

The First Gospel - *Genesis 3*

Series Introduction:

- We're now entering the season of advent, a season of anticipation leading up to Christmas and the celebration of the birth of Christ. It's hard to believe we're already here.
- Last year, we went through a series called "*Why Christmas*", in which we looked through the book of Hebrews to see the deeper significance behind the coming of Christ, and why Christmas is such a time of celebration.
- This year we're starting a new series called "*A King Will Come*".
- The purpose of this series is to look through the Old Testament at a number of different prophecies that foretold the coming of Jesus.
- When I was younger I loved to read, I would go through books so fast, and when I was done reading my own books, I would go to my older sister's bookshelf and steal books from her.
- There was one series in particular that she had that I enjoyed reading, called the Red Rock Mysteries. They were relatively short mystery novels about a young brother and sister who lived in Colorado. I loved these books, but I had a really bad habit, one that anyone who enjoys mysteries would yell at me for. Before I started reading the book, I would always flip to the back and read the last chapter first. I know. I'm terrible.
- You're never supposed to do that, and turn to the end of the book before you've actually read it. Not only does it spoil the ending, especially in a mystery, but it just makes no sense.
- When I would read those last chapters, it would be wrapping up this big story that had been going on throughout the entire book, but I had no idea what was going on. I didn't know any of the characters, and there was no excitement or satisfaction at seeing the conflict resolved, because I had no idea about what had been going on throughout the entire book.
- And in a way, we can sometimes tend to treat our Bibles like that, especially this time of year. It's Christmas time (again, that feels crazy), so of course we focus a lot on the coming of Christ, and his birth in Bethlehem. It's why we celebrate Christmas. But we can often celebrate that event, without taking too much time reflecting on everything that led up to that moment. The coming of Christ, his birth, his life, death, resurrection and ascension, really is the climax of all of human history. It was a fulfilment of a plan that God had been working out since the very beginning of time.
- The Old Testament is full of prophecies and promises that point us to Jesus. And taking this time, leading up to Christmas, to look a bit deeper at some of these promises that God made in

the Old Testament, and how he planned from the very beginning to send his son, helps us to have such a greater appreciation of Christmas itself as we celebrate the coming of Christ.

- Now to be clear, there are more of these prophecies in the Old Testament than we could cover in a whole year. I have a book called the “Infographic Bible” that has a picture with lines connecting prophecies in the Old Testament, to their fulfilment through Christ in the New Testament. There’s so many lines that you can barely distinguish one from another.
- So our purpose here isn’t to look at every prophecy that was ever made, but to take some time working through a few of them, in this season of anticipation, seeing how God was at work all throughout human history to bring about his perfect purpose in the Gospel.
- When you look at your Bible, it really is all part of the biggest story in the world.

Setting the Stage:

- Today we’re starting right at the beginning of that story, looking at Genesis 3, because this is the passage where we have the very first promise of Christ found in the entire Bible.
- Now as we look at this story, it’s one that many of us would be familiar with. This is taking place right after creation, God has made this perfect world, and created Adam and Eve to live in this world, with only one rule. They’re not allowed to eat the fruit of one particular tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They can eat from literally every other tree, but just not that one.
- But in Genesis 3 which we just heard read for us, we have the snake tempting Adam and Eve to disobey God, which they do, then we see the consequences of that choice play out.
- And while this is a familiar story to a lot of us, it’s an absolutely devastating one, which commonly is referred to as “The Fall”. This is the story of how sin entered into the world.
- We’ve said a lot over the past few months that we live in a broken world, and a world that is so full of brokenness.
- Well today we’re looking at the story of the day that the world broke.
- And as we look at this passage together, there’s so much in here, so we won’t be going into every little detail of this story, but I want to focus on making two observations as we move through this passage, looking at two things that Genesis 3 teaches us. First, we’ll see that this passage teaches us an important lesson about the nature of our own sin, and second we’ll see that this passage teaches us an important lesson about the nature of God.
- And I hope that we’ll see that even here, on one of the darkest days in all of human history, we find the hope of the very first promise of Christ found in the entire Bible.

Genesis 3 teaches us an important lesson about the nature of our own sin:

- And so I want to begin first with looking at what we learn about the nature of our own sin in this passage, because in this story we see two things about our sin. We see where our sin comes from, and where our sin leads to.

