

Genesis 2-3

The Story of God The Fall

Introduction: If this is your first time at Refuge Christian Fellowship, Welcome. As a part of our year of Biblical literacy we are doing a series of miniseries on different themes in and from the Bible. We spent all last month looking at the Bible specifically - what it is, what it claims about itself - it's authority, it's accuracy, it's purpose. In our teaching about, What the Bible is - we talked about how it is first of all a story (Not a fairy tale), but a congruent true story that gives meaning and shape to our lives. Everyone has grand narrative that they are living by, a story that they tell themselves about why we are here, how we got here and where this life is going. We call these world views or meta-narratives - A real (Grand) story, that provides a framework of meaning for all people in all times and places, and therefore our own life in the world. So when we call the Bible a story, we mean the true story of God, his creation of the world, it's fall into sin, evil and death, and ultimately God's redemption of the world. Christians believe that this is the true story - that provides us with an understanding of the whole world and our own place in it.

“Scripture - the Old and the New testaments - is the story of creation and new creation. Within that, it is the story of covenant and new covenant. When we read scripture as Christians, we read it precisely as people of the new covenant and the new creation. We do not read it, in other words, as a flat, uniform list of regulations or doctrines. We read it as the narrative in which we ourselves are now called to take part. We read it to discover “the story so far” and also “how it’s supposed to end.” To put it another way, we live somewhere between the end of Acts and the closing scene of revelation. If we want to understand scripture and to find it doing its proper work in and through us, we must learn to read and understand it in light of that overall story.” - N.T. Wright, Surprised by Hope

For the next weeks we are going to be looking at that grand story in six parts Creation, Fall, Israel, Jesus, the Church and New Creation. Last week we looked at Creation - God's good creation. This week brings us to what happened to that Good creation - Something we Christians call the Fall.

1. Good Creation.

1. Last week we talked about the major themes of the creation story being: God, YHWH, as the unrivaled king of the universe, creation being an act of his goodwill and kindness - an act of love. We saw how the Garden of Eden was God's temple - dwelling with humanity and the creation. Lastly, we saw how humans were created in God's image in order to partner with him to rule and reign, making the whole earth God's temple dwelling place. As I said last week, we aren't told that the creation is perfect, but we are given a picture of it's inherent goodness and purity - Genesis 2:25 says this, "And the man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed." No lack of trust, no fear, no shame, nothing to hide. The idea here is this open transparency and vulnerability because of their innocence.
2. This is nothing like the world today. What happened? Why is life filled with fear, distrust, guilt, shame, pain, evil, and death.... What is wrong with the World.. what is wrong with me? Why do humans have this incredible ability to create, to sacrifice, to love, to help.. (To rule, to have dominion) and at the same time this incredible knack and ability to royal screw things up? and not only that to be enslaved themselves, to be domineered... or to hurt to hurt and exploit others, to enslave others, to rape, murder, lie, cheat, and steal.. where does this come from?
3. This is what Genesis 3 seeks to answer for us -Why the world is filled with beauty, order and bursting with life in one breathe, and absolute chaos and death in another. What happened to God's good creation? Like us, the nation of Israel did not experience the creation as good they knew evil first hand - slavery in Egypt, hard labor from dawn to dusk, no freedom of worship, their baby boys drowned in the Nile, most likely their daughters in sex slavery. For over 400 years Israel had lived under these conditions. Genesis 3 tells us how all this came to be - the tension, the problem, the conflict that came in to God's good world.. though we probably have so many questions about this (who is this serpent; why is he talking; where did he come from; where is God; where is Adam; etc) we need to suspend them and seek to hear what Genesis 3 actually tells us, and wants us to know.

2. The Fall

1. In the first verse of Chapter 3 we are introduced to the Serpent - we are told he is cunning or crafty... and it doesn't take us long to see that something or someone seems to be possessing this Serpent..

In Revelation 12:9 John the Apostle identifies him as the Satan or the devil himself. It also interesting to note that in ancient times the serpent was symbolic for many things but especially known as a chaos monster - Leviathan. (I know there are so many things we want to ask - but this is what the text tells us)

