

Life in Adam's Image

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[0 : 00] And some time ago, one of my daughters was singing in the kitchen at the bench while my wife Michelle was cooking dinner. And I came in and heard her singing.

And then she kind of paused and said, I'm not a very good singer, am I? To which I replied, we all have our different gifts. I don't want to lie, but I then said, look, the problem is, sweetie, that you've actually inherited your father's singing voice.

In fact, I remember when I was a student minister leading a church service one time and we were singing, the senior minister came up during the song and turned the microphone off and said, that's better.

And my poor daughter has inherited my bad singing voice. But that's what happens in life, isn't it? People inherit certain traits from their parents, whether it's their height, their looks, their mannerisms, or even their voice.

We share a certain likeness with our parents. So, for example, on the next slide is the actor Tom Hanks and his son, Colin, who share a rather, you know, quite a lot like, aren't they?

[1 : 09] They look like. Or the next slide, Paul McCartney and his son, James, who share a common appearance. We all inherit certain things from our parents.

And it's the same in our passage today. You see, today we come to a new section in Genesis where the writer describes the family line of Adam. And as we'll see, we share a certain likeness to Adam and have inherited from him certain things, even some things we prefer not to have.

So, if you have a look at verse 1 in your Bibles of chapter 5, the writer begins using that phrase I pointed out last week. He says, this is the written account of Adam's family line.

Literally, these are the generations of Adam's family. You see, the writer is about to describe Adam's family line. And remember the phrase, this is the account of, or these are the generations of, was the writer's way of structuring his material through the book of Genesis.

And so, this section begins in chapter 5, verse 1, and continues to chapter 6, verse 8. Because then in verse 9, he uses the phrase again. So, just turn over the page for a moment and have a look at chapter 6, verse 9, at the top of the page.

[2 : 24] Do you see that phrase again? And this is the account of Noah now and his family. He's beginning a new section there. And so, he's grouped this material about Adam's family line here, chapter 5 and the first part of chapter 6.

And as we look at Adam's line, you'll notice that the writer will only trace one family line. So, it's not a family tree which includes all the sons and daughters, but a family line of one son.

The line of Seth, not the line of Cain. And that's because the writer is looking for the offspring or the child, literally the seed from Eve who will crush the serpent's head.

Do you remember chapter 3, verse 15? God promised Eve that an offspring from her, a child or a seed from her, would crush the serpent's head. And last week, we saw that Eve rejoiced that she had acquired a man whom she named Cain.

And so, perhaps Cain was that offspring who would crush the serpent's head and rule over sin. But as we saw last week, he was instead ruled by sin and murdered his brother Abel.

[3 : 35] I saw a prayer that a Sunday school child wrote once. So, on the next slide. So, we might... Yeah, there it is. Thanks, Joel.

Dear God, maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they had their own rooms. It works with my brother Larry. Of course, as we saw last week, rooms were not the problem. Sin that ruled over Cain was the problem. At the end of chapter 4 last week, we saw that God was gracious to Eve and granted her, it says at the end of the chapter, another son called Seth.

So, perhaps Seth is the one who will now be the offspring of Eve who will crush the serpent's head. And so, that's why the writer starts tracing Seth's line, you see.

But he begins his section, really, after this statement, by reminding us of our promising beginning.

So, we're at point 1 in your outlines and verse 1 and 2 in your Bibles.

[4 : 38] Now, this is a written account of Adam's family line. When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them.

And he named them mankind when they were created. Now, do these first couple of verses sound familiar? Made man in God's likeness, created them male and female, blessed them.

It's meant to remind us of chapter 1. And so, if you just turn back a page in your Bibles to chapter 1, verse 26, he's kind of done shorthand to remind us of these three verses here.

Chapter 1, verse 26, see if they sound familiar. Then God said, Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness. Same language. So that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals.

Verse 27, So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God, he created them. Male and female. Same language, he created them. And then verse 28, God blessed them.

[5 : 45] How? Well, he said, Be fruitful and increase in number. So it's a blessing of fruitfulness in life. Fill the earth and subdue it, so that you can rule over the fish of the sea and so on.

You see, the beginning of chapter 5 reminds us of the beginning of creation. When God created us in his likeness to rule over the world, to represent his rule as his image bearers in the world.

Kind of like our second reading said when it quoted Psalm 8, if you pick that up. And here, it also reminds us here in chapter 5 of how God created us as male and female, so that together we'd help each other rule the world.

And it reminds us of how he blessed us with fruitfulness, the ability to bring life, so that we might increase in number, fill the earth, subdue it, and so rule over it. Chapter 5 begins by reminding us of our promising beginning back in chapter 1.

But of course, it all went pear-shaped, didn't it? Adam and Eve rejected God's rule over them and decided to play God themselves, doing what they wanted, which meant eating the forbidden fruit and sinning.

