

Genesis 3 St Andrews 28.01.24

Introduction (Family Time)

Imagine waking up in the morning to a beautiful, blue-sky day, knowing the temperature and weather are going to be perfect. You have slept soundly and are refreshed. Beside you, your lovely spouse also awakes, and you walk together through the beautiful countryside, which is your home, picking fruit for your breakfast as you talk. You are perfectly complementary and enjoy an ideal relationship.

A pair of tigers emerge from the trees and come over to rub their huge heads against you; you decide to call them 'tiger' and then watch as they pass by a family of grazing antelope, on their way. You talk with each other about the beautiful fauna and flora around you, pausing now and then to name something you haven't seen before.

You have no worries, no discomfort, no sorrow, no shame, only peace, love, friendship and joy; you have no concept of discord, pain or sickness. You will enjoy tending the garden today, and are looking forward to the evening, when the Lord God will come and walk and talk with you in His beautiful world; you can tell him about the animals you have named since yesterday and thank Him and praise Him for the wonders of His creation and all He has given you.

This, I imagine, was life for Adam and Eve in Eden before the events of Genesis chapter 3. Milly Marsh, Hugh's mother, speculated about how long our first parents enjoyed this glorious existence before everything changed. We don't know, but today, we are going to consider how that idyllic existence came to an abrupt and catastrophic end.

We must not underestimate the disastrous consequences of the act of disobedience recorded in Genesis 3; it was infinitely more terrible and far-reaching than the loss of a perfect lifestyle for two people.

Later in the service, we will consider the temptation, the Fall and its out-come, and God's remedy. It is a packed chapter and, if you would like a more in-depth study, I recommend 'The Gospel in Genesis' by Henry Law and 'Treasures in the Darkness' by our own Alice Wilson-Sharp.

1st reading Genesis 3 v 1 - 13

The serpent The first character we meet in Chapter 3 is the serpent.

In a drama, when everything is going along swimmingly, then the music changes to a darker theme and a new character is introduced, you know trouble lies ahead. Well, here we are in verse 1. The serpent turns up and the mood shifts; he is one of the created beasts and described as more cunning than all the others. (Cunning in the original language doesn't have the same negative connotations as English.)

And yet, this is no ordinary snake. It seems, the fallen angel, whose desire is to supplant God, has taken over this serpent-creature, in order to spoil God's perfect creation and gain worshippers for himself.

Anyway, he is identified in Revelation as the Devil, who is also called Satan. The word, satan means an opponent, the hater, the accuser, adversary, enemy and can be applied generally to any opponent, but in scripture the translation 'Satan' is ha-satan, not his name but accurate description as 'the hateful enemy.'

The purpose & nature of temptation v 1 - 5

To disbelieve, distrust and disobey God.

The serpent, used by the satan, preached another god to Eve; a god who lies and deceives. This is not the Creator God of Truth, but does describe the satan himself.

His purpose is to cause the couple, created in God's own image, to cease to worship God, the Creator, and to worship what is created – ultimately, the Satan.

There is a pattern to temptation which we see in v 6: Looking, which leads to touching.

Eve says that God told them not to even touch this tree. I don't know whether that was addition of Eve's to God's instruction not to eat of it, or whether God did say not to touch it.

However, touching leads to eating/engaging in/involving yourself in, which leads to encouraging others to sin.

We see this desire to get others to commit the same sins in our society, don't we. Maybe, we don't feel bad about our own sin if other people are also engaged in it.

The apostle John clearly identified this pattern of temptation in his circular letter to the churches:

1 John 2 v 16 For all that is in the World – the **desires (or lusts) of the flesh and the desires (or lusts) of the eyes and pride of life** – is not from the Father but is from the World.

And who is the Prince of this World? ha-satan – the Satan - the hateful enemy

Notice how the attack – the temptation - is through the mind – the command centre of our behaviour. We must guard our minds against enemy temptations.

Gen 3 v 6, 7 So the woman saw and believed that the tree was good for food (desires of the flesh), and that it was a delight to the eyes (the desires of the eyes) and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise.

But Proverbs 1 v 7 and Psa. 111 v 10 tell us that 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Wisdom cannot be gained by disobeying the Lord God.

So, the pride of life - the Satan's sin of pride, wanting to overthrow God and take his place, becomes in humans the desire to kick over God's rule and reign in our lives, and be wise enough to be independent of Him; as Psalm 2 says:

'Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain. The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."

Doesn't this explain a lot about the repeated conflicts on earth?

Back to Adam and Eve: What an insult to the loving Creator, in Whose image they were created; with Whom they had such close fellowship and Who had given them all that they needed in abundance. What an insult to believe the words of, apparently, one of the animals that they had been given authority over, rather than the words of their God.

We see the catastrophic effect of this attitude of pride in the whole of history in the major events and in people's lives individually.

The same pattern of temptation is seen when the Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness.

The desires of the flesh: Command these stones to become bread.

The desires of the eyes: the devil ... showed Him all the kingdoms

The pride of life: throw Yourself down from here – test God.

What the Satan offered Jesus was actually Jesus's by right as Creator; what the Satan offered Eve and Adam was far less than they already had.

Jesus resisted the temptation to disobey the Father and worship the Satan in order to gain the world without going to the cross.

Eve, and then Adam, chose to disobey God's clear command. (There was only the one command!) Instead of innocent trust, they gained shame, a sense of terrible exposure and fear of the wrath of God with whom they had had sweet fellowship a few hours before.