2. The Serpent simply asks Eve a question - **“Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?” Read Genesis 3:2-5**
 1. The Serpent suggests to Eve that God is withholding from her and Adam - he hones in on this one tree - the tree God said is dangerous... never mind the tree of life and the rest of the garden and the whole world that God has given them... this tree, the serpent suggest, is evidence that God is keeping something from them, God is not actually being generous with them, but withholding.. God himself knows that if Adam and Eve eat from this tree they’ll be like God... “your eyes will be opened, you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
 3. Sadly Eve talks about God rather than talks to God.. she buys into what the serpent has suggested and then his poisonous words of doubt work their magic...
 1. **“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”**
 2. So far in the narrative God has been the one to see and judge what is good.. Genesis 1 records 7 variations of this phrase "And God saw that it was good" But here it is Eve seeing and judging what is good... No longer is God the Authority - The serpent is, but he moves into the background and Eve becomes the authority... she is seeing, and judging, taking and giving... Adam and Eve have directly rejected God’s authority and distrusted his word - and have chosen rather to listen to the Serpent, and taken his word as authoritative.
 1. *“Although God intended the human couple to rule over all the creatures, on this occasion they obey one of the animals. By following the serpents promptings, they fail to exercise authority over it. Their failure not only overturns the divinely*

instituted order of creation, but also significantly is a blatant betrayal of God. By siding with the serpent, they reject God and his ordering of the world. ironically, their treachery occurs in the context of the serpent's saying to them that they shall become, "like God, knowing good from evil (3:5) unlike the serpent, the human couple have been made in the "image of God." However by obeying the serpent instead of God, they forfeit their position as God's vice-regents. If they image anyone now, it is the serpent. And the authority given to them by God passes to the serpent.." - T. Desmond Alexander, From Paradise to the Promised Land

2. There is another story in the Bible very similar to this one - this time though it's a man who sees something that delights him, he judges that it is good and he takes it for himself. I'm talking about the Story of King David and Bathsheeba. David, after his sin and cover up is exposed confesses his sin and he says something so interesting, In Psalm 51, in reference to this event David says to God, **“against you and you alone have I sinned.”** What?? What about Uriah? And Bathsheeba, your family, your people...Why would David say that?? Because David's understands that the sin under every other sin is the sin of cosmic treason.
3. **What do I mean?**
4. Before David could have slept with Bathsheeba or murdered Uriah he first had to say something like, God I don't believe you have my best interest in mind and I know what is better for me than you do. David put self in the place of God. David decided for himself what was good, disregarded God's law, and satisfied his own desires.
5. See, David failed to believe that God wanted good for him, that God had or would meet his needs - so David took for himself what he thought was good, and satisfied his own desire. This is essentially the same thing we see Adam and Eve doing in the garden of Eden. Before Adam and Eve took of the fruit they first committed the sin of unbelief in the goodness and love and provision of God. The original sin was really a character assassination on God.
6. We've all done the same in some way, shape, or form -Let's say a person cheats on his income tax form. Why does he do that? Well, you say, because he is a sinner. Yes, but why does

his sin take this form? Luther's answer would be that the man only cheated because he was making money and possessions —and the status or comfort from having more of them— more important than God and his favor. Or let's say a person lies to a friend rather than lose face over something she has done. In that case the underlying sin is making human approval or your reputation more important than the righteousness, love, and acceptance you have in and through Jesus Christ. There is a reason why we steal. It is because we do not trust in God's provision for our lives and value the stuff of others (going from I like, to I want, to I must have at all cost) to the point of making them our own. The Bible, then, does not consider idolatry to be one sin among many or a rare sin found only among primitive people. Rather, **all our failures to trust God wholly or to live rightly are at root idolatry—something we make more important than God.** There is always a reason for a sin. Under our sins are idolatrous desires. Every sin stems from a failure to believe in the goodness and love of God toward us.

3. The World we now know

1. We just read, **“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”**
2. What is this? Shame and guilt. Sin, disobedience, rebellion against God, brings discord, no one told Adam and Eve that they were naked, that they were exposed - they know it intuitively, and the first thing they try to do is hide it.
3. Why do each of us feel shame and guilt - maybe we even grew up in a very accepting and affirming home, never shamed by our parents or peers. Why do we feel disconnected from ourselves, and from one another.. why do things, especially relationships fall apart and bring heart ache...Why aren't we what we should be? Sin. The word sin has all this baggage that it carries nowadays that isn't actually found in the Bible.. or sometimes we only talk about sin in the context of transgression - breaking the rules.
 1. Many would say in our day that the ancient Judaeo/Christian doctrine of sin is primitive, outdated, oppressive and offensive. But what's the one thing we all agree on? That something is greatly wrong with the world and especially with humans. After centuries of attempts at utopia through kingdoms, nations,

monarchs, politicians, religions and pseudo saviors our world is still royally screwed up. Even though we are living in one of the safest times in human history - people are riddled with anxiety, and fear. Economists know the world is messed up, psychologists know it, Doctors know it, teachers, parents...everyone knows it. Without believing in the biblical doctrine of sin you can't really make sense of the world around you.

