

The Saviour has come - to crush the serpent's head

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- [0 : 00] As we begin our series in Advent today, Genesis 3 seems like a bit of a strange place to start, but I want to show you guys today why Christmas is the hope of this passage.
- So if you've got your Bibles, keep them open at Genesis 3. We'll be tracking through that today, but why don't I pray first? Father, we thank you for your word, the Bible.
- We thank you that you've revealed your thoughts and your wisdom to us there. Help us to understand, give us your spirit to help give us insight into it tonight.
- We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. It's been a few weeks now since the Burke Street incident. Three weeks ago, a man set fire to a youth with gas cylinders laden in this youth.
- He stabbed, he killed one man. Another two were wounded. The man was later shot by police and died in hospital. What went wrong that day?
- [1 : 12] How could a man drive right through the heart of Melbourne CBD? How could he set fire to a car? How could he stab three people in broad daylight?
- That's the question we've been debating now over these last few weeks. PM Scott Morrison, he blamed religion. Muslim extremism was the problem that day.
- This was an attack inspired by Islamic State. Muslim communities failed to reach out to their troubled youth. And in the name of religion, some of these youths then go on to propagate terrorism.
- Greg Barton, on the other hand, from the Alfred Deakin Institute, he said that the problem was education. How is Australia supporting at-risk youth?
- More than just simply blaming parenting, consigning these youth to neglect, we need better community intervention. We need to better integrate these youths into society.
- [2 : 18] Another researcher said the problem was security. We've spent billions and billions of dollars now on counter-terrorism measures. This man was on the ASIO watch list for years.
- His passport was cancelled. And yet, he's able to buy chemicals to make an explosive. He's able to drive right through Burke Street.
- He's able to stab three people in broad daylight. Who is right? All three may have a point. But there is a more central issue.
- The passage we just read, it identifies a more deeper, a more intrinsic issue than just security or education. This might be the most depressing sermon you hear all year.
- In Genesis 2, we see a generous God who provides everything humans need for life. We see that they're given plants and trees that are beautiful, that are good for food.
- [3 : 19] Streams of water come up from the earth to give everyone sustenance. There's relationship. God says it's not good for man to be alone. So he gives him a companion, Eve.
- And we witness the first marriage in history as Adam and Eve are joined together to become one flesh under God. This is a place of no shame.

Both Adam and Eve have nothing to hide. They are both fully known in their nakedness. They walk freely. They walk intimately with God. There is order to the world.

God chooses humanity to rule alongside, to rule over and care for this world he had created for them. But God also gave them the way to live.

He provided one rule for them for how they are to enjoy this garden. They are free to eat from any tree in the garden, God says. But there's one tree you can't. There is this tree called the tree of the knowledge for good and evil.

[4 : 21] Because when you eat from this one, you will certainly die. So every tree in the garden is theirs. Just one, God says, don't eat it. This was an expression of simple trust, simple obedience in the midst of abundance and plenty.

But this picture of order, of joy and of flourishing we see here is now quickly corrupted. So turn with me now to Genesis chapter 3 that we read today.

And you'll see firstly in verse 1 that the serpent is more crafty than any of the wild animals. We're not told the identity of the serpent. All we know is that he is a wild animal.

He is a created being. Satan in the New Testament is often described as a deceiver. So we have traditionally associated the craftiness of the serpent here with the work of Satan.

And so even if this serpent is not Satan himself, he is clearly an agent for evil. So look at the first thing the serpent does. We see the serpent disrupts God's perfect order by questioning his word.

[5 : 29] In verse 1, he said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? Notice that the serpent not only questions God's word here, but he distorts it too.

Remember God said the humans could eat from any tree in the garden. He never said you couldn't eat from any tree at all. The serpent, he's making God out not to look like a loving ruler who's given them everything.

He's making him look out to be a tyrant, to be restrictive and oppressive in his design. You have to remember this, guys, that all temptation that comes to you seeks to ruin you.

That Satan has not brought temptation to taste something good that God has withheld from you. All temptation seeks to strip you of your relationship with God.

So we need to flee from it. But what does the woman do? Although the woman doesn't entirely agree at the start, she doesn't rebuke the serpent. She doesn't run away.

[6 : 35] Even in her reply herself, she changes God's words ever so slightly. She says in verse 3, God did say you must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.

