Genesis 2 & 3 June 24, 2018

*He Was in the Beginning, Part 3 (The Fall)*

Rev. Meagan Boozer

Throughout the summer we are discovering Jesus in the book of *Genesis*. I think far too many people think Jesus just showed up in the cattle stall! But we are learning, or being reminded in very specific ways, that just as God the Father has always been, Jesus has always been, and the Holy Spirit has always been. Last week we discovered that all things were created in Jesus, through Jesus, and for Jesus. We discovered that Jesus himself holds all things together. We discovered that Jesus was the light that illuminated the darkness even before the creation of the sun or the moon, and we discovered that the grace given to us was given to us in Christ before the ages began. *Wow!* Isn’t God’s love and mercy for us heart-invigorating, mind-blowing, and life-changing?! It is for me. I hope and pray it is for you, too! Let us pray: *Thank you, O my Father, for giving us Your Son – and leaving your Spirit ‘til the work on earth is done! Teach us now what you want us to know. Open our eyes, our ears, our minds, and our hearts to receive and respond to your grace through Jesus Christ the Lord, Amen.*

Today we are glancing at chapter 2 in *Genesis* and then spending most of our time in chapter 3. Chapter 3 is known as the ‘bad news’ chapter, the chapter that shows us why we need the rest of the Bible. But chapter 3 is also a ‘good news’ chapter because in it we begin to see the extravagant grace of God for us – a grace that carries us all the way to the birth of Christ and on through to what is proclaimed in the book of *Revelation*!

Let’s begin with what happened in Genesis 2. After everything had been created, God saw that it was very good. Everything was very good. The man, Adam, and his wife Eve had been living in the Garden in perfect communion with God and with one another. One prohibition, only one, had been given to them: They could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; the fruit of that tree was off limits. Genesis 2:15-17, *“****15****The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.****16****And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;****17****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 die.”*

You can freely eat of every tree but one. Do not eat of the fruit from the one tree – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why? Because to eat of it was to assume the right to decide for oneself what is good and what is evil rather than to depend on God to define good and evil. God alone can see all things and know all things. God alone perfectly knows the good that leads to life and the evil that leads to death. If they ate from that tree, they would die, God told them. “No problem,” said Adam. “What God says goes.”

And then one day, the fallen angel, Satan, called a serpent in *Genesis* 3 (some believe he was mesmerizingly, deceivingly beautiful – not like a simple snake we think of) came to Eve and very effectively did three things: He questioned God’s word, he added to God’s word, and ultimately he denied God’s word. Listen to the exchange between the serpent and Eve in Genesis 3: *“He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’*?”[There’s the questioning and the adding to…God only said they couldn’t eat from the one tree in the garden]***2****The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden;****3****but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’”****4****But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die;* [there’s the denial of God’s word]***5****for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+3&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-61a)*] knowing good and evil.”*

The serpent suggested to Eve that she did not need God to know what was right and what was wrong, what was good and what was evil. She could become her own moral compass. Eve began to doubt God’s sincere love for her. She began to doubt whether he really wanted what was best for her. Eve began to doubt God’s inherent goodness. So, guess what? The serpent was successful in his mission. Eve listened to the serpent, Adam listened to Eve, and no one listened to God. Something new was created that day that was not from God’s hand but from man’s disobedience: separation was created between God and humanity, his treasured creation, formed from the dust of the earth, into which he blew his very breath. Separation because of our disobedience against God.

***6****So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.****7****Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.*

The serpent said that their eyes would be opened and they would be like God. He was half right. Their eyes were opened, but they were not like God. With new vision they saw their own nakedness, their own vulnerabilities, they acutely saw the flaws in the other, and they were ashamed, afraid, and looking for excuses. ***8****They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.****9****But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”****10****He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”****11****He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”****12****The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.”****13****Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”* No one owned their rebellion. No one put their hand up and said, “I blew it. I’m sorry. Will you forgive me?”

What did God do? He had every right to bring about the judgment of death upon them right then and right there. But instead he did five things: He cursed the serpent, he cursed the ground, he showed mercy to Adam & Eve, he revealed the way He was going to bridge the separation they had created, and he kicked them out of the Garden. He said to the serpent, *“Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.* ***15****I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

An offspring of the woman will engage the serpent in combat – and win. “Beginning with Eve’s first offspring – her son Cain – her descendants began to wonder if each new baby might be the offspring who would destroy the devil who had led them into so much suffering. But each of those children eventually died. The rest of the Old Testament, friends, is the story of the yearning. Yearning, longing, watching, and hoping for the promised offspring. It is the story of God preparing a people from which the offspring would come. And the New Testament is the story of the coming of the promised offspring (Jesus Christ the Lord, the Messiah, the Beloved Son of God, the third person of the Godhead, the suffering servant, the friend of sinners, and the perfect sacrificial Lamb of God), and his battle with, and ultimate defeat of that ancient serpent. There’s Jesus revealed in *Genesis* 3! The promised offspring! The promised conqueror who would crush the head of the serpent! Let’s look at how the apostle Paul wrote about this in Romans 5:12-21.