Where sin comes from:

- So in looking at where our sin comes from, I want to draw attention to what the serpent says to Eve in V. 5.
- His first words to her were asking “*Did God really say you couldn’t eat from any tree in the garden?*”. We know that isn’t true, but he’s beginning to sow the seeds of doubt in Eve’s mind, making her question whether God really has her best interests at heart, and if there’s some good thing being kept from her.
- The serpent then hammers home those doubts in V. 5 when he says this:

“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” - Gen. 3:5 (ESV)

- Again, he’s focusing in on that idea of doubt, that there is some great thing that God has hidden from Adam and Eve, and if they’ll only eat this fruit they can take this great knowledge for themselves and be “*like God*”.
- But there’s such sad irony in those words. The serpent is tempting Adam and Eve to try to become “*like God*”, but in reality, if you look back at Ch. 1:26 you’ll see that Adam and Eve were already like God, because they had been made in his image. The very thing that the snake was tempting them with, to be “*like God*”, is something that God had already given to them.
- Then in V. 6 we see how Eve responds to the snake’s words.

“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.” - Gen. 3:6 (ESV)

- So we see here that the serpent’s temptation accomplished exactly what he wanted it to. Look at those first words “*the woman saw that the tree was good*”.

- A very similar phrase is repeated constantly throughout Genesis 1, after each thing that God creates we find these words, *“and God saw that it was good”*. It’s a short phrase that, honestly, I didn’t think to deeply about until recently.
- As I was reading in a commentary by a guy named John Sailhammer, he took some time to look at that phrase *“and God saw”*, and pointing out how it’s more than just God surveying what he’s made, but rather seeing every need that humanity will have in creation, and providing for it perfectly. This is what he says:
 - *“Throughout this opening chapter the author depicts God as the one who both knows what is ‘good’ for humankind and is intent on providing the good for them. In this way the author has prepared the reader for the tragedy that awaits in chapter 3.”*
- So whereas God saw every need and provided for it perfectly in how he created the world, the wording that the woman saw that the tree was good, shows that she no longer trusts God to know what is good, but rather takes that onto herself, believing she knows what she needs better than God does. So *“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”*. Then she gave it to Adam who ate it as well.
- And in that moment they declared that they no longer trusted God to provide what was good for them, and wanted to decide what was good for themselves.
- And I think that really strikes at the heart of our sin, doesn’t it? To believe that we know better than God, and to think that there’s some good thing that he’s keeping from us that we need to take for ourselves. Yet, in reality, God knows what is best for us.
- I want to encourage you, in times when you are tempted, to remember those words, *“and God saw that it was good”*. God knows every need that you have, and he is able to provide perfectly for every need, no matter what situation you are facing. It may not always look the way that we want, or expect it to, but in the end, God sees and knows what is truly good for us, and will provide for our needs.
- The only question is whether we will trust him to provide for us, or make the same mistake that Adam and Eve did, to trust our own wisdom rather than God’s.
- And as much as we look at Adam and Eve and wonder how they ever could have done what they did, each and every one of us does the exact same thing each time we sin, and we’re about to see where that decision leads.

Where sin leads:

- Because now that Adam and Eve have sinned, disobeyed God and done the one thing that he commanded them not to do, they immediately begin to feel the results. Look at what the beginning of V. 7 says:

“Then the eyes of both were opened,” - Gen. 3:7a (ESV)

- Just like the snake said, their eyes were opened. Later at the end of the chapter, at the beginning of V. 22, we read this:

“Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.” - Gen. 3:22a (ESV)

- Again, that’s exactly what the snake told Eve was going to happen, and yet it didn’t happen the way that Adam and Eve had hoped. Look at the second half of V. 7:

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.” - Gen. 3:7 (ESV)

- So just like the snake had said, in the moment that they disobeyed God their eyes were opened, but it wasn’t to some hidden good thing that God had been selfishly keeping from them, rather it was to the evil they had been protected from. Their sin did not result in them gaining anything good, but rather gaining shame, and fear, and death.
- And this is so often how it is with sin isn’t it?
- It always looks so desirable to us on the surface, and we think we know what’s best for us, even though we know it’s wrong, yet the moment we give in there’s that feeling of regret and emptiness that comes along with it. Sin will never fulfil us, or satisfy is. Even if it seems to bring us good things in the short term, over the long term it will leave us empty and broken.
- And this sin impacted more than just Adam and Eve themselves. From V. 16 all the way to the end of V. 19 we see God describing the consequences that Adam and Eve’s sin will have, and they’re consequences that we still feel the effects of today.
- Things like the pain of child birth, or the struggles that exist in marriages, or the difficulty of hard work.
- This is why I said that this is the story of the day the world broke. Everything that we see in our world that is broken today can ultimately be traced back right here to Genesis 3.
- But the most devastating effect of sin is first mentioned in V. 8:

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” - Gen. 3:8 (ESV)

- Adam and Eve hid from God. Later Adam tells God that when they heard him walking in the garden they were afraid, so they hid.
- Then look down at the end of the passage in V. 23-24:

“therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.” - Gen. 3:23-24 (ESV)

- The greatest tragedy of Genesis 3 is that in Adam and Eve’s quest to find some great knowledge they believed God had hidden from them, they lost the greatest gift they could have ever had. The blessing of living in the presence of God, enjoying a perfect relationship with him.
- This is the key problem that exists throughout the entire Bible, that sin has separated us from the presence of God, and it leaves us with the question of how we could ever return to that perfect relationship with God.
- And so Genesis 3 teaches us an important lesson about the nature of our own sin.
- It teaches us that our sin comes from a lack of faith in God’s provision for us, and leads to separation from him.

