

Great Gift - Ruining The Gift We Had

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to be reading this morning from Genesis, chapter 3, so you can find your way there. I think it's on page 8 or 5 or something like that. And you may be wondering, what's Genesis got to do with Christmas? Well, we'll find out. Thanks, Sarah. There's notes here as well. Jez is going to come and read for us. There's some notes here as well.

Yeah. So, reading from Genesis 3, the fall of man, on page 5 of your Bibles. 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? The woman said to the serpent, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 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. You will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. 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 too. And then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. And 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. But the Lord God called to the man, where are you? He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid. And he said, who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat? The man said, the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it. Then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this you have done? The woman said, the serpent deceived me, and I ate. So the Lord God said to the serpent, because you have done this, curse it 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. 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.

To the woman, he said, I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing. With pain you will give birth to your children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. To Adam, he said, because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree, about which I commanded you, you must not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil, you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you will return. Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all of the living. The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

And the Lord God said, The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat and live forever. So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden, a cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Thank you so much, Jez, for reading that. Well, last week we started looking at the greatest gift, the promise of the gift that we all want, that we all long for, a world where there is no more brokenness. This morning we're going to look at the gift that we had and how it was ruined. Let's pray and ask for God's help.

[5 : 26] Father, you are the giver of good gifts. We thank you for the gifts that we have enjoyed even over tea and coffee together. And we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit.

the power of God, indwelling all those who believe. And so we ask that by your Spirit, you would be speaking into our hearts afresh, awakening us to who we are as people and our desperate need of you. We pray that through this morning, we will wonder afresh at the amazing gift of your Son. So please help us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, little Johnny runs downstairs on Christmas morning, and in his excitement he rips open his present. It was just what he longed for. Written across in a big yellow label on the front of his present were these words. Before turning on, please read carefully. But little Johnny knew everything about this gift. He pulled off the cover, plugged it in, bang! Bits went flying everywhere.

Little Johnny sat in tears. His brand new gift was ruined before he can even play with it. Ever been there? Well, God in his goodness has given us a good and beautiful gift.

But that gift has been ruined. First of all, the gift that we had been given, the gift we had.

[7 : 58] Look at Genesis chapter 1, verse 1. Ignore chapter 2 there. It's Genesis 1, the gift we had.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. This is the true story of how God made the world earth and gave us a wonderful gift to enjoy, the gift of creation. Verse 2. Now the earth was formless and it was empty. And as we read on through the story, we read that God, by his powerful word, formed the heavens and the earth, and then he filled the heavens and the earth. Earth and sky were separated. Land and sea were shaped. And then God began to fill each space with life. So verse 14.

God said, let there be light in the expanse of the sky to separate day from the night. Verse 20. And God said, let the water, that's the seas, the oceans, team with living creatures and let birds fly across the earth and across the expanse of the sky. Each living creature, every planet and star has been assigned to its place. And look what God said at the end of each stage of his creation. Look at the end of verse 10.

And God saw that it was good. The end of verse 12. And God saw that it was good.

End of verse 18. And God saw that it was good. Verse 21. And God saw that it was good.

[10 : 14] End of verse 25. And God saw that it was good. Do you think God is trying to tell us something?

This was a good world that he made. A world of beauty and harmony. Nothing was broken. Everything was good.

But God wasn't finished with his creation. In verse 27 we're told that God created man and woman in his own image.

The pinnacle of his creation. It was as if God was saving the best till last. I've made a beautiful world. But now look what I am going to make. And look what he says after he had made people.

Verse 31 of chapter 1. God saw all that he had made. And it was very good. Good before.

[11 : 16] But now with people. Very good. And there was morning and there was evening. The sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed. In all their vast array.

From these vast unexplored galaxies. Billions of miles away. Unseen planets and stars that exist. Right down to the tiny little ladybird.

With her beautiful dark red body. And distinguishing black dots. That you could hold in your hands. Spectacular.