[6 : 58] I saw online a church sign in the States, actually, that said this on the next slide. It says, Forbidden fruits create many jams. And Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit created one huge jam.

Big problem. It changed our promising beginning to a painful present. Their sin led to judgment, including death, as we saw. And so the writer comes, as he comes to Seth's line in verse 3, notice how he now changes the language from verse 1 and 2.

So we're at point 2 of verse 3. Chapter 5, verse 3. Do you notice in verse 3 how Seth is described? Seth is not said to be made in God's image. He is said to be made in Adam's image. Do you notice that? The writer has changed the language.

Why? Well, because something has happened between our promising beginning in chapter 1 and our painful present here in chapter 5. And what happened was sin, which led to judgment, especially seen by death.

[8 : 23] And so those who come after Adam like Seth, like us here this morning, well, unfortunately, we inherit Adam's likeness. On the positive side, it means we're still sharing God's image as Adam did.

It means we're still to rule over the world and be fruitful, increasing number as Adam and Eve were to. But on the negative side, just as Adam and Eve were tainted by sin, so too are we.

Just as Adam and Eve came under God's judgment, including death, so too do we. This is now our life in Adam's image. And this is what the writer highlights for us in chapter 5.

So we'll see people still enjoying God's blessing of fruitfulness, of bringing life, an increasing number. They have sons and daughters and so on. Verse 3 and 4. But we also see that life ends in death.

You see the end of verse 5? Notice how Adam's life ends. And then he died. Death has the last word in life. And this pattern continues.

[9 : 33] Have a look at verse 6 to 8. When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father of Enosh. After he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters.

There's the blessing of fruitfulness. Altogether, Seth lived a total of 912 years and then he died. You see the pattern? It's also worth noting here that because Seth died, he's not the one who ends up crushing the serpent's head, is he?

For Seth still suffers the judgment of sin, which is death. And so we are to look forward to another. But in the meantime, this pattern of life in Adam's image continues.

There is a blessing of fruitfulness and life, where they have sons and daughters and they live a long time. But life always ends in death. And with a couple of exceptions, life also gradually gets shorter. It's life, death it seems, always has the last word. And it's relentless, which makes the overall tone of this pattern in chapter 5 rather depressing.

[10:43] Now let me read quite a large section to you, see if you can see the pattern, but also feel the tone. So verse 9. And then he died.

Verse 17. And then he died. Verse 20. And then he died. Do you see the pattern? There is the blessing of God in fruitfulness and life, but no matter how much fruitfulness of life there is, it always ends in death.

It's like humanity is caught in this depressing cycle. And it's depressing because death always seems to have the last word. You see, the writer is highlighting for us that we're a long way from our promising beginning in chapter 1.

One of humanity's big problems is now death. People often say today that death is just a natural part of life. But it's not natural.

It's horrible. I mean, if it was a natural part of life, if it was the way God meant life to be, then why do people still fear death?

[12:19] Why is our natural instinct to resist death, to fight against death, to seek to live? And why is it that it causes so much pain when death comes to those around us?

Shouldn't all that tell us that death is not natural? See, we are built for life. And death is an unnatural invasion of life.

I remember visiting someone who was dying. They were not a Christian. They openly didn't want... I mean, they were a nice person, but they didn't want anything to do with God and the church during their life.

And they had often said to their kids that when you die, you die. That's just life. And yet when they were close to death, they wanted a minister of the church to come and visit them and pray for them. Perhaps a minister would kill them. Why? Because they didn't want to die. See, even though they had said all their life that death is just part of life, when push came to shove, when they were at death's door, they didn't want to just go on with it as though it was natural.

[13:30] They wanted to fight against it. Even they sensed that death was unnatural. You see, we are built to live, but death is unnatural.

And yet death will come to every person. One out of every one person in this room will one day die. Aren't you glad you came to Holy Trinity this morning? But there is a sign of hope.

Have a look at verse 21. There's a break in the pattern. Verse 21 says, Here there is a break in the pattern, isn't it?

Enoch, who is a different Enoch to chapter 4, his life does not end with, and he died. It ends with, God took him away.

And so instead of death having the last word, God has the last word. God saves Enoch from death. Why does God save Enoch from death? Well, it says twice, actually, because he walked faithfully with God.

[14:52] Now, to walk with God is a rare expression. In the Old Testament, it speaks of a very close relationship with God. And at the heart of this relationship, like every relationship, really, is trust, faith.

And so Hebrews chapter 11 on the next slide is like a commentary on these verses. And this is what Hebrews says, By faith Enoch was taken from this life so that he did not experience death.

He could not be found because God had taken him away. He quotes Genesis 5 here. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith, it is impossible to please God.

Because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. You see, Enoch not only trusted that God existed, like Cain did, but he also trusted in God as his own personal God, God of his own life, such that he sought to please God, like

Abel did.

