

# Life In The Garden

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[0:00] Can I just say I love to hear the sounds of children in this room. I'm so serious. This is a blessing to hear children in a church, and it's a sign of life, and there's no better place for them to be than right here.

And by design, we want families to come here and to worship together, and there's no better place for a child to learn what it means to be a part of the church and to learn what it means to worship than to be right beside mom or dad or grandpa or grandma and to see them worshipping.

So those little coos and awes don't bother me at all. I love it, and the Lord loves it as well. If you would, let's turn to Genesis. Open up our Bibles to the book of Genesis this morning.

We're continuing our series in Genesis. If this is your first time joining us with us in a while, we've been walking through the book of Genesis together, so you've missed a little bit, but not that much because we're in Genesis chapter 2 this morning. We finished our look at this week of creation, and now we get to see what life was like in the Garden of Eden.

And so our passage this morning is Genesis chapter 2, verses 4 through 17. If you don't have your own Bible with you, that's okay. We provide Bibles in the seat backs, either behind you or in front of you.

[1:16] But I would recommend you to have a copy of God's Word open in front of you as we walk through this passage together. Genesis 2, verses 4 through 17. And when you found it, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth into heavens. When no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the face of the ground.

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

[2:42] And the gold of that land is good. Bidellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria.

And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. Father, we thank you and we praise you for your word. And we ask now as we sit under it, God, would you teach us and draw us to Christ? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. For a brief season early on in our marriage before having kids, I developed a nightly routine where whatever else I was doing, whatever I had done during that day, seven o'clock came and I stopped whatever it was I had to do. I would find my way to the couch and I would turn on the television and I would watch Wheel of Fortune every single weeknight. In fact, I got so into Wheel of Fortune that I auditioned for Wheel of

Fortune and I made my way past several preliminary rounds before I was eventually eliminated. [ 4 : 08 ] But that's another story for another day. If you've ever watched Wheel of Fortune, you know that one of the most painful parts of the show is when it comes to the very last puzzle and the person is there, all the pressure of the world is on them to solve that last puzzle and the time is ticking and then it ends and they haven't done it and they fail to achieve the prize.

And Pat Sajak does this cruel thing where he makes them look at the prize they could have won had they succeeded. Sometimes it's a car, sometimes it's a trip, sometimes it's a whole bunch of money and everybody in the audience and everybody watching at home just lets out this exasperated groan as they look at what could have been.

That's a little bit like how it feels reading our passage this morning in Genesis chapter 2, this picture of a perfect paradise. It's a picture of a perfect world free from sin.

It's beautiful. Everything that mankind needs is here. God is here with man. It's absolutely perfect. And it almost hurts to read it because we know deep down that is how things are supposed to be. This is what we should be enjoying right now. But you and I and Adam in our place, we have lost out on the prize. What we see here in Genesis chapter 2 is a brief glimpse, this window into a perfect world.

[ 5 : 39 ] This is a brief glimpse of what the world looked like before sin comes in and wrecks the whole thing. And we see a brief glimpse of God's design for the universe. And the big picture for our passage this morning is this.

God created man to enjoy paradise with him in covenant relationship. That's the big idea this morning. I'll say it again.

God created man to enjoy paradise with him in covenant relationship. So let's look at our text and we'll see what was life like in the Garden of Eden.

First, we see life in the Garden came with great blessing. Life in the Garden came with great blessing.

Look there with me starting in verse 4. And you notice that it begins with this heading here. It says, These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

[ 6 : 39 ] This is sort of like a header of a new section of the book. You'll see this over and over and over again as we walk our way through Genesis. And it's an organizational tool.

That's a good reminder. It's a good indicator for us that we're entering into a new section of the book. Which explains in part why we're circling back now to some of the topics that we've already addressed.

And we finished last week, this whole week of creation. God worked six days in creating the world. And then he rested on the seventh day. But now it's like we're going backwards, aren't we?

And we get another look here at the world being formed. He says, When no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land, and was watering the whole face of the ground.

This is sort of a recap, isn't it? And you might wonder, well, why are we coming back to that same material again? And why does it sound just a little bit different than the first account?