Amazing. What a beautiful and good world God had made. And at the end of it all. Look at chapter 2 verse 2.

By the seventh day. God had finished the work he had been doing. And so on the seventh day. He rested from all his work. God rested.

[12 : 15] His work finished and completed. All that was left was for man and woman. To enjoy God. And to rest in his beautiful good world.

What a beautiful sight. And of course to enjoy God's world. To get the best out of God's world.

Meant obeying God's rules. Chapter 2 verse 16. And the Lord God commanded the man.

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden. But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat of it.

You will surely die. Again this is God's goodness. Protecting us and caring for us. Telling us and showing us what is best for us.

[13 : 12] There was no need for anyone else or anything else. Because we had everything that our creator God had chosen to give to his created people.

What a beautiful scene in these two chapters. Man and woman in perfect relationship with God. In right relationship with each other.

And enjoying God's amazing good creation. This was a flawless world.

There's no hint of brokenness. Can you see any brokenness here? There's no death here. There's nobody getting sick. There's no suffering.

There's no evil. There's no violence. This is the good gift that we had. That God had given to us.

[14 : 13] Enjoy it. Live with it. Know me. Enjoy me. What a wonderful gift. God had given. The good gift we had.

But secondly. It's the gift we ruined. Instead of a flawless and beautiful world.

We now see and experience a very broken and destructive world. Where things don't work the way they're meant to. Sadness.

How did all this happen? Where did it all go wrong? Well theologians call it the fall. Or for our purposes today we're going to call it D-Day.

So here's all your D's. It's going to help you to remember everything. First. The devil. Chapter 3 verse 1. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

[15 : 23] Now the serpent we know. Often pictured in kids books as a snake slithering around a tree with an apple in its mouth. We know this serpent to be Satan or the devil.

Now some people will say the devil took the form of a serpent. Others will just say the serpent is a symbol for the devil. But our concern is not what the serpent looked like.

Genesis 3 is all about how he works. That's what we're interested in. In how he works. We're told. Look at verse 1. That he was crafty. Meaning he was deceptive and disruptive.

This is what the devil does. He deceives people. And he disrupts God's good order. He literally throws a spanner in the works.

He tries to cog up the working mechanisms of life. He opposes God and his ways. That's what he wants to do. Now while we must take the devil seriously.

[16 : 31] We must not see him as the same as God. The devil is. In verse 1. And we're told. Made by God. So he is a created being.

He's not above God. He's not equal with God. He is a created being. A dependent being. Not that we should think that God has created evil.

Later in the Bible we're told that the devil was an angel who had fallen and had rebelled against God. But here we're introduced to one who is there.

Whose main goal in life. In our life and in this world. Is to disrupt and deceive. And break all that is good.

And all of this leads to doubt. Look at the rest of verse 1. Look at what he says. He said to the woman. Did God really say.

[17 : 34] You must not eat from any tree in the garden. He undermines. What God the good creator had said. Did God really say.

He's like a cunning lawyer. Are you really sure that you heard correctly. Maybe you misunderstood. Maybe you're just a little bit confused on that point.

Did God really say that. And so doubt begins to form in the mind. And this is always the way in which the devils work. This is his primary weapon.

He makes us question. Question. God's word. The Bible. He makes us question what God has clearly said. Which leads to.

A distortion of God's word. Look at how the woman responds. It seems like she responds correctly. But if we look carefully.

[18 : 32] It is a complete distortion. So look at verse 2. The woman said to the serpent. We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.

Sound familiar? Well compare that to what God had said. In chapter 2 verse 16. And the Lord God commanded the man.

You are free. To eat from any tree. In the garden. Can you see what's happening? The woman begins to distort God's word.

And makes God out to be mean. She doesn't say anything about the freedom they had. She doesn't say anything about any tree. It's. We can't have. As if God was stingy.

And as if God was not good. And look how she continues. Verse 3. And God did say. You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden.

[19 : 36] And you must not touch it. Or you will die. Now we think. Well what's wrong with that? Well again go back to chapter 2 verse 17. And compare what Eve said.