God never said, did he? He never said don't touch it. She's adding to God's word. She is distorting God's word too. But the serpent doesn't stop at questioning.

Now he completely rejects God's words. You will not certainly die, he says in verse 4, God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

God's word is now completely undermined. God is made out to be selfish now. He's made out to be withholding something good that these humans really need.

I remember growing up, I was always that child that was given things that were a few sizes too big so I could grow into them. And I remember when I was young, I remember telling my dad that he was stingy, that he was a cheapo.

[7 : 47] I really wanted this computer game called FIFA 98. I wanted it for full price, but no, we'd wait till the next year once it went on special.

See, I had completely lost sight of everything he gave me. He gave me life. He gave me a house to live under. He gave me all the food I could want. Schooling, education, love, everything was mine.

But all I could think about was that he was withholding joy from my life. And that's the trap that Adam and Eve fall into here, where God asks for simple trust, they doubt his character.

In verse 6, The woman saw that the fruit was good for food, pleasing to the eye, 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.

This one command, this one rule that God had given to them, they broke. Remember that any tree in the garden is theirs. But they deliberately picked this one.

[8 : 53] They look at the fruit. They see that it's pleasing to the eye. They lust after it. And they ultimately break God's order. They reject his rule. I want you to notice what's happened.

I want you to notice here that the order of God's creation has been flipped. Remember God created humans to rule alongside of him over creation. But notice now that through sin, this serpent, this wild animal, this created being, is now ruling over humanity.

Humans were supposed to do the ruling. But now they've allowed themselves to be ruled by creation. They've subverted God's perfect order. That's why Paul in Romans 1, he'll pick up on this idea that we have exchanged the worship of the creator God for the worship of the created being.

We are ruled now by creation. And now disorder reigns. So if sin now is the rejection of God's rule, what is at the heart of this sin?

The key is to understand what the tree represents. The tree is described in chapter 2 as the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And in chapter 3, verse 5, you'll see that Satan tempts humans here saying that you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

[10 : 12] Now, I don't think this means that humans will now know the difference between good and evil. It's not a discernment between right or wrong, but it's wanting to define right or wrong for themselves.

Adam and Eve want to be the ones who decide what is good and what is not. So they want God's role. And that's at the heart of sin. See, where God's purposes for humanity were to care for creation, now you see that Adam and Eve, all they can focus on is this tree.

They've completely turned in on themselves. They're no longer thinking, how can they care? How can they steward this world? But they're thinking, what is good for me? What do I want?

This self-centeredness now is symptomatic of a desire to take God's place. So now we come back to Bourke Street and we ask what failed. Sure, education, surveillance might have failed that day.

But at the heart of it, we failed. We have sought to define right or wrong apart from God. And we even justify it now in the name of religion. We Christians, we know the terrible things that can be done, even in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[11 : 23] James chapter 1 says that each person is tempted when they're dragged away by their own evil desire. The problem is us. And we have no one else to blame.

And although sometimes we think, you know, we may not never do anything as horrendous as on Bourke Street. We know that our human condition is exactly the same. Just like that guy thought he could define right or wrong by taking life, we do the same thing.

Now it's all about my dreams. It's all about my preferences, my wants. It's my life. It's my career. Who dares tell me what I should do for my work? Even our love is selfish.

It's on my terms. It's when it suits me. It's when it's convenient for me. But we know that a love that is self-centered, that is self-serving, is no love at all. See, sin has caused us now to ignore the voice of our Creator.

We define what is good or bad for ourselves. And we look to everyone else. We're willing to blame everything else. Find all these reasons under the sun. But at the heart of it is an innate desire to be God.

[12 : 36] Not only is sin selfish, but it has destructive consequences. And as soon as Adam and Eve, they eat the fruit in verse 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. Humans want to be God, but all it has brought on them is fear and shame.

Humans are incapable of assuming God's role. The reason we don't let five-year-olds drive is not because we're withholding from them, but it's because they're completely incapable of handling that type of responsibility.

So, of course, it won't end well. I want you to see the fear in verse 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 in the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you? He answered, Where man used to walk intimately with God every day, now their sin has alienated themselves from him.

[13 : 55] Rather than walking with God, rather than running to this God, they run away from him. It's tragic. When I was in high school, I wish I could say I was a little bit younger, but I had the audacity to stick a sticker on my maths teacher's bum while he was bending over to solve a problem on the whiteboard.