*“****12****When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.****13****Yes, people sinned even before the law was given. But it was not counted as sin because there was not yet any law to break.****14****Still, everyone died—from the time of Adam to the time of Moses—even those who did not disobey an explicit commandment of God, as Adam did. Now Adam is a symbol, a representation of Christ, who was yet to come.****15****But there is a great difference between Adam’s sin and God’s gracious gift. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.****16****And the result of God’s gracious gift is very different from the result of that one man’s sin. For Adam’s sin led to condemnation, but God’s free gift leads to our being made right with God, even though we are guilty of many sins.****17****For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.* ***18****Yes, Adam’s one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ’s one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.****19****Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.* ***20****God’s law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God’s wonderful grace became more abundant.****21****So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God’s wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

In Adam we can see a pattern of Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 15:45, *“****45****The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.”[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15%3A45&version=NIV;NLT;MSG#fen-NLT-28724a)*] But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit.”* Like the first Adam, Jesus was tested by God and tempted by Satan – not in a garden paradise but in the wilderness. Just as Satan entered the garden to tempt Adam and Eve, so he entered into the wilderness to tempt Jesus to fall into sin and disobedience which would then disqualify him as the spotless sacrifice for the sins of humankind.

But think with me about another garden – the Garden of Gethsamene. Satan once again tempted Jesus, resulting in the most significant spiritual struggle of all time. Hebrews 5:7-9 describes the struggle and the victory won for us, *“**In the days of his flesh, Jesus[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+5%3A7-9&version=NRSV;NLT;MSG#fen-NRSV-30021a)*] offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.****8****Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered;****9****and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”*

Think about it. If Adam & Eve had obeyed God about the tree, they would live. If Jesus obeyed God about the tree (meaning the cross), he would die – so that we could live again!

Who are you most connected to? The first Adam, choosing for yourself what is good and what is evil, rejecting God’s clear and life-saving instructions, or the second Adam, receiving a second birth leading to eternal life by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone?

Today, seven people will unite with this congregation by publicly professing their faith in Jesus Christ in front of all of us – three at 8:30 and four at 11. In a couple of weeks, one more will make his public profession. As Bible-believing Presbyterians, we believe that God initiated this partnership. We believe that Brad & Becky, Gary & Patti, Barb, Holly, Ellen, & Ken didn’t simply decide to “join” us, but they responded to God’s call to unite with us here in ministry and mission. God did this. Just as God came to Adam & Eve in the garden, seeking them, calling out to them, covering their sinfulness through the sacrifice of another, God seeks us, calls to us, and covers us with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. When our new partners in ministry declare, “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior,” today – they are declaring just that! God did this! God saved me! God called out to me! God led me to this new place of ministry for his name’s sake. God is still the initiator!

Also today at the 11 a.m. service, we celebrate the baptism of infant Natalie Elizabeth Robinson. I love the whole name – but I especially love the Elizabeth part! You remember, don’t you, that it was Mary’s relative, Elizabeth, whose baby (John, the forerunner for Jesus) jumped in the womb when the pregnant Mary came to visit her! Elizabeth and her unborn son knew right away that they were in the presence of their Lord, their Savior, their God, and their King! Can that be anyone but God’s work? No! It was God’s initiative. It was God’s call. It was God’s work of grace from beginning to end – and that’s the message of baptism – especially illuminated through infant baptism!

Natalie cannot proclaim for herself anything other than she’s hungry, she’s happy, she needs a diaper change, she’s excited…. She cannot say “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.” But baptism, folks, is not in and of itself an act of or means of salvation. Scripture never says this. If you’ve been baptized and yet don’t profess faith in Jesus Christ, eternal life in Heaven is not yours until you do profess faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9-13, *“****9****If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.****10****For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.****11****As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”****12****For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,****13****for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

“Baptism is not an act of salvation. Baptism is God’s means of bringing us into the fellowship of the Body of Believers. Baptism is like God’s arms opening a little wider to bring a person into the family to be nurtured in the faith with the goal of a having a saving faith in Jesus Christ, whether that person is 12, 40, 80, or not yet 1. Baptism is God’s work. It’s God’s work, and whatever God does, is perfect and complete. God comes to us, he calls to us, he calls to parents on behalf of their children (in Acts 16:33 the jailer was instructed to be baptized along with his whole household!), and he places his mark on us in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God calls that good, and so do we, in faith and in obedience even though we do not fully understand.

Oh, how I hope you can see the good news of Jesus in what we often call the “bad news chapter” of the Bible – Genesis 3. How I hope we are all beginning to feel like we are on a treasure hunt as we move through this beautiful book. And we are. We are searching for the greatest treasure the world has ever been given – the Treasure of Jesus. When we seek Him, we will find Him, when we search with all our heart. May we take what we are discovering, may we take it down deep, ruminate on it, pray it back to God, sing songs about it, let it fill us up to the brim so that it overflows into the lives of others to the glory of His holy name! Thanks be to God.

Let us pray: *Thank you, gracious God, that we don’t have to spend our lives hiding who we really are and what we’ve done. Thank you that whatever it is, Jesus, you died for it. Hear us now, as we confess the ways we have separated ourselves from you. (silence). Thank you that Jesus’ sacrifice was sufficient for it all. Thank you that he didn’t come to condemn us. He came to save us. He came as the bridge to bring us back to your goodness. Thank you for your grace. We need you, we trust you, and we love you – our greatest Treasure. Amen.*

*The Treasure of Jesus*

*by Steven Curtis Chapman*

What can I do   
How can I live   
To show my world   
The treasure of Jesus   
  
What will it take   
What could I give   
So they can know   
The treasure He is   
  
And if I can sing   
Let my songs be full of His glory   
If I can speak   
Let my words be full of His grace   
  
And if I should live or die   
Let me be found pursuing this prize   
The One that alone satisfies   
The treasure of Jesus