And what God had said. So chapter 2 verse 17 reads. God said you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

You see the woman put in the word touch. Again it seems innocent enough. But again she's distorting God's word. And makes God out to be oppressive with his rules.

We can't even touch it. God hadn't said anything about touching things. He just said don't eat it. Do you see what happens when we begin to distort God's word?

We're making it out that God is withholding good things from us. That God is unfairly strict with mankind. That he's a party pooper. That he's spoiling all our fun.

[20 : 40] Which leads to a denial of who God is. Look at verse 4. Look at how the serpent responds. You will not surely die.

The serpent said to the woman. Don't be silly. God's not going to judge you. You're not going to die. You don't want to believe that kind of stuff do you?

You can't trust what God says. Don't take God's word seriously. After all it's all a myth. It's all made up. Don't believe this stuff at all. And so we go on and believe the lies.

And we close God's word. And we deny God's word. And all of this leads to a terrible distrust.

God's word. In the good creator. Who gave us all that we ever needed. verse 5. For God knows that when you eat of it.

[21 : 38] Your eyes will be opened. And you will be like God. Knowing good and evil. Don't trust God. God thinks he knows what's best for you in your life.

But you know what? You're the only one who knows what's best for you. You can become. Look at verse 5. You will be like God. In other words. You can play the role of God too.

That means. You and I get to decide what is good and what is evil. You and I get to make up the rules for life. Don't let God tell you what the rules are.

You decide what they are. Don't trust God with what he says. You know what's best for you. You know what you need in your life. You go get it.

You have it. Because you know best. And so we distrust our good creator. Who had given us the best of gifts.

[22 : 40] And of course that led to disobedience. Verse 6. When the woman saw the fruit of the tree. That 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.

You see Adam. This isn't just about the woman and blaming the woman. Adam was there all along. After all he was the one who had received the command. He knew it.

He should have been the one who stood up and stopped it all. But he hadn't. They're both guilty. Now people get very excited about why God was so against eating apples.

I mean what was wrong with the tree? And what was wrong with eating the apples? Well we don't even know if it was an apple or what the fruit was. And it's not so much about the fruit. It's about the action.

[23 : 38] God had made it so clear to them. You can. You're free. You're free to eat any of these fruits in this garden.

Anything that you like. But don't eat of this one. Don't eat this one. And they disobeyed.

It was open rebellion. When they took that fruit and they ate they were sending a clear message to God. I don't need you. You don't rule me.

This is nothing less than an open revolution to remove God and replace God. To push them out of their lives completely. This is the day the human race became enemies with God.

And broke the good gift that God had given us. The consequences are all plain to see.

[24 : 43] We live in a world of disorder. Of brokenness. Of decay. And death. We see this disorder in human relationships.

Look at verse 16. At the very end of verse 16. The last couple of lines it says. God is speaking to the woman. He says. Your desire will be to rule over your husband.

Or will be. Sorry. Your desire will be for your husband. And he will rule over you. Now that word there for desire. Means that. The woman will try to control.

The husband. And in response to that. The man will rule over. This is a very strong word. It means to be oppressive. And against. So here we see.

Right at the very beginning. The first human relationship. Shattered and broken. Because they had gone against God. And the pattern has been repeated. Right the way through the history of the world.

[25 : 46] There's not one of us. In this room. That does not have a broken relationship. Friendship. Friendship. Marriages break.

Friendships break. And families fall apart. Not only do we see disorder. But we see the decay.

All around us. Verse 17. To Adam he said. Because you listened to your wife. And ate from the tree. About which I commanded you. You must not eat. Cursed. Is the ground because of you.

The whole world. Is under a curse. Through painful toil. You will eat of it. All the days. Of your life. Everything around us.

Has been touched with the curse. Things are full of disease. And decay. Things don't work. Weather. And chaotic patterns.

[26 : 43] All around us. Ruin. And crush. And break lives. Not only is there decay. But there is death. Verse 19.

