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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 5, 2017
1st Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Romans 5:12, 17-19 Passion: Upper Room
Hymns: 149; 369; 154; 779:1 (798:1,3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-3,14-15

And the Lord God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a
living being.

⁸The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He
put the man whom He had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the
Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and
good for food. The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden,
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of
Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the
man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but
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."

^{3:1} Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field
which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has
God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the
trees of the garden; ³but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst
of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you
touch it, lest you die.'"

⁴Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.

⁵For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be
opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

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

¹⁴So the Lord God said to the serpent:

“Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: How did the world become such a mess?

People in the world have all sorts of different answers. Some would say it is evidence of man's inhumanity to man. Others would propose that it is all part of the evolutionary process, not that that excuses evil, but it still reveals that life comes down to the survival of the fittest. Others would propose that the mess this world is in is evidence that there is no God, because if there were a God that was loving and kind He wouldn't allow such evil to go on. By the way, all the people agree to one degree or another. They do agree on this, that in spite of the mess and the violence and the suffering, and the cruelty that is evident not only in some people's lives but in every life, man is basically good. If there is a God He must see and acknowledge that. If there is a God, He's the one that must have messed up the world.

The Spirit would lead us in another direction, to the recognition of the truth about man and his depravity, and the recognition of the truth about God and His love and grace. On this first Sunday in Lent we turn to the book of beginnings and we will learn how it happened that we have --

THEME: A Paradise Lost, but also a Paradise Regained.

What God presented to Adam and Eve was –

I. Paradise.

Our text reviews for us how the Lord process of creating man was different from the rest of creation. This in itself is significant. For all other creatures and things in God's creation, the Lord spoke the word, and it was there. It was there by the power of His Word. It was there and it was good. All that the Lord had made was very good! The Lord could have created man in the same way, but He chose not to. The Lord chose to form man of the dust of the earth and to breathe into man the breath of life. The Lord did this not for the Lord's benefit, but for our benefit. The Lord tells us of how the Godhead counseled together regarding the creation of man, and how man would be made in the image of God. We also know that this "image of God" is not a reference to a physical image since the God of creation is a spirit being without a physical appearance. This image of God in which Adam and Eve were created was all about the spiritual nature of God, the goodness of God, the immortality of God. Man was made in the image of God. Man was not only a physical being, but also a spirit being. Man became a living soul.

As we proceed in our text we are again struck with the special care the Lord took with man. With the animals of the world they were set to roam on the face of the earth, and the plants which the Lord had called into existence were to be food for them to eat. With man God made a special place for them to live, a garden. This garden had many trees within its borders, trees that were pleasant to look at and that were also intended to provide food for Adam and Eve to eat. It was all there; it was the perfect place. **It was Paradise!**

We are told that there were two other trees present in the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These trees bore fruit, but they were not intended to provide food for Adam and Eve. If not for food then why were they present at all?

Now this question may be asked with the intent to challenge the wisdom and the goodness of God. It may be asked with the implication that if God had not stuck that tree of the knowledge of good and evil there in the middle of the garden then Adam and Eve would not have sinned. That kind of a challenge is the vain and sinful attempt to turn the whole fall into sin back on God and not on Adam and Eve.

At the same time it is good for us to consider why these trees belonged in this Paradise. A very special element to life in the Garden of Eden was the dynamic relationship that Adam and Eve had with the Lord. The Lord made His presence known to Adam and Eve. The Lord spoke with Adam and Eve, revealing His kindness and providential care and so also His great love for them as His children. The Lord communicated His will to Adam and Eve regarding the tree of the knowledge of God and evil which was in the middle of the garden. The Lord thereby gave them a way to respond to Him in this dynamic relationship, showing Him their love for God with their obedience to this one simple command.

It really topped the cake of what Paradise was meant to be, what Paradise had to be to be a paradise, a living, active, two sided dynamic relationship with God. Without this Adam and Eve would have been very little different from the rest of the beasts of the field, and Eden would have been little different for the rest of God's beautiful creation.

And then, so quickly, so tragically we see --

II. Paradise Lost -- Sin entered into the world

Genesis 3:1-5 “Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?””

²And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

⁴Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.

