

Genesis 3:1-24 AM

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Date: 11 August 2024

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[0 : 00] I want to open with some words from the Chronicles of Narnia. It is winter in Narnia, said Mr. Tumnus, and has been for ever so long.

Always winter, but never Christmas. Think of that. How awful, said Lucy. Many of you will remember these words if you've read The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.

They're words that capture and have captured the imaginations of countless children and adults alike. These words capture our imagination because they are simple and so relatable.

Especially if you grew up in the prairies, like I did. Where it sometimes feels like it is actually going to be always winter. Although we did have Christmas, so that was a good thing. But these words are simple and relatable, but they reveal a very deep and profound understanding of what it's like to live in a world that is bound by the curse of evil, sin, and death.

Now this is the second week in our summer sermon series where we're using the narrative arc of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe to help us see the gospel story in scripture in a new and deeper way.

[1 : 20] Last week we reflected on creation. In the first two chapters of Genesis, we see life, goodness, and beauty bursting out. God speaks into the darkness and chaos and glorious things come into being.

At the center of it all, at the center of creation, the first man and woman ruled and cultivated all of this life and beauty in the presence of God.

In this glorious dawn of creation, Adam and Eve worked without toil or frustration. They had dominion without pride or domination.

They lived in peace with God, one another, and the world. And they had no need, lack, or want. It was indeed, as God saw and said, very good.

And this begs the question for us, what happened? What happened? Because this isn't our experience of God's good world.

[2 : 27] No matter how much you love your job, your work probably feels like toil sometimes. We all will have desires and needs that go unmet.

And far too often, people and nations use dominion and authority to dominate and exploit, rather than to cultivate life, beauty, and goodness. So again, this begs the question, why is our experience of the world so different from what we see in Genesis 1 and 2?

And to answer that question, we just need to turn over one page, from page 1 to 2, and read Genesis 3, which we've just heard from Claire. Genesis 3 is a big chapter with lots of implications for how we understand God, ourselves, and the world.

And if there's one thing I guarantee you'll take from this sermon, it's unanswered questions. So I'm just going to warn you ahead of time, I won't be able to cover everything in our short time.

But in their short time together, I want to focus on two big questions that this passage addresses. That is, what is sin? Because sin is at the root of what's gone wrong in the world.

[3 : 40] So what is sin, and what are the consequences of sin? Okay, so first, what is sin? Well, in Genesis 3, we learn that we are living in a cursed world.

A world that has been cursed by sin. It is important for us to understand sin, because without a proper understanding of sin, we won't be able to make sense of the world that we live in.

The same thing is true for the goodness of creation, which we reflected on last week. Most people, regardless of religion or worldview or philosophy, live with a sense that things are not the way that they should be.

I think that's fair. Most people have this sense that things are not the way that they should be. But most religions and philosophies fail to grasp reality in a satisfactory way, because they don't account either for the goodness of creation, for things like beauty and love, or for the evil that threatens to corrupt and destroy those good things.

The biblical story is true and persuasive because it explains both of these things. It explains our tendency towards destructive pride and evil, while also and always holding to a vision of humanity and creation that is ultimately good and hopeful, because it's grounded in the goodness of God.

[5 : 11] Now, today we're going to focus on the negative side of that equation. But this is really important to remember. The events of Genesis 3 do not negate or undo what we heard last week about the goodness of creation and the job that God has given us as human beings, as his image bearers.

So, back to the question, what is sin? We see this in verses 1 to 7. And in these verses, we see that sin is more than disobedience.

It is a rejection of God and his goodness. In this story, we see that sin is relational before it's legal.

Another way to say that is our betrayal of God leads to law-breaking, not the other way around. Look at our passage.

In verse 1, we're introduced to a new character, the serpent. We aren't told where the serpent came from or why it was in the garden, but it becomes clear that it opposes God and his design for humanity.

[6 : 27] Look at the first words that the serpent says to the woman. Did God actually say, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

This is, of course, not what God actually said, which the woman acknowledges. But this lie, this subtle lie, introduces a new possibility.

It introduces the deadly idea that God's word might not be true or might not be trustworthy, or that we can set ourselves up as judges of the truthfulness and trustworthiness of God's word.

We can imagine the effect of the serpent's incredulous words upon the man and the woman. Did God actually say? To this point in the story, God's word has only been effective, true, and good.

In Genesis 1 and 2, what happens when God speaks? Very good things come into existence. And even God's one prohibition to the man and woman is exceedingly generous.

[7 : 37] You may surely eat of every tree in the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge and good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.

So to this point, God has only been good to the man and the woman, but the serpent begins planting seeds of doubt that this is the case. Now, after the woman responds truthfully, the serpent becomes more bold.

He now directly contradicts God. He says, you will not surely die. He also claims that God is keeping something from Adam and Eve, something good.