And Enoch trusted God to provide for him, to give him reward when he sought it. Reward here is not so much treasure and money and so on, but things like food and protection. The point is that the heart of his walk with God was his trust in God.

[16:07] And this trust meant death did not have the last word for him. Here is hope in an otherwise sad pattern of life in Adam's image. And so could Enoch then be the one who would crush the serpent's head?

After all, he walked with God instead of being ruled by sin. And what's more, he even conquered death. And yet, there's no hint that he's dealt with sin for other people.

Because the pattern just continues for them. You see verse 25? When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. After he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters.

And altogether, Methuselah lived a total of 969 years. And then he died. The pattern continues, you see, doesn't it? And so we're to continue to look forward to one who will crush the serpent's head and deal with all our sin so that all of us might be able to conquer death.

That death might not be the last word for us. And we don't have to look far because the very next verse again breaks the pattern. And it seems Noah could be a candidate.

[17:20] Verse 28, when Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. And now this is different.

Verse 29, he named him Noah and said, he will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed.

Chapter 3. After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. And altogether, Lamech lived a total of 170 years. And then he died.

Here the sad pattern of humanity is again broken with Noah. And Lamech, who is again a different Lamech to chapter 4, this is a good Lamech, he names his son Noah.

And as you'll see in your footnote in your Bibles, the name Noah sounds like the Hebrew word for comfort. And so Noah, it seems, will somehow bring comfort from the curse of chapter 3.

The curse caused by Adam and Eve's sin. How will Noah do this? Well, as we'll see next week, by building an ark. I think you've heard of that story. Which offers salvation through judgment and a new beginning for all who trust in God like Noah, like Enoch.

[18:33] Though sadly, not many take God up on his offer. But for the moment, the writer wants us to realize that the first big problem for life in Adam's image is that death seems to always have the last word.

But there's actually a second and more primary problem, underlying problem, and that is sin. So point 3, chapter 6, verse 1. When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful and they married any of them they chose.

Then the Lord said, My spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal. Their days will be 120 years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them.

They were the heroes of old, men of renown. Now, most people want to know who the sons of God were. But unfortunately, no one is actually sure.

In fact, one commentator said that that verse is the most debated verse in all of Genesis. There are different options and you can ask me about them later. But whoever they are, it's a picture of humanity's inclination to sin.

[19:52] Here it's sinning by men marrying whoever they want, indicating many wives instead of one wife as God created marriage to be. And so God brings death by shortening their life.

He says in verse 3 that his spirit will not contend or as your footnote says better, that his spirit will not remain in mankind forever for they are mortal.

In other words, God's spirit sustains human life. But his spirit will not sustain human life forever. Instead, he will now shorten their life to 120 years to bring death sooner.

You see, sin leads to death. Sin is the primary problem. And we see it again in verses 5 to 7. The Lord saw how great the wickedness of human race had become on the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.

The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created and with them

the animals, the birds, and the creatures that move along the ground.

[21 : 03] For I regret that I have made them, he says. It's worth noticing for a moment here that sin grieves God.

The end of verse 6 says his heart was deeply troubled. It's literally his heart was deeply grieved. Sin grieves God. It breaks his heart.

Which means God's heart must have really been broken here because you see how sinful humanity had become. In chapter 1 God saw all that he had made and it was very good but here in chapter 6 verse 5 he saw how great the wickedness of humanity had become.

And the writer says that the human heart was only evil all the time. Now I realize that for some people this seems like over the top language.

I mean, surely humanity can do great good as well. And you're right. They can. But notice the writer says it's humanity's hearts that are always evil.

[22 : 08] And that's because a heart that rejects God, a heart that does not have faith or trust in God, a heart that seeks to live apart from God, well that's the definition of sin. Evil.

Remember on the next slide how we wrote the word sin with capital I in the middle because sin is about ignoring God and living how I want to live. the essence of evil is living in rebellion to God who is good.

And when we realize this, it's not hard to imagine a world whose hearts are only evil all the time because their hearts continue to reject God all the time.

And sadly, it's not too dissimilar to our world today, is it? And so this sin again leads to death, this time by flood. a grieving God will wipe out a sinful humanity.

But again, there is hope. Verse 8, but Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Here is one man who found favor with God.

[23 : 12] Why? Well, verse 9 will tell us that Noah also walked with God like Enoch. And so I take it that he also had a faith or trust in God like Enoch.

That's why he found favor with God. And given this and the fact that Noah's very name suggests he will bring comfort from the curse caused by sin, then perhaps he is Eve's offspring who will crush the serpent's head, who will free us from sin and death.

Well, as we see next week, sadly, no. Noah ends up being ruled by sin as well. And so we are left with a pretty depressing picture of life in Adam's image, aren't we?

