus**

Think a moment about what we see and hear in this promise. Who's talking? God. Whose he talking to? Satan and the snake he used for evil. Who is going to bring hostility between humans and Satan? God. So what is the role or responsibility of Adam and Eve? There is none! Sinners have never, ever, been responsible for doing anything to gain victory over Satan or forgiveness or God's love. That hasn't changed. It's all a totally free gift. And maybe you're thinking: Well, it's free because of what Jesus did. And you are totally correct!

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This short burst of Light to replace Darkness gives no details, but hundreds of later promises and rituals instituted by God progressively shed more light and gave us a full portrait of the One who would crush the devil's head and incur great personal damage to himself to do so. And it was all about Jesus. It's like the rest of the Old Testament gave us a full set of fingerprints of who the Savior would be and what he would do for us sinners. And in the New Testament Jesus arrives and matches the fingerprints exactly in his person, life, and work. Yes, it's his perfect, holy, innocent life, without sin. His God-forsaken death and being executed for crimes he didn't commit (ours!) It's his taking responsibility for our failures while giving us credit for his perfection. It's the gospel.

And that is why we appreciate and thank God for giving us Genesis 3. It makes it clear why and how we humans lost the image of God – but then how God's undeserved but gracious love immediately shared the first in a long series of promises of how he would come to our rescue and give us spiritual and eternal life to replace spiritual and eternal death.

We never appreciate the beauty and warmth of Light until we experience the coldness and scariness and deadliness of Darkness. Face the reality of your sin, dear Siblings in Jesus! Then rejoice in the reality of your Savior – Jesus!

Let us pray. . .