And he implies that God is keeping this good thing from them because he is afraid or threatened of them becoming like him. And this is an appeal to desire and pride.

We see this in Eve's response, her thoughts about the tree. She saw the tree was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise.

[8 : 49] Now, in Eden, Adam and Eve had good things beyond our imagining. I mean that literally. We can't even imagine the goodness and abundance that was available to them there.

But the serpent convinced them that God was still holding back something from them, that he was holding back the best thing from them. He claimed that God was keeping them in the dark and offered enlightenment.

He claimed that God was holding them down and offered freedom. But the serpent's freedom turned out to be the worst kind of bondage. If we look at verse 7, when the man and the woman ate from the tree, their eyes were opened.

This is what the serpent promised. He said, your eyes will be opened. But when their eyes were opened, they didn't enter into newfound freedom or empowerment or enlightenment.

They only felt shame and insecurity. They had cut themselves off from the grace and goodness of God. And apart from him, they felt exposed and naked.

[10 : 01] So yes, sin is disobedience. It's law-breaking. But at a deeper level, it's a rejection of God. It's a denial that God is good and that his word is trustworthy and true, that he actually intends what is good and right and best for us.

We sometimes teach this to the kids and youth with an acronym. We might have shared this in a kid's talk. S-I-N. So sin is S, shove off God.

I, I'm in charge. N, no to you and your rules. That's what sin is. It's saying, shove off God. God, I'm in charge.

No to you and your rules. Now this brings us to our second question. What are the consequences of this? What are the consequences of sin?

We see this in verses 8 to 24. And again, there, there are so many implications and questions that arise out of these verses. I want to focus on two things though.

[11 : 08] Here we see that sin has personal and global consequences. Personal and global consequences. We have already seen some of the personal effects of sin.

Immediately after their rejection of God, the man and the woman feel, feel shame. There is a loss of security and identity. And this insecurity leads them to separate themselves from God.

They literally hide from God as God is seeking them out. We see even more serious consequences in verses 16 to 24. Sin opens up this breach between God and humanity and the world.

The man and the woman become exiles. They are cast out of the garden and they become wanderers in the world, living in conflict with God and with one another.

So personally, sin leads to pain, toil, frustration, and eventually death. We all feel the effects of this in our life and in the world in various ways.

[12 : 22] Now these personal effects of sin are serious, but Genesis 3 shows us that sin has global consequences as well. And we see this especially in verses 17 to 19.

God tells Adam that the ground itself, the earth, will be cursed because of him. Adam and Eve were called to work in the Garden of Eden, but their work wasn't toil.

Their work was cultivating, stewarding the abundance and life and beauty that God created. But now God says, instead of working in that way, cultivating the free abundance of his goodness and grace, Adam will now work to survive.

He will toil and sweat to bring food and bread from a ground that produces thorns and thistles. Later in the Bible, in Romans 8, the Apostle Paul writes about how creation was subjected to frustration and futility in the hope that it will be set free from its bondage to corruption and be brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

See, we talked about this last week. God gave us, human beings, the privilege, but also responsibility, of ruling creation under his authority.

[13 : 52] We were to have dominion over the earth, to subdue it, to bring forth its life and beauty. We were supposed to continue God's generous and creative work of bringing order out of chaos and life out of darkness.

But instead, we turned in upon ourselves and sought to take God's place, to take control of things for ourselves. And this threw everything into chaos.

We could imagine it tore the fabric of creation. And so we live in a world that is cursed, as Paul says, that is in bondage to decay.

And this is why our imaginations are so gripped by the image of a land where it is always winter and never Christmas. Because we've experienced something of this reality.

In one way or another, each of us have experienced tangibly something of this reality. We long for freedom from toil, frustration, decay, sin, and death.

[15 : 04] And the good news is we can experience something of this now in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will experience this in an even greater way when he comes again.

In Narnia, the story of the lion, the witch, and the wardrobe, if you've read it and you remember, spring comes when Aslan returns. As Aslan returns, the snow and ice begin to melt, the children hear running water, flowers begin to bloom, birds begin to sing, spring comes again.

And as Christians, we know and proclaim the good news that our true king, the true king of the world, Jesus Christ, has come, that he has broken the power of sin and death, and that he will come again to end this wintry exile which we have endured for so long.

This is what Paul meant when he said that we're awaiting the freedom and glory that creation is groaning for, and which we look forward to as we trust in Christ.

So we live in an in-between time, between Christ's first coming and his coming again to make all things new. And in this time, we may still struggle with evil's winter, but we do get Christmas, and that's good news.

[16 : 30] We may struggle with winter, but we do get to celebrate Christmas, and we know that our God is on the move. Our king has come, and he will come again to rule the world with truth and grace, and to make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found.

That's what we'll be talking about more in the coming weeks. So I invite you, encourage you, to come and hear that good news more fully. Thanks be to God.

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