

Genesis 3: Three Trees, Three Gardens: The Imago Dei and the Gospel

Get on the Bus (Welcome – continue our series on what we are passionate about in this new season for IDC) – I want to see just how new this season is – **Right at 4 years ago I preached this text at IDC, I want to see a show of hands of how many of you were here?**

- As we look at this text again and consider the Christmas season I asked several people what was the best Christmas gift they had ever received and I got a lot of answers –
- This text before us shows us the promise God made to our parents of the best gift He will ever give humanity! **PRAY**

Opening Illustration: Things are not right in our world – *There is childhood cancer, trafficked children, hunger, shootings, racial tensions, tsunamis, earthquakes, raging fires, and on and on* (the world is broken!)

- We all instinctively know there is something wrong with the world: with us personally (anger, greed, pride, lust) and with the world cosmically – **We all long for something better and to be made right because we have a sense of what the world is supposed to be – Songs are written about this like John Mayer’s which says: *“We keep waiting, waiting on the world to change!”***
- Tolkien (LOR) writes about this and points back to a time when the world was as it was supposed to be: *“We all long for Eden, and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with the sense of ‘exile’. If you come to think of it, your just horror at the stupid murder of a hawk...is derived from Eden”*

The Problem is nothing takes back there to Eden and nothing solves what is broken in Eden – **Some think education, government, science will solve our problems and yet they don’t – But this text, which our early church fathers called the First Gospel, tells us 1) what went wrong (with our world, our race) and then gives a promise of what will reverse and restore all that was broken!**

(READ GENESIS 1:26-31) Here is the context: The Triune God of the universe creates us in His Image as the crowning work of Creation – **In this we are not like the animals** (*created according to their kind*) **instead we are created after His likeness – And He says of us the crowning work of His creation: VERY GOOD!**

- **And after we are completed it is finished – No more refrain of morning and evening after this –** *Here we are the apple of His eye created to be in relational harmony with Him and to have the regal role of ruling dominion over the earth as His Vice-Regents*

What are we to do in this role – **We are to bring Him glory by filling the earth with worshippers of Him – Adam and Eve were to bring Him glory by filling the whole Earth with His image-bearers through being fruitful and multiplying and exercising rule over what He had created** (which has all kinds of implications that we will have to explore at another time)

- **And we are put in a lush paradise for communion with our creator and to worship and obey Him while we carry out our purpose!**

(Read V. 1-5) 1st Tree and Garden – A garden and tree of life that leads to death

(V. 1 to 5) – The Temptation in that first garden

Here in this temptation the first thing the Serpent (Revelation 12 names him as Satan) does is call into question the Word of God – **He mocks it by saying: “Did God really say that, or do you really believe that?” – This is true in our day of the scriptures: “did God really say you can only have sex in a certain context?”**

- Satan is implying that God's Word and authority can be questioned or analyzed or is up to our judgment – *This is a subtle attack as he is trying to make them think that the Word of God (His basic commands) is up for our judgment and analysis*

(v. 2-3) Eve corrects the serpent by explaining that God actually gave all the trees except one for food which would produce death – (v. 4-5) **In response Satan now openly contradicts God – Satan does this because he is a liar that seeks the ill of those in God's Image:** “He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44)

- As in our day we see the first doctrine to be questioned is judgment: *“You will not surely die”* – This has not changed as even in our day pastors like Rob Bell write books questioning the doctrine of judgment – *Satan is using one of his most crafty tactics by trying to get the one being deceived to be blind to the consequences of their actions!*

Satan has now caused our parents to put themselves in the place of evaluating God's Word – *In a sense what they do by questioning God's Word and authority is make themselves the higher authority who can evaluate whether God's Word is true or whether God's Word is good for them – There is hardly a better description in our day of how we view God's truth and authority and I don't just mean outside the church but in – (- we see it as something that applies to us only as long as it doesn't rub up against what I want or my experience!)*

- And he does this by having them question God's goodness and love (*implying that God is selfish*) and that being created in His image isn't enough – **The tragic irony is that they were already like God – But Satan wants them to grasp for more by questioning the repeated refrain of Genesis that God is good and the supplier of good!**

Satan here isn't questioning the existence of God instead he is simply asking them to question the love and goodness and thus trustworthiness of God (He is calling into question God's character) – **Satan is saying: “doesn't this look good, don't you want this, wouldn't this feel good” – So see God does not want what is best for you because He wants to restrict you, don't you want to choose for yourself what is good and evil?**