[ 7 : 40 ] And again, this is just sort of how Hebrew literature works. It's not linear in a straight line like you and I tend to think. It's more circular. It comes back around, and it focuses in on something in more detail, or from a different perspective.

That's what we see here. And the point is, in this section, is to show us, again, the prize that we should have won. This is the good, perfect creation that we, by design, are meant to enjoy.

This is what we could have had. Now, look with me at all the blessings that Adam gets to enjoy here in the garden. For one, Adam gets to enjoy the blessing of God's design in the garden.

He gets to enjoy the blessing of God's formation of the universe by His Word. If you remember from chapter 1, we saw that, again, God is the main character of this story.

The Bible begins with God. He's the focus of the Bible. He's the focus of creation. The whole Bible is not about us. It's about God. The creation is not about us.

[ 8 : 47 ] It's about God. He's the main actor. And we see Him acting time and time and time again throughout this account. The plants haven't grown because God hasn't caused it to rain, verse 5. God forms the man from dust, verse 7.

He breathes life into him, verse 7. God plants a garden, verse 8. He puts man in the garden, verse 8. God makes the trees to spring up, verse 9. God speaks and He gives commands to the man, verse 16.

It is clear to me that the emphasis here is that this is God's world. God's at the center of it. He's the main character of the story, and Adam simply gets to enjoy it.

It's a blessing for man. He simply gets to receive and enjoy the world that God has made. But before he can do that, we see another blessing. Adam gets to enjoy the blessing of life.

Look there to verse 7 with me. I love this picture of God creating man. Look there with me at verse 7. It says, The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

[ 9 : 59 ] You know, we should realize that life itself is a blessing and a gift from God. Amen? Life itself is a blessing from God, an undeserved blessing from God.

We tend to think that life itself is a right, don't we? Our Declaration of Independence, what does it say? We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men have this fundamental right to life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it says.

And while that may be true on a horizontal man-to-man level between us and God, that is not true. God does not owe us life. God does not owe us liberty.

God does not owe us pursuit of any sort of joy or happiness. All of this is a good blessing and a gift from God. Every day that we have life is a gift.

We shouldn't presume upon our next breath. We shouldn't presume upon our waking up tomorrow morning. And every moment we have is a gift and a blessing from God. We get to see this clearly here.

[ 11 : 11 ] We also get to see where man comes from. This is sort of mankind's origin story here. It says we come from the dust of the ground.

God has taken mankind like a potter with clay and molded us as his creation. There's a song that we sometimes sing here. It's called, My Worth is Not in What I Own.

And it's got this line that I love. He says, Two wonders here that I confess. My worth and my unworthiness. And we see both represented here, don't we?

We're dust. Our unworthiness is on display here. We come from the dust. We're not evolved creatures. We can't find our origins in anything in the animal kingdom.

That's actually a step too high, isn't it? We come from the dust of the ground. We ought to be humbled by this. And yet, we also see that God has taken us from dust and he's molded us and he's embedded within each one of us this undeniable worth.

[ 12 : 22 ] That every single one of us, man, woman, boy, girl, child, adult, believer, non-believer, every single one of us is made in the image of God.

Adam gets to enjoy this blessing of life from God himself. And then we see that Adam gets to enjoy the blessing of a perfect land. The Garden of Eden is a perfect paradise for him to enjoy.

We see verses 8 through 14 show us this glorious garden paradise. Look there with me to verse 8. It says, God planted a garden. Just imagine that with me.

God planted a garden. In my family, when we lived in Myrtle Beach area, we used to go to Brook Green Gardens. I can hardly pronounce it. You know what I'm talking about.

Brook Green Gardens is beautiful. We love to walk around there and see the plants and the beauty of this garden. Man can create some beautiful gardens, but just imagine God planted a garden.

[ 13 : 27 ] Man, we see that he caused to spring up every tree that's pleasant to the sight. It's beautiful to look at. It's pretty. It's full of color and life and vibrant.

And it says it's good for food. It's not just good to look at. It's good to eat. Adam could take food whenever he pleased. Everything Adam needed was right there at arm's reach.