I must have a very soft touch because I got away with it, but there was this kid in my class, Taylor, and he doxxed on me. He snitched on me. And from that moment, in my shame, I ran out of the class.

Every time I would see this teacher in my school, I'd run away from him. During lunch and recess, I'd run in the opposite direction. Until the very last day of school, he cornered me, and he said, Devin, there is nowhere else to hide.

And so he gave me a detention, one of only two detentions I ever got, and he made me write down for two hours how sorry I was for sticking that sticker on Mr. Brown's bum.

But you see, sin has only brought shame. It has only pushed us away from God. Adam and Eve, they're now completely aware of their nakedness. Notice the repetition of I in verse 10.

[15 : 11] I heard you. I was afraid. I hid. The only new knowledge, the only new insight they have received is an acute awareness of their own nakedness and their own shame.

You know, when tragedies occur, when terrorism, when we see murder, we often ask, where was God? Has he abandoned our society?

But in this passage, who is doing the hiding? Who is doing the searching? God calls out, where are you? You know, we refuse to listen to God.

We suppress his voice. And then when things go wrong, we blame him. We accuse him of abandoning us. Do you see this sick cycle that sin has created?

And from this point on, Adam and Eve will be cast out of the garden. They'll be cast away from God's presence. Their desire to be God has severed their relationship. Sin has now so fundamentally, comprehensively corrupted who we are.

[16 : 20] Where man used to walk intimately with God, now even in the Bible, the most holy, the most godly men, when in his presence, can only say, woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips.

But not only is our relationship with God broken, but so are our relationships between each other. Adam and Eve here, their marriage disintegrates.

In verse 11, God questions Adam, have you eaten from the tree I commanded you not to eat from? The man said, the woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit, and I ate it.

God, all God asks is, Adam, did you eat the fruit? But instead of answering the question, he blames his wife. The woman, she's the problem, Adam says.

Only moments earlier in chapter 2, Adam is serenading his love in the garden. He says in chapter 2, this is the bone of my bone. This is the flesh of my flesh.

[17 : 21] Next minute, he's blaming his love before God. When marriage used to be a point of harmony, now it is becoming a point of conflict.

You know, from the outside, marriages look perfect, don't they? On the wedding day, the beautiful bride is walking down the aisle, the groom, a few tears down his eyes. The vows are honorable, the speeches are touching, but the marriage, it can be a disaster now.

Marriage can now end in divorce. It's tragic. Even the very best marriage will be hard, and it won't be anything like the wedding. Why? Because humans are turning in on themselves instead of obeying their creator God.

We all know the pain of relationship breakdown, whether it's marriages, whether it's relationships, whether it's family, and especially friendships. We all feel that. It's sad when the people we love the most, we hurt the people we love the most.

I'm sure some of you have felt that. Or even the people we adore, even the people we look up to and admire, they leave deep wounds in us. This is all pointing to a broken world where sin reigns.

[18 : 42] This might be the most depressing sermon you've heard in a while, but there is a hint of hope. Notice that through this whole saga, God has not lost control.

He's sitting in judgment over Satan, sin, and evil. And so he goes on to curse the serpent for his deception. In verse 14, What this curse actually means is debated, but what I don't think it means is that this is the story about how snakes lost their legs.

And kids, this is why nobody likes snakes. It's not an Aesop's fable, right? No, this is a curse on Satan himself.

This curse that the serpent will crawl on his belly, eat dust, is one of humiliation. There is no grace for Satan. There is only condemnation that will ultimately end in his destruction.

You know, often the Bible, we think of the Bible as depicting this struggle between God and Satan. Who will win? Will good conquer over evil? But the Bible never presents God as anything but sovereign over evil.

[20 : 03] And you see that here. But what is in doubt is the future of humanity, our future. I want to focus on verse 15.

God says, 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 enmity between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of Eve represents a life and death struggle that will take place between the forces of evil and humanity.

Evil will constantly be trying to overcome humans. And from this point on, humans are constantly losing the battle. That's why our world is what it is.

But through this struggle, there is hope. God promises that there will be an offspring of Eve who will crush the serpent's head even though the serpent will crush his heel.

[21 : 04] And so ever since Genesis, we're searching for this offspring. We're searching for a human being who will crush the serpent's head and restore life to our dying world.