- This is what leads us to sin when we question God's Word and Character and seek to make ourselves our own authorities over what is right and wrong – **Satan here is wanting us to think we have a bad dad who deprives us of good things and wont let us do whatever we want to – And it true He gives us commands but they are for our good!**
- There is a reason you don't let your kids eat whatever they want or stay up as late as they want because you know something they don't – **You know what is best for them and so does our Father – There is a reason He gives us good gifts like sex but restrictions on how we enjoy it for our good as between one man and one woman in a marriage but we want to question that**
- The Father knows best and we know the fallout of from sins like sexual sin – **Toby Keith sings of a man's thoughts after an affair that wrecked his family: “That's my house & that's my car, That's my dog in my back yard. There's the window to the room where she lays her pretty head, I planted that tree out by the fence not long after we moved in. That's my kids and that's my wife whose that man, runnin my life”**

Application: So whose voice do you listen to or what is your authority – **Sin at its root is unbelief you don't trust in the Word of God and so you listen to other voices – In order to fight sin we must see these patterns within us and determine where are we questioning or rejecting God's Word!**

- This now leads to Adam and Eve forfeiting their rule over to Satan because they thought equality with God was something they could grasp – **They wanted to substitute or put themselves in the place of God and make His word subject to our desires deciding for themselves what was good and**

evil – Do we? We need to see that this is deep within us because Adam and Eve's blood flows through ours!

(READ V. 6-7) – The Fall

We see here how subtle the temptation was because the fruit was good to eat – **Sin is always about missed placed desires and appetites** (as I mentioned just a second ago about Sex)

- And now we see the great Rebellion of our race and it doesn't seem the term Fall quite does it justice – **the theologian Dempster calls it:** *“Flagrant Rebellion...against the divine word by the pinnacle of creation, which has just been invested with the divine rule, (THIS) is a heinous crime against the cosmos and its creator”*
- In their attempt to put themselves in the place of God they lead the world into a massive curse – **They have rejected His authority and Word and listened to the voice of a creature rather than the Creator – As Romans 1 talks about they have suppressed the truth in unrighteousness and looked to the creature rather than the creator!**

Tragic – Adam should have stopped this and exercised dominion over the creature by stepping over and crushing his skull – **Instead they give into a subordinate through willful rebellion refusing to worship and obey and rule – The tree wasn't as much a test of obedience but whether we would be reliant upon God to reveal to us the knowledge we needed and trust Him alone as the arbiter of good and evil and not ourselves or the serpent!**

Application – See our sin in this – We don't trust that He is a good gift giver!

- **The moralist** doesn't trust so he tries to earn salvation through works rather than trusting in God
- **The one who turns to wild living** doesn't trust God for His satisfaction and pleasure so seeks it elsewhere
- **Neither one trust the love and grace of God** – and so we are like our parents seek good and pleasure apart from God!
- **Our project now is one of self liberation – This is what Satan holds out for us, determine for yourself what is RIGHT – Cease to see yourself as a creation but rather as a god, and so now the guiding principle for us is autonomy and not obedience and humble reliance** (And ironically this project of freedom leads to chains – Drug addict: Unchecked self-autonomy here leads to death!)

Why is this sin so heinous: Because we through seeking liberation and self-exaltation have rejected the very one who gave us life (breath and heart beat) – **We see this sort of rebellion in our children don't we– And yet deep within in us is rebellion against the very one who gave us life and we seek to knock Him off His throne and put ourselves there and the effects are cosmic shifting!**

(READ V. 8-13) – The Curse (V. 8-24)

We see here from God a mixture of judgment and grace as He does not smite them even though consequences come but before doling out judgment He begins by asking questions – **This is not because He needs information (He is all-knowing) but instead this is like what you do when you catch your child doing something that you have told them not to – Instead He is trying to cultivate a response of confession (repentance) so that they would admit what they did!**

- Sadly, repentance will be farthest from their mind as instead they try to hide from God who knows all

God confronts Adam first picturing him as the greater rebel because he has not led – **In the moment of first sin she was leading and he was being passive – *It is even possible he did not eat first because he was waiting to see if she died!***

- Men, this is a question of all creation – ***“Adam, where are you, where are the men?” – Men have a dangerous tendency to be passive and absent or if they aren’t passive they are abusive***
- **Combat Tennis with Freedom – *IDC men lets not follow the proclivities of our Father Adam but instead lets be active, sacrificial, and compassionately courageous men who lead!***

Instead of becoming repentant instead we become blame-shifters who seek to justify ourselves:

- **Adam blames his sin on the best gift God had given him and thus blames God Himself (*The woman you gave me made me do this!*)**
- **Eve blames the serpent (*Satan made me do it!*)**
- This is deep within us as we are experts at blame shifting from the time we are kids until now

(READ. V. 14-19) What is the tragic result: What is broken as a result? **3 Broken Relationships**

- **With God** – *The language of the text indicates they used to commune with God (the language here in Hebrew indicates Friendship) but now we hide from Him*
- **With each other (among humanity)** – Now humanity will be at odds with one another even the most intimate and profound relationships will be broken like marriages and families – *Now so broken that not one chapter over a brother will strike down his own brother* (Note: This is what happens in relationships when we want to be god)
 - o **Curse for Woman** – **what she was blessed with will now be her curse her companionship (*ruling over husband*) and child bearing**
 - o **Curse for the Man:** What he was supposed to be and do is now cursed as well – **He was to lead and have dominion of the earth but now it will be frustrated – He will get a taste of his own medicine as the ground will rebel against him and frustrate his work!**
- **Creation is broken** – **thorns and thistles come out of the ground** – *This isn’t natural and so we long for Eden knowing that in a Christian Worldview Tsunamis and earthquakes are not the way things are supposed to be!*

Man has now plunged the World into a cataclysmic fall and curse and we follow in this path (BFM2000) – *Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation” – This sin is pervasive and spreads like a germ throughout our race*

- **But truth is these patterns are deep within in us and we all willfully walk in a pattern of sin as our parents did seeking to put ourselves in God’s place – And what do we get as a result? (v. 19) DEATH! (Rom. 3:23) 6 FEET OF DIRT AND DUST**

HIT THIS QUICKLY – FINAL FALLOUT!!! (READ V. 20-24)

In the midst of Despair is Hope as Eve will bear children (a seed) giving a picture that God is not done with the human race – **He also in kindness clothes them with animal skins in anticipation of the sacrificial system to come – *But we also see here the ultimate punishment for their transgression!***

- The ultimate punishment and true death is exile from the presence of God to live outside of Paradise (Eden) – **Now the one who was to guard the garden is guarded from the garden – Their intimacy with God will be replaced with alienation outside the camp with all of creation asking *“Adam, where are you?”* (BUT THIS ISN'T THE END OF THE STORY!)**

2nd Tree and Garden - A garden and tree of death that leads to life (John 19-20)

GENESIS 3:15 tells us that God in His grace does not leave us in our Rebellion but will send someone to deliver a fatal blow who will reverse the curse and regain dominion and bring my people back to Eden – He is saying from the outset to Satan you want to use the woman to turn against me I will use her to crush your head

- There is an allusion to Genesis 3:15 as after Abel is killed Eve conceives Seth and she says, “God has appointed for me another offspring” and yet he will also die – *And the rest of OT is asking who is this seed: is it Moses/David/Solomon – And yet the reign of death from Eden on is unstoppable and it seems there is no one to turn it back, no one until you come to a man by the name of Jesus of Nazareth*
- And He comes on the Scene and His miracles make a Point – **He is demonstrating that He is this man who will fix what is broken – He is healing the sick, raising the dead, and even creation itself listens to Him as He is on a boat... “Who is this man they ask?”**

And John’s Gospel is especially interesting as we look at Genesis – **People sometimes ask did the apostles know they were writing scripture – Well John seems to be indicating from the outset of His gospel that He is about to write about a Genesis type of thing (Enarche)**

- And especially interesting is how John’s account of the passion (especially days 6-7) parallel the Creation week (**READ John 19:41-20:18 TIME????**)
- End of Day 6 in creation? **And what is the Last thing Jesus says on the cross (IT IS FINISHED)? On a tree as Galatians says**
- 7th day? GOD RESTS IN THE TOMB
- **And what happens on the first day of the new week again in a GARDEN: What happens on the 8th day – New Creation – This is the point of the Scriptures, Jesus is Re-creating the World, Restoring the World, He is able to overturn every bit of Genesis 3!**

How does He accomplish this: How does He reverse the curse? – He does so by taking the thorns and thistles that come out of the ground on His head BY BECOMING THE CURSE OUTSIDE THE CAMP as the judgment of God against sin that brought about the curse touches down at Golgotha – oh Christian, do you wonder if He loves you? Look to the Cross! (RG LEE)

- And what is the result? **RESTORING ALL THAT WAS BROKEN**
 - o Relationship with God – **Notice what he says to Mary, “My Father and Your Father”**
 - o With one another – **Jesus speaks words in John 20:17 as he is speaking of men who have just abandoned Him as He was beaten and killed – He speaks words that are so wonderful they often bring me to tears: “Go get my brothers!”**
 - (Christian) The church by our relationships with one another is to give the world just a glimpse of what the restoration of relationships is to look like – **More on that in the coming weeks as we look at community and the church**
 - o Creation – **No more death giving a glimpse of the day when there is no more pain or tsunamis or thorns or thistles! (Rom 8)**

The question now then has to be how can sinful rebels be restored back into the presence of holy god and here it is – THROUGH JESUS!