You see, the land was well watered. You have these four rivers flowing through. It's full of gold and precious gems. It's just absolutely beautiful. You imagine this. Anything Adam could have possibly wanted or needed, God had already thought of it.

And he placed it right there for him to enjoy in the garden. Now, stop for just a minute and think about how Israel would have responded to this when they read this account.

Do you remember where they are? Do you remember where they are when they're receiving the book of Genesis? Moses is compiling this for them and they're reading this as they're in the wilderness, in the desert, journeying through the desert.

[ 14 : 35 ] On the way to the promised land. How would they feel as they read this account of this lush and beautiful and abundant garden with all the food they need? It's green. It's lovely.

It's pretty. And they're here in the desert. Surely they would just groan and feel this sense of sorrow. How in the world could we have lost all of this? What happened?

This is what we could have had? This is what we were made for? And look how far we've fallen from this state of blessing. Now to this.

There is this infinite gulf between what Adam enjoyed in the Garden of Eden and what Israel endured in the desert. And here as we zoom forward to us a few thousand years later, that gulf is still there, isn't it?

I don't know about you. I don't live in a perfect garden paradise. My life is not perfect. The place where I live is not perfect.

[ 15 : 38 ] There's things that aren't quite right. I don't have everything that I think I need. There's an infinite gulf between what Adam enjoyed in the Garden and what we experience, isn't there, in our day-to-day life.

We should read this text and feel a sense of loss. This is what could have been. This is what should be. C.S. Lewis has this quote.

I'm going to butcher it. He says something like, if we find ourselves to have a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.

It's the world that we see in Genesis chapter 2. We were made to enjoy paradise in covenant relationship with God, our Creator, but because of our sin, we have forfeited our right to the prize. You know, it's tempting sometimes, isn't it? When we look at our lives and we look around at the world that we live in and we see all the broken things inside of us and without, it's tempting for us to blame God for all of that, isn't it?

[ 16 : 52 ] I mean, Israel did that. Lord, why have you brought us out into the wilderness to die out here? It's tempting for us to look out and to blame God, but we look at Genesis 2 and an honest reading would show us that God has designed blessing for us.

God's design is that we were made to enjoy paradise with Him in covenant relationship. But second, second, what we see here in verses 15 through 17 is that all of this was conditional.

There are conditions that must be met for Adam to continue in this garden paradise. So second, second, we see life in the garden came with great responsibility.

Life in the garden came with great responsibility. Verse 15, look there with me. He says, Then the Lord God took man and put him in the garden to cultivate it and keep it.

The Lord God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

[ 18 : 08 ] God here is very clearly laying out the conditions here for Adam. This is the word of the Lord. Adam's enjoyment of this garden paradise was conditional.

If he obeys the word of the Lord perfectly, then he gets to enjoy the blessings of this garden paradise forever. But if he disobeys the word of the Lord, even in one part, the day you eat of it again, you shall surely die.

This is the word of God. And we should realize also, this is a blessing here as well, isn't it? Here before the fall, here before sin enters the world, the presence of God is here with Adam and the word of God is there.

They're guiding Adam. God delivers the word of the Lord to Adam here even before sin enters the world. It's a blessing. Man from the beginning is given the word of the Lord.

He is bound to the word of God. He's governed by the word of God. He's subject to it. Here in the beginning, God declares by his word for Adam what's good and what's right.

[ 19 : 21 ] And Adam is created with the capacity to listen and to obey the word of the Lord. and the expectation that he should, he must do so.

All of this is very good. It's God's design. Sometimes the law of the Lord especially, it gets a bad rap, doesn't it? And we kind of talk about the law like it's a burden and our sin, especially on this side of the fall, it makes us say, well, that's restrictive.

That's too much. Why can't God just let us do what we want? But the law of the Lord, when we understand it rightly, it's not a burden, it's a blessing and a gift.

And we go home this afternoon and read Psalm 119 and you tell me the impression you get of how Israel and David felt about the law of the Lord. Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord, he says.

I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous rules. How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

[ 20 : 31 ] With my whole heart, I seek you. Let me not wonder from your commandments. I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord.