So we trace the seed. We trace the seed through Eve, through Abraham, all the way through David. And ultimately, the seed reaches its culmination in Christmas. That's why it's such good news when Jesus comes as a human.

Galatians 4 says that when the set time had fully come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law.

Why would Paul stress that Jesus was born of a woman? Aren't most people born of a woman? No, Paul's not giving a lesson on the birds and the bees.

He's saying that this is the offspring. This is the one we have been waiting for all this time since the very beginning. At Christmas, we don't simply celebrate the birth of a baby.

[22 : 09] Babies are born all the time. No, we're celebrating because this birth is marking the end of our enmity between us and evil. In our passage from Revelation 12 we read earlier, we see the climax of Genesis 3.

The offspring of the serpent has now fully grown into this dragon. This dragon is identified as Satan. And this dragon's purpose is to devour the child as soon as he is born because he knows that this is the one who will crush him.

But as soon as the child is born, he's snatched up to God, he's snatched up to the throne, you know, just like Adam and Eve, Satan tempts Jesus too.

But Jesus doesn't break in the wilderness. Jesus remains loyal to God's word. It's Jesus' sinless life that shows us that he will be the one that will finally break the enmity.

So at Christmas, we celebrate this victory. We celebrate a victory that comes through us on a manger, in a manger, but is one for us on a cross.

[23 : 18] As Jesus is crucified, the serpent strikes his heel just like God said he would. It's a death blow to the body of Christ. It's remarkable, isn't it?

Because this death blow should have fallen on us. It was us that sinned. It's us that failed. We should bear this punishment. But Jesus comes as a human being to represent us, to interpose himself for us, so that by his wounds we are healed.

Not only does Jesus die for sin, for evil, in victory he rises again. He conquers over all the powers of sin, over Satan and evil.

So remember, guys, that Christmas is not just about eight pound, six ounce baby Jesus. Christmas is the event which heralds in the victory of humanity over evil.

That's the reason we celebrate. So when you look to the world, you should think to yourself, this is not what it was meant to be. Life is not what it should be like.

[24 : 27] And the solution is not just another New Year's resolution. It's not just hoping that somehow 2019 will be somehow better than the last 2,000 years. History has shown us, hasn't it, that this is a struggle that we cannot win.

Don't kid yourself. Evil is too powerful for you. Evil will overcome you unless Jesus fights for you. So I encourage you guys to make this Christmas the opportunity to turn to Christ, to trust in him.

For this is the only way evil can be defeated. Don't let this period slide without at least considering why he came. And if you're a Christian, you should take heart.

You might feel like you've lost. You might be at the end of yourself. You might be sick of struggling with sin, with pornography, with jealousy, with envy, with pride, with judgment.

I know some guys that have struggled with the same sins for years. Do they want to change you? Of course they want to change. It grieves their soul that for some reason they just can't snap out of it.

[25 : 37] It might not feel like it, but we've actually won. Jesus has come. He's died. He's risen. He's conquered sin. He's conquered evil. So this Christmas, just remember this victory.

Keep leaning on Jesus. Remember why he came. I used to love this movie, Die Hard. I don't know if any of you have seen it. For me, Bruce Willis is the ultimate hero.

No one can wear a tight singlet like he can. But after watching all these Die Hard movies, I came to this realization that as he's flying helicopters through buildings, as he's blowing up the city, who's cleaning up?

Who's cleaning all this up? Yeah, the city is safe, but there is a lot of mess still on the streets. That's life. The war has been won, but life is still a mess.

It's still full of mess. So don't worry. This is no longer a life or death struggle. There is a lot to mop up, but don't worry.

[26 : 42] We'll get there. One day, Christ will return. He will finish the job. He will finally wipe the last remnants of evil from this earth. Right now, it might not feel like victory.

One day, it will. And it's all because of Christmas. As I close, I want you to hear these words of comfort from Romans 16 as the Apostle Paul, he's encouraging a struggling church.

He says, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. We have already won. And the Apostle Paul assures us that we will.

Come, Lord Jesus. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that this Christmas we celebrate that you have sent your Son to crush the serpent's head, to give us victory over evil.

Help us to use this time to think again and to remember and to rejoice of the victory of our Lord Jesus, to lean on him even in our struggles, to trust in him for our life.

[27 : 52] In his great name. Amen.