By the sweat of your brow. You will eat your food. Until you return to the ground. Since from it you were taken. For dust you are.

And to dust you will return. Only a few verses previously. There was this amazing picture. Of the world teeming with life.

In all its beauty. In all its harmony. And now there is just the experience. Of pain. And the hurt. Of death itself. And above all of these things.

There was the broken relationship with God. Look at verse 23. So the Lord God. Banished him from the garden of Eden.

[27 : 45] To work the ground. From which he had been taken. What a desperate conclusion. To the story. Man being shut out from God.

Rather than. Rather than enjoying God. Rather than enjoying God. Rather than living and walking with God. Now fearing God. And hating God. It's all gone wrong.

The gift has been broken. But this isn't just the story of the first man and the first woman. This is my story.

I'm Adam in this story. Because we all distort. We all deny. We all distrust.

We all disobey. Quite a number of years ago. The Times newspaper. Had a question in the paper.

[28 : 42] And they invited a number of writers. To respond to the question. And this was the question they put in the newspaper. What's wrong with the world? One well-known writer at the time.

G.K. Chesterton replied. Dear sirs. I am. Sincerely yours. G.K. Chesterton. What happened to this good and beautiful world?

You're looking at it right here. It's me. And look at yourself. Why is everything a mess?

Me. We've all ruined God's good gift that he's given to us. Like a kid on Christmas Day who comes rushing down the stairs. And breaks open their presents.

All because they thought they knew what was best. And they didn't listen to the instruction or read the label. We have not listened to God. We've gone on a revolution in saying we don't need you.

[29 : 48] Don't tell me what to do. I know what's best for my life. I know what's best for my relationships. I know what's best for me. And the world is broken.

What do we do? How can we fix it? Well, we need another gift.

The gift we all need. Because Genesis 3 is full of terrible things.

But it's full of goodness and it's full of grace. Because in chapter 3 someone is promised who can fix it. Genesis 3 is not all doom and gloom.

There are the seeds of hope. The promise of an amazing gift that is to come. What is this gift? Or who is this gift?

[30 : 49] Well, this person will come and destroy the devil and death. Look at chapter 3 verse 15. You could just read through it and not see it.

Chapter 3 verse 15. God is speaking to the woman. This is what he says will happen. He says, I will put enmity between you and the woman. And between your offspring.

Sorry, I'll start again. God is speaking to the devil. And this is what he says. 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. God is promising and saying from the woman.

From the human race. One is going to come out of the human race. One special person is going to be born. And they are going to grow up.

[31 : 52] And they are going to crush the devil. Defeating him. And destroying him. You may remember Mel Gibson's film, The Passion.

The very opening scene has Jesus walking through the garden of Gethsemane. Where he goes to pray to his father. And as Jesus is praying, Mel Gibson in his interpretation has a snake.

And it crawls over Jesus. And in reaction, Jesus stands on the snake's head and crushes it. Now while that never actually happened, Gibson is using the symbolism to try and explain what Jesus came to do.

He was the one who came to crush Satan. Hebrews chapter 2.

Since the children, that's people like you and me, have flesh and blood. Normal human people.

[33 : 28] He too, that's Jesus, shared in their humanity. It's talking about the God who came to this earth in the person of Jesus Christ. He took on flesh and blood.

He walked this world like you and me. He shared in their humanity. So that by his death, he might destroy him who holds the power of death.

That is the devil. Jesus Christ is the special one who was born, who comes to destroy the devil by his own death on the cross.

Jesus crushes his head so that we could be set free. So that we no longer have to distort or distrust or disobey God.

But rather we read his word. But rather we read his word. We obey it and we follow it. Because we are now in a right relationship again with our creator God. Jesus came to overpower the evil one.

[34 : 36] And give us a new way to live. To set us free. To live God's way. God in his grace at the very beginning.