Teach me your statutes. With my lips, I declare all the rules of your mouth. In the way of your testimonies, I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your word. The law of the Lord is a wonderful gift for God's people. I wonder if you love the word like this or if it feels like a burden to you.

The law of the Lord here is a blessing. It's a gift for Adam and Adam is meant to live by it. And again, if he does perfectly, if he perfectly obeys the law of the Lord, he gets to enjoy all of these wonderful blessings.

And we see here there's a positive command and a negative command, isn't there? There is something to do and something not to do. What must he do? Verse 15. Literally, verse 15, it says, God put man in the garden to serve and obey.

[ 21 : 42 ] And we saw a couple of weeks ago, didn't we? This blessing of work. Man was made in God's image and he's given this task of filling the earth and subduing it, ruling over it as God's image bearers.

He was meant to work as an extension of God's work in the world. That's what he must do. But there's also this command what he must not do, isn't there? Look there again to verse 16.

You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat. For in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.

Now, we've got to think about this for a second. Because there is something here in the garden of Eden, in perfect paradise, that man is told he must not do.

Have you ever thought about this? We need to grasp this. Because for many of us, our idea of paradise, if we could draw up our perfect paradise, our version of Eden, it would be that nobody can tell us what to do or not to do.

[ 22 : 54 ] Our vision of perfection, our vision of paradise is that we are absolutely free and autonomous. We are a law unto ourselves.

Our vision of a perfect paradise is that nobody can tell us what to do and nobody can deny me of what I want. but here in a perfect world, here in paradise before the fall, God tells man, don't do that.

God, by his word, he put boundaries and limits in place that are good for us, for our flourishing and for our life that we might thrive with him in relationship.

He tells the oceans to go here and no further. He tells the sun to stay there and to shine. He tells the stars to go here and he tells man, don't eat of that tree because the second he does so, here's the warning.

All of this blessing for him is lost but not just for him. Here's what we need to understand.

[ 24 : 09 ] This is why this account matters for you, for us this morning. Not just for him. All of this will be lost for him and all of this will be lost for us.

Our hope of enjoying this garden paradise with God, it hangs in the balance on whether or not Adam can do what he's told to do.

And the reason why is because third, third, life in the garden is defined by something called covenant. It's defined by covenant.

covenant. You remember the big picture here? God created man to enjoy paradise with him in covenant relationship. Covenant relationship.

We tend to complicate this. It seems like an overwhelming, scary topic to talk about but really it's not that complicated because everything that we just described this whole time we've been sitting here is what it means to be in covenant.

[ 25 : 15 ] In the Bible covenants define relationships. And we just got done with Valentine's Day. Right? All over the world men and women are thinking they need to sit down and have the DTR talk.

You know what that is? They need to define the relationship. We need to come to terms on how I relate to you and you relate to me. I need to understand the relationship here.

Are we boyfriend, girlfriend? What is this relationship that we're in? In the Bible God defines the relationship by way of covenant.

Ligon Duncan defines it like this. He says a covenant is a special relationship established and bestowed by God that has blessings and obligations.

And it is of life and death significance. You may feel like your boyfriend, girlfriend's situation is of life and death significance. It's not quite there. In the Bible though, a covenant is a special relationship established and bestowed by God that has blessings and obligations and is of life and death significance.

[ 26 : 28 ] And isn't that what we see here in the garden? Isn't that what we've just seen? Here in the garden of Eden we see that God has defined the relationship between him and Adam in what we call the covenant of works.

God initiates this relationship. God establishes the terms. God makes these big promises. Eternal life. Life forever in the garden. And God says here is what you must do in order to enjoy all of this. If you succeed you get to enjoy all the benefits of eternal life and paradise. But if you fail then guess what? You die. But again not just you, not just Adam, it's you and everyone whom you represent. You and everyone who descends from you. This covenant here in the garden with all of its promised blessings and all of its promised consequences it includes us.

It defines our relationship with God. You want to know why we're not in the garden of Eden this morning? It's because Adam has failed in our place. You want to know why we don't enjoy perfect paradise and in right relationship with the Lord?