Genesis 3 teaches us an important lesson about the nature of God:

- And that doesn’t leave us with a very hopeful feel does it? And yet it’s important to read this story and allow ourselves to be struck by the weight of sin and its consequences that we see playing out here, because it makes what comes next all the more powerful. Because there is an answer to that question that Genesis 3 presents to us, of how we can return to a relationship with God.
- Because despite all of the tragedy that is found in Genesis 3, and the difficult lessons that we learn about our own sin, this chapter also teaches us an important lesson about the nature of God, and it’s here that we get to the first promise of Christ that is found in the Bible, and an incredible hope in the midst of this dire situation.
- Despite the consequences that God justly declares upon the man and the woman, and upon creation in this passage, there’s a key verse to see here, and it is Genesis 3:15.

- This is arguably, one of the most important verses in all of the Bible. If this verse were not in the Bible, we all may as well pack up and go home.
- This is what Genesis 3:15 says, as God is talking to the serpent:

*“I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel.” - Gen. 3:15 (ESV)*

- This verse is something that is known as the “*proto-evangelium*”, or rather, “*The first Gospel*”.
- This verse is the first promise of Christ that we have in the entire Bible.
- At this point in the story God could have easily looked at Adam and Eve and said “*you disobeyed me, you’re a lost cause*”, and just started over from square 1, but that’s not what he does.
- In his grace, his mercy, and his love, he looks at the snake and says to him “*you have not won, and you will not win*”, and he makes the promise that through the offspring of the woman, the snake will be defeated. His head will be crushed.
- And it is through this offspring of the woman, who is Jesus, that sin is defeated and we are provided with a way to return to life in the presence of God.
- Jesus says of himself in John 14:6:

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” - John 14:6 (ESV)

- Christ’s coming was to undo the devastation that was caused in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve were sent out of the presence of God. He is the offspring of the woman who crushes the head of the serpent.
- Yet we also have the part of the promise that tells us that the snake will bruise the heel of the woman’s offspring. This is meant to point us forward to the price that was required for that way to be opened, as Christ would lay down his life to take the punishment that we rightfully deserve for our rebellion, and in doing so, make it possible for us to have a relationship with God again, and have the hope of eternity spent with him.
- All that God asks of us is to place our trust in him. To trust in his perfect provision, and live our lives in obedience to him.

- Without Christ, we have no hope and Genesis 3 is the most devastating chapter in the entire Bible, yet because of Christ we see hope even in one of the darkest moments of human history. The hope that God would continue to provide perfectly for our every need by providing a perfect saviour to die in our place.
- Do you see why this passage gives so much hope in the midst of darkness that makes Christ's coming at Christmas all the more exciting?
- It shows us that despite our failure to trust in God, he was still willing to send a saviour, to pay the ultimate price, and take the punishment for our sins, which he did not deserve, upon himself, allowing us the opportunity to have hope and a relationship with God again.

Conclusion

- But as much as you and I read this passage, and right away it points us to Christ, for the original readers of this story, that question remained of how God would one day provide an answer to that question, and a way for humanity to once again enjoy a relationship with him.
- So again and again throughout history, God would remind his people of this promise, which was made at the very beginning. That a deliverer and a saviour would come. And in those promises we learn more and more about who that saviour is and what he is like.
- And over the next number of weeks, as we work through this season of advent, leading up to Christmas, we're going to look at some of these promises that God gave to his people throughout the Old Testament, and see how these promises help us to have an even greater appreciation for what actually took place on Christmas day.
- Because just as God had provided so perfectly for every need in creation, the same is true through Christ, that he provides so perfectly all we need to live in relationship with him.
- So don't trust in your own wisdom. Don't listen to the lies that say God is keeping you from what is truly good in life. Trust that God sees every need that we have, and provides perfectly for those needs. He provided his son to open the way to a relationship with him, so place your trust in Christ rather than yourself, and live a life of obedience to him, trusting that he knows what is best for you, and has provided so wonderfully for us in his Son.