Promised the one who would come. And that's what we celebrate at Christmas. The baby. The Lord Jesus. Who grew up. But not only does he destroy evil and death.

He comes to cover our guilt and our shame. Look at chapter 3. This is back in Genesis chapter 3 verse 7.

We're told there that Adam and Eve after they had eaten the fruit. In verse 7 it says. Then both of their eyes were opened. And they realised that they were naked.

So they sewed fig leaves together. And made coverings of them for themselves. What a stupid thing to do. We can picture it.

[35 : 39] We've seen the pictures. Sticking leaves on each other. What are they trying to hide? You see when we turn against God. We lose our innocence. We take all his good gifts.

And we can't use them for good any longer. We just break them and destroy them. And when we try to. And then we try to cover it all up. As if nothing has ever happened.

And that's what Adam and Eve were doing. They're trying to cover up their sin. They're pretending that nothing happened. That they didn't take the fruit. Let's put leaves on ourselves.

Let's hide our guilt and shame. And God won't see. And God won't know. How ridiculous. But again look at the grace of God in all of this.

Look at verse 21. Look what God did. Look what he provided. Verse 21. The Lord God made garments of skin.

[36 : 39] That is he took the skin of an animal. For Adam and Eve. And he clothed them. God provides a covering for them.

Not leaves. But something a bit more substantial. Something better. Now if we know anything of the Bible story. We know this is deeply symbolic.

Because centuries later. His promised one would come. The Lord Jesus Christ. What did he come to do? To cover. Our guilt. And our shame.

How did he do that? Well Jesus takes our disobedience. He covers himself. He takes our guilt and shame off us.

He takes those clothes off us. And he puts them on himself. And he suffers and dies in our place. But in his place. Not only that.

[37 : 37] He takes off. If you like. His perfect obedience. And he covers us. With his beauty. And his purity. He takes off our old clothes.

And he puts on the new clothes. And when God looks at us. He doesn't see me. He sees me.

He sees me. He sees me in Jesus. All his perfection. All his perfection put on me. So that I might be right with him.

You know. You know. Too often we deal with our guilt and shame. As if nothing ever happened. We cover it all up with excuses.

We do the blame game. We do the blame game. And we say. Oh they did this. They said that. They started that. They said this about me. We blame our circumstances.

[38 : 33] We blame our childhood. We blame all sorts of things. But it's never me. And we ignore everything that has gone on. Putting leaves on ourselves.

Trying to cover it all up. Instead we should be running to Jesus. Who covers all our guilt. Covers all of our shame.

So that we can live. Just like Adam and Eve lived. In the very beginning. That perfect harmony. To walk with God.

To know him. To delight in him. To enjoy him. This is what he called us to do. This is the gift we need. The one who comes to renew this disordered world.

The one who came to restore our broken lives. This is what Christmas is all about. And this is why we celebrate. The Lord Jesus who came.

[39 : 34] To destroy the devil and death. And to cover. All of our guilt. And our shame. Let's thank God.

For his amazing gift. Father.

Father. Father. We see ourselves. All too clearly. In this story. We see ourselves.

As people who ignore you. Deny you. And distrust. That you are good. And what you give us. Is best and right. And so we confess.

Father. The times. This week. Today. Where we have decided. What is best for ourselves. Where we have ignored you.

[40 : 44] And turned against you. Father. Please forgive us. And we thank you. That in Jesus. We have one who covers us.

Covers all our guilt. And all our shame. Takes it away. So that we might be in fellowship with you. So Father.

Help us. To enjoy your good gifts. Help us to celebrate the good gifts. That you have given to us. But we pray above all.

That we will worship. The greatest gift of all. The Lord Jesus. That we might live. In harmony with you. In harmony with one another.

We thank you. That you have come to do something. About this world. And we thank you. That Jesus is the answer. We praise you for that. In Jesus name.

[41 : 45] We all pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We are going to sing.

A song which reminds us of how things have gone wrong. The prayer for us to call out to God. To have mercy.

To forgive us Lord. To renew us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.