- And this ALL ABOUT SUBSTITUTION (This is the story of the world) – **We want to substitute ourselves for God but God in His grace substitutes Himself for us and takes the penalty we deserve!**
- At this time of year we especially reflect that this was all made possible because of the Incarnation (God becoming man!) – **Consider the staggering magnitude of it – The Eternal God with us taking on all it means to be human in order to redeem humanity**

- He so humbled Himself for our good that the creator of all of the universe would need milk to live – **The sovereign of all creation would need His diapers changed (Oh, this is staggering) – So no wonder Queen Lucy would say in the Last battle: “Yes in our world too, a stable once had something inside it that was bigger than our whole world!”**

And Christ is the worthy substitute because He succeeds where Adam failed – **He goes face to face with the serpent in the wilderness and comes back victorious and then at the Cross the 2nd Adam takes the consequences of the 1st Adam’s sin on Himself – *And by Sunday morning He has defeated the ancient murders final weapons of death and accusation as He walks out of a grave in the Middle East!***

- And if you will turn to Him much like God did in the Garden but in a much greater way – He will clothe you – ***Not with Animal skins but with His righteousness!***
- **And where is He taking His people? To Resurrection and New Creation – He is taking us to a final garden and tree where He will once again dwell with us in a place where there is no more pain!**

3rd Tree and Garden – A garden and tree of life that leads to eternal life (READ REV. 22:1-5)

Here with the 3rd Tree and Garden we see Paradise Regained – ***Nothing accursed means no more curse – We are back in Eden (PHYSICAL REALITY, NOT CLOUDS)***

- **Jesus is bringing about New Creation not just for us individually but for the entire Cosmos – a place un-frustrated by the fall (IMAGINE THE BEAUTY!) – and all 3 relationships restored!**
 - o **With God:** Best news of all God will be with us (Immanuel) – **THE LAMB WILL BE IN IT – our brother Jesus who made all of this possible!**
 - o **With Each Other:** **Restored to one another as we dwell as brothers and sisters in unity forever** (better start liking each other!)
 - o **And Creation itself is restored:** *This is a new earth where there will be no more pain, child cancer, aids, sex trafficking, or senseless shootings of our brothers and sisters in prayer gatherings just a King and Kingdom where righteousness and peace reign forever and ever!*

Conclusion: The greatest Christmas gift ever is that God sent His son, born of woman, to cut off the Dragon’s head – **And it is the true story that makes sense of the world (tells us where we came from, what went wrong, what is the solution, and where we are headed) – The hanging question for all of us is “have you received this gift by faith?”**

UNBELIEVER: If you have not on the last day you can either be found in Adam or you can be found in Christ – *You can either approach God on your own trying to be your own god trusting in your works and yourself or you can cry out for mercy for God to count Jesus as your substitute and to trust that He alone can save you!*

Believer: Does this gospel shape your life – **Our call is the same as Adam’s in the garden to trust Him and obey Him – And then our command is the GC (to fill the earth with worshippers of this worthy King)**

- **Illustration:** You know when you get a great gift like a Nintendo you talk about it, in fact you invite friends to come get in on it – ***How much better a gift have we received in the righteousness of Christ?***

And believer have an unshakable faith about where we are headed (end of return of the jedi

- **– They party: the play flutes and use storm trooper helmets as drums, and they sing, and they dance, and they eat, and they embrace – *Why is it such a good ending?***

- Because it gives a glimpse of the true story of the whole world (*What Tolkien calls the True Myth*) – *Because that is where we are headed to a celebration after the accuser of our brothers is dealt the mortal blow!*
- So we keep waiting, waiting on the world to change... but not for long – **Soon our King will split open the Eastern Sky and bring us back to Eden – To a place that CS Lewis pictures as one where every chapter is better than the one before it!** (*Now we turn to a foretaste of that day in the table!*)

Pray Romans 16:20