A life that is plagued by two big problems. I mean, I know we all face all sorts of problems in life.

One parent said to me that they have three problems and they are aged 12, 10 and 8.

For others, we face financial problems or health problems or family problems. But this account of Adam's family line reminds us that life in Adam's image comes with two big ones, death and sin.

[24 : 27] And chapter 5 highlights the problem of death. Chapter 6 highlights the primary problem of sin. And they are related. Death is caused by sin. Not only death in this world, but eternal death in the world to come, such that death has the final say.

And so we need someone who will deal with this primary problem of sin and in so doing free us from death having the last say. And it just so happens that there is such a person.

There is another offspring of Eve who walked with God like Enoch and Noah. There is another person who offers us salvation through judgment like Noah will. There is another person for whom death was not the last word for them like Enoch.

And this one person is the one who crushed the serpent's head and dealt with our sin so that death might not be the last word for us as well.

This one, of course, is Jesus. As we heard in our second reading, which is on the next slide, just the pertinent verses, Jesus became a man who walked with God and by his death on the cross he took God's judgment for our sin.

[25 : 40] And in so doing he crushed the serpent's head. He broke the power of the devil who had the power to accuse us of sin and demand our death, our eternal death.

But Jesus has paid for our sin and so the devil has lost his power to demand our death. Death no longer has to have the last word for us.

I may have told you this story before. The family who bought some white goods from one of those superstores on 100 days interest-free sorts of schemes, Halving Norman, I think it was.

But for some reason or other they couldn't make the repayments. And so they received a notice by mail saying that they had to pay the outstanding balance by this date. Otherwise, some guys with a

truck would come and repossess the goods.

You see, the family's debt meant that these guys had the right, the power, to demand the goods back. But a family member ended up paying the balance for them and gave them the receipt of payment.

[26 : 42] Except Halving Norman didn't tell these guys with the truck and so the next day after this date they turned up, parked their truck on the front lawn, banged on the front door and demanded their goods. The father went inside to their house and got the receipt and then came back and held it up to the guys and said, my debt has been paid in full.

You have no power to demand my goods. Move your truck. It's similar for us. We have a debt of sin we cannot repay but Christ paid it for us and because he did then Satan no longer has any power to demand our judgment, to demand eternal death.

We're off the hook and death no longer has to be the last word for us. Instead, life can be the last word for us. As Paul says on the next slide, I think I've put it there, Romans 6.23, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I've had the privilege of conducting a number of Christian funerals and most recently Bill Lings and as I spoke with Bill the week before he passed, he didn't fear death.

Don't get me wrong, there was part of him that wanted to live and that's right because we are built to live. Death is unnatural. There was also part of him that didn't want to leave his wife or children or grandchildren and again, that's right because we are built for relationships.

[28 : 13] Death is unnatural but he did not fear that death would be the last word for him because he knew that life was about to start again for him and he knew his wife Betty would see him again.

You see, there was hope and comfort in the face of life in Adam's image. Chapter 5 makes it clear that every person in Adam's likeness that's all of humanity will die but those who trust in Christ will live again.

In fact, Jesus even lived again to prove it and we have historical evidence for his resurrection. But this certain hope over death is only for those who like Enoch had faith in God who trusted in Christ. So can I ask you this morning, have you put your faith in Christ for life? Have you trusted in him for life? And for us who have, then firstly, we are to continue to exercise that faith like Enoch did and walk with God in Christ.

That means we are to relate to God. Christianity, you see, is not about a religion where we do certain things over and over again to earn God's favour, twist his arm. It's about a relationship where, sorry, it's not about a religion where we repeat those things, it's about a relationship where we trust God and he just gives us his favour.

[29 : 37] And if it's about a relationship where we trust God and walk with him, then it means we are to relate with God. That's what a relationship is, isn't it? We are to talk to God by praying.

We are to listen to God by reading his word. I know these are the basics but they're not always easy to do, are they? And we are to trust him when life is good and when life is bad.

This is how we are to walk with God, relate to God. And on the flip side, we are to try not to grieve God. Remember, sin breaks God's heart. And so we are to not try and grieve him and when we do, ask that he might forgive us for it.

And finally, it means we ought to give thanks to God that death no longer has to be the final word, that we have hope of life. And so, as Paul says on the next slide, and I'll finish here, 1 Corinthians 15, the sting of death is sin but thanks be to God.

He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Why don't we pray and give thanks now. Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank you for this solemn reminder this morning of life in Adam's image which comes with death because of sin.

[30 : 56] Yet we also thank you for the reminder that you have sent your only son, born as a man, born as one of Eve's offspring, to die on a cross and rise again.

That death may no longer be the final word for us but that life can be the final word. And so Father, we pray that you would help us to trust in Christ, to walk with you, not to grieve you, but to always give thanks to you who gives us the victory over death through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.