2. Again, in Psalm 51, David describes sin in three ways -
 1. *Iniquity - Self absorption - we are curved in on ourselves (iniquity means to be bent or twisted - the inner warp of the fallen nature)*
 2. *Transgression - Rebellion and Self will (transgression refers to stubbornness and willfulness but because we are twisted inwardly it's always negative) we say, the heart wants, what the heart wants..We are bent on our own will, our own way, ourselves as the authority.. We see signs that say -do not trespass, or your spouse or parent says, don't do that or say that and what? we want to do it even more.. just because.*
 3. *Sin - Failure - the word "sin" actually means to miss the mark, or to get "it" wrong. It's the Bible's way of saying Humans are not what we should be or were supposed to be. We fail, we mess up, we get things wrong, accidents happen and some have huge ramifications - killing people and ruining lives... where does this come from? Sin.*
 4. And these three things - Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin, make the world a miserable place. And Sin in all its categories is what separates us from God, from one another, from ourselves and from our relationship to the natural world.

4. Paradise Lost - Judgment and the Grace of God

1. It is always so interesting to me to actually read God's response and questions to Adam and Eve.
2. God - Where are you? - No accusation, no anger.. God is inviting confession
3. Adam - I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.
4. God - Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I told you not to eat? Again, God inviting confession.
5. Adam - The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate. No responsibility - everyone's fault except Adam.

6. God to Eve - What is this that you have done?
7. Eve - The serpent deceived me, and I ate.

8. Read Genesis 3:14-23

1. If Genesis 1 & 2 teach that God is king; Genesis 3 shows how humanity rejected God's kingship humans disobey and rebel
2. If Genesis 1 & 2 show earth as God's good kingdom - Genesis 3 shows humans corrupting it with sin, bringing it under a curse and handing their authority over to the Serpent
3. If Genesis 1 & 2 shows Humanity created to be covenant partners with God - Genesis 3 shows human rebellion, human autonomy - working chaos into God's creation, suspicious of God's goodness and intentions.
 1. Their sin brings about removal from God's presence, loss of their authority and ability to rule in the way God intended.
 2. Cursed - this sounds harsh.. and maybe it is.. it is the opposite of blessing. It is to allow chaos instead of order.. it seems to be a reversal of the created order. Instead of life - death.. instead of ease futility....But such is the state outside of the presence and authority of God who is life, beauty and order.
 3. God's judgment of human rebellion is a reversal of the blessings of Paradise. God's judgment of sin means banishment from the full presence of the holy God. It introduces pain in the family, pain and struggle in marriage, pain and struggle in life - in sweat and painful toil does the ground produce for us....and then finally death..
 1. *"Because humans are spiritually homeless, We dream of holy spaces, utopias, motherlands, golden ages, and soul mates. We yearn for reconnection to the divine, re-admittance to the sacred and pure space....This wandering, this lostness, is the essence of humanity's essential weakness: detachment from their true home in God, and with that, the curse of mortality."* - Mark Sayers, *Strange Days*
4. And yet.. there is this faint glimmer of hope for in the midst of judgment - God shows his amazing grace - In verse 15 we have the Proto-Evangelion - The Gospel before the Gospel - The good news proclaimed to Adam and Eve, about the seed of the woman, the snake crusher who would come and destroy the serpent..and yet would be wounded in his victory.

Conclusion: I think modern people including Christians see the world backwards - When we are faced with sickness, disease, breakdown, separation, divorce, death, and the worst experiences in this world.. are question is why God? Why have you done this.. the Answer is - he hasn't. And in fact God in his grace broke up the unholy alliance of humans and the serpent, and though humans rejected God as their king, spurned his goodness and love, allied with the serpent and destroyed God's earth with evil, brokenness and death... God refuses to go away. He refuses to leave us on our own.. he breaks in again and again, He blesses us with rain, and food, gladness, the joys of friendship and companionship, children, family, love, sex, beauty and transcendence. (Reading Genesis 3 isn't a wonder that anything good happens at all in this life?) God bends to bless us, he loves us, he refuses to give up on us. He hears the cries of his creation suffering under the weight of sin, and it breaks his heart... he cannot let it be so.. and so God does the unthinkable, he comes to earth himself, in the person of Jesus, to bear the curse, to gather up in his body all the sin, evil and brokenness of the world, and then allow all the judgment of God on sin to come upon him.. in order that the world might be cleansed and restored as God's good creation - to usher in the new creation.. so one day God makes all things new, and gets rid of all the evil, sin, brokenness and sadness in the world, he can do it without having to remove us too

The story of the fox and the fleas...

Skeptics can use evil and suffering as a stone against Christianity, but what consolation do they have in their own worldview? Christianity is the only religion or worldview that has an answer to evil and suffering - God has done and is doing something about suffering and evil in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.. Eastern religions ignore evil; Darwinism and Communism rely on it; atheism is clueless about it; and Islam has a superficial view of it. Only Christianity provides an answer — that we are living in an abnormal world which God will one day restore.

Next week we'll begin to see how God began to redeem and restore his Creation through the family of Abraham