⁵For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

We know it was the devil inside the serpent. The devil used the serpent’s body for his evil purpose and intent. We know the devil, who is the father of lies, is truly the one who is cunning. We know that the devil addressed Eve to loose his vile scheme on the earth. He began with a question that was intended to sow seeds of doubt, while directing the conversation to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; “**Has God indeed said?**” When Eve confirmed the command of the Lord, the devil countered with the big lie: “**You shall not surely die!**” He made it appear that the Lord who had so graciously and wondrously made Adam and Eve in His image and established this wondrous relationship with them, was in fact trying to deprive them of that which they could be, something that was desirous to make *them* like God! And Eve fell for the devil’s deceit.

Genesis 3:6-7 “So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.”

All the devil’s ploys sounded reasonable. It was good to make one wise, to be like God, knowing both good and evil! Well, just how did that turn out? She took, she ate; she gave to her husband with her; and yes, Adam was with her during this entire exchange. Adam did not eat of the forbidden fruit in ignorance of what he was doing. He was culpable. He was responsible. Adam should have intervened, but he didn’t. He ate, and their eyes were opened. They knew evil. Instantly they knew evil. Could they even remember good? They knew shame. They felt the need to cover themselves. Innocence was gone. **Paradise was lost.** Death had entered the world.

But had God been completely honest with them? He had told them that in the day they ate of the tree they would die? And so they did. That is what is in evidence. They knew they were naked? They knew shame. They sought ineffectively to cover themselves. Death had entered Paradise. Death had entered God's creation. When the Lord came into the garden in the cool of the day they were afraid. The wonderful dynamic relationship God had established with them was destroyed. They were at enmity with God. They didn't even understand God. They tried to hide from God as if anyone could hide from God. In His grace the Lord granted them a temporary extension of physical life, but they had already died spiritually and they, Adam and Eve, and all the rest of humanity to come after them were subject to the bondage of death.

Paradise was ruined, subject to corruption. The entire world would **devolve** from that time forward. The mess that we see in the world today with evil and pestilence and death and sorrow, it all came into the world by the corrupting power of sin. And so death passed upon the world for all have sinned. **Paradise was lost. ALL** was lost, because Adam and Eve sinned, and death passed upon all men. What a mess!

But then God stepped in. God did not forsake mankind. Oh, He confronted the sin that Adam and Eve had done. He made it clear what kind of ruination their sin had brought into the world, the pain, the subjugation, the tears, and the sweat, the thorns, and weeds. But the Lord also brought hope of life, hope of --

III. Paradise Regained – The Promise of a Savior

Genesis 3:14-15 So the Lord God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You *are* cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”

Up to this point the devil had gained his objectives. Not only had he managed to deceive Adam and Eve and disrupt their harmonious relationship with God, he had stolen their hearts. They

were not like God; they were like the devil himself. So once God had addressed Adam and Eve and announced the repercussions of their tragic folly, the Lord turned His attention to the devil. While all creation fell under the curse sin brought into the world, the serpent was cursed “more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field” (3:14) for lending his body to the devil and being a part of this terrible corruption of God’s creation, but the devil was to receive even more shocking news.

There would be enmity between the devil and the woman, between those who proceeded from the devil and the Seed of the woman. A great conflict lay before them. A Descendent of Eve would come into the world and destroy the works of the devil. Yes, there would be a crushing of the heel of the woman’s Seed, but that serpent the devil would endure a far more severe blow as his head would be crushed. The devil would be defeated. These words, first directed to the devil who possessed the serpent, these words brought hope and life to Adam and Eve. Even as they first heard these words the Spirit worked faith in their hearts, and the new man arose. Peace was once again established between Adam and Eve and their heavenly Father. Paradise was regained. By the grace and power of God that essence of Paradise, the harmony and love between the Father and His children was restored. *We* have peace with God through the Seed of the Woman, all by the grace of God alone.

We look at the world, with all its conflict, with all its evil, with all its sorrow, with all its sin, and we wonder, how did this world get to be such a mess? We know the answer. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. The paradise God created disappeared as this world was subject to the bondage of corruption. But He who subjected it to the bondage of corruption subjected it in hope (Romans 8:20-21).

Paradise will be restored, *this is our hope*. *We will* see the glory of the Lord, and there *will* be a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness, and *only* righteousness dwells. Right now though we rejoice that we live in that hope, knowing that Paradise has been regained. It was regained when the Seed of the Woman bruised the head of the Serpent. In sacrificing Himself, Jesus delivered us from death and the power of the devil.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)