[ 27 : 40 ] It's because we are included by natural right in Adam. Adam has failed as our representative and so now his sin is our sin. His failure is our failure.

His punishment is our punishment. We don't enter the world on neutral terms with God. We enter the world in covenant with God that's been broken already in Adam.

This is bad news. Is it not? This is bad news. God if it sounds unfair to you that we might enter on negative terms with God that we might have no chance in our own right of earning our way to right relationship with the Lord.

Just wait till I tell you about the good news. The good news of the gospel is that God has made a way to bring us back into covenant relationship with him by sending his own son Jesus as the head of a new and better covenant.

So Jesus Christ has come to redeem what Adam has lost. This is why we call Jesus the true and better Adam. Did you hear what we just sang moments ago?

[ 29 : 05 ] He the true and better Adam come to save the hell bound man Jesus is the true and better Adam because unlike us Jesus doesn't inherit Adam's natural guilt.

He's born of a virgin. He's born without our sin nature. And what we see is that unlike Adam and unlike all of us Christ Jesus has perfectly obeyed the law of God.

Positive and negative. He has positively obeyed everything God commanded! And he has avoided! Every temptation and every sin. He's tempted and tried in every way as we are yet without sin.

And Jesus Christ the true and better Adam he lived the perfect life that you and I should have lived! And he died the sinner's death that you and I deserve to die. You want to talk about unfair?

This is unfair! Jesus says how about I take on all of the punishment that you have earned and I'll just give you all of the eternal life and righteousness that I've earned!

[ 30 : 13 ] How about that deal? I will become a curse for you so that in me you might become the righteousness of God who can be blessed in me he says he made him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God all you have to do is simply repent of your sin and trust in Christ come to him in faith you know this is why try harder just this doesn't cut it does it any sort of works righteousness I'm just trying to be a better Christian I'm trying to better myself I just want to be a good Christian person none of that none of that works it doesn't cut it you can't better yourself into paradise it's impossible no amount of effort you put in will get you one inch closer to God why because covenant defines the relationship you are either in

Adam or you are in Christ and all of your best efforts in Adam are worthless you must simply come to Christ in faith and say I can't do this my greatest efforts are not enough I'm guilty I'm a sinner and I need you to save me you are either in Adam or you are in Christ Paul says in Romans chapter 5

therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men for as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous he says in Romans 6 23 the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord church do you want to be paid a wage or do you want the free gift this if

God pays you the wage that you deserve for your righteousness your works we're toast and we need the free gift of eternal life in covenant relationship with God in paradise and that free gift is found only by faith in Jesus Christ the call for us this morning church if you're not a believer the call for you is come to faith in Christ repent of your sin turn from your wicked ways and put your faith in the Lord stop trying to better yourself you can't you need a new representative not Adam but Christ Christ stands here with open arms and says come to me come to me come receive my righteousness and come receive eternal life by faith alone in Christ alone if you're not a believer come to Christ and it's true that as sinners we look at

Genesis chapter 2 and we grieve what we've lost but as Christians church we can look at this passage and rejoice at what Christ has done to give us in him a certain hope of a new and better paradise to come where we his covenant people can enjoy God forever in paradise I want to close this morning by reading from Revelation we're going from the very first two chapters of the Bible to the very last two chapters of the Bible this morning and I just want you to notice again how familiar this should sound this is what awaits all of us in Christ John says then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride! I was adorned for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away and he who is seated on the throne said behold I am making all things new chapter 22 then the angel showed me the river of the water of life bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city also on either side of the river the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations no longer will there be anything accursed but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him they will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads and night will be no more they will need no light of lamp or sun for the Lord [ 35 : 52 ] God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever father we thank you for sending Christ in our place the true and better Adam who lived in our place and perfectly fulfilled the law of God where none of us can Lord none of us can knock down the doors of paradise but Christ has entered in on our behalf so he says like he said to the thief on the cross today if you believe in me today you will be with me in paradise we thank you for Jesus Lord we confess our sin to you and we thank you that Jesus welcomes sinners into the presence of God by his blood the new covenant we love you Lord we pray this in Jesus name amen through