The consequence of disobedience v 7, 8f

Immediately, they became aware – not of greater wisdom and goodness, but that they were not covered. They were exposed and vulnerable and felt ashamed. They attempted to cover themselves with leaves – they were no longer comfortable to be naked before each other. And then they hid from the presence of God.

John writes in chapter 3 v 19, 20

'And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world [Jesus is that light] and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practising evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.'

While people still have a tender conscience, they will try to keep their sins covered; but determined, repeated sinning will lead to a conscience which has become 'seared' – scarred and insensitive; then we see the deterioration of the moral fibre of the nation as people not only openly sin against Almighty God, but flaunt it and encourage others to sin, calling good, what God has called bad.

Adam and Eve still had very tender consciences and so they try to hide from the Light of God's revealing Presence.

But of course, no one can hide from the Lord God. Can we hear the voice of loving concern, "Adam, where are you?"

Of course, God knew where he was and what he'd done, but like any loving parent, He wants Adam and Eve to come to Him and confess their sin, but like any child who has done wrong, Adam is afraid and is very aware that he is exposed before the Lord God. And, like many a child and adult since, they pass on the blame – 'The Woman *You gave me*, gave me the fruit and I ate it.' Not only the woman's fault, but God's for giving her to be a companion for Adam!' What a nerve! How could he? But have we ever done something similar?

Notice, Adam blames God in the presence of the serpent. He shields the Serpent and doesn't blame him. Already, Adam is experiencing and demonstrating the knowledge of evil in his response to the Lord God.

Eve does attribute blame to the Serpent who deceived her. However, I repeat, she who was made in the image of God and who had close fellowship with Him and had all that she could ever need, chose to believe what she thought was one of the beasts and doubt the Lord her God.

And so, the beautiful creation of the Lord God was marred. Our first parents had indeed learned evil and all was changed. And their DNA is in us and all their offspring through the generations; 1Cor.15.22 'in Adam, all die..' and Romans 5 v 12 '.. through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ..'

The Satan had, apparently, won a great victory: Adam and Eve had handed over dominion of the earth to the satan and their perfect communion with God was marred by sin. But Almighty God has a remedy... which we'll consider after the next part of the reading.

Second reading: Gen. 3 v 14 - 24

Note, that God curses the serpent/satan combo, but what God speaks over Adam and Eve expresses the terrible effect their sin has had over their environment and future. The whole ecosystem of the world will change and feeding themselves will involve hard graft. Not just giving birth, but the raising of children will bring its share of pain and sorrow.

The words God speaks about the relationship between Adam and Eve (and men and women ever since) is not, I believe, punitive but restorative. Had Eve looked to her husband, when the snake approached her and had he given her the spiritual covering he was intended to give, she would have been stronger to resist.

Eph.5 v 22 – 25 picks this up:

Wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord. This is not in subservience. Eve was made from Adam's side, not from under his feet! It is to look to him as her spiritual covering. Husbands are called to love their wives *as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*

The further consequence for Adam and Eve was that they were banished and barred from Eden and, although they lived for many hundreds of years, finally, they died.

However, see God's amazing grace revealed as he pronounces judgment on the serpent:

First, it seems that the animal is cursed to walk upright no longer, but crawl on its belly. Now we know that snakes slither along the ground or up trees, however, at least some species have vestigial legs, and there is a fossil snake with hind legs, which suggests that once snakes walked on legs.

Be that as it may, the judgment is mainly directed at the spirit inhabiting the beast – the satan. The curse speaks of absolute abasement and of continuing enmity between him and the woman and her descendants.

And here we see God's amazing grace: the remedy for sin will come through the offspring of the woman – the woman who first disobeyed. And it was through a faithful woman, Mary, that the offspring would be born who will crush the satan's head.

Henry Law writes that, in 'the history of the long war between the children of light and the power of darkness ... he has tried every weapon of the armoury of hell ... but all have failed. They cannot rise

higher than the heel. The head is safe with Christ in God. ... Fear not, then, believer, the curse is on your foe. Dust is his food. He cannot swallow the jewels of Christ's crown.'

The covering

Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with vegetation, in order to hide their shame, but God teaches them that they cannot deal with sin so lightly. God Himself makes covering for them from the hide of an animal.

Nothing had died before; no blood had been shed in Eden, but now one of the creatures, that God placed for Adam to care for and name, has been slaughtered by God to cover their guilt. Can we imagine the shock and horror of it?

The lesson being taught is that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. A lesson which second generation Abel grasped, but his brother, Cain, didn't.

And, of course this action is a fore-shadowing of a much greater sacrifice, when God Himself took on human flesh and shed His blood to cover our sin.

Bernard of Clairvaux, who lived in the first half of the 12th Century and who Luther called 'the most God-fearing monk of the Middle Ages,' said:

'Lord, Thou hast loved me more than Thyself, for Thou didst lay down thy life for me'. Consider *that* when you come to take the bread and wine of Holy Communion!

All die in Adam; life in Christ

Romans 5v12, 15,16 NLT

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so sin spread to everyone, for everyone sinned....

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 through this other man, Jesus Christ ... 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.

1Cor. 15v 21, 22, For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Conclusion

In revelation, we see the final defeat of that great enemy, but in the meantime, here are glad tidings from Henry Law:

Though he (the satan) is strong, there is One far stronger;

Though he is great, there is One gloriously greater.

Though he is mighty, there is One Almighty.

Though he is wily, there is One All-wisdom.

Though he is many, there is One Infinite.

Though he is a captivator, he has been taken captive.

Though he is an enslaver, he has become a slave.

Though he forges chains, he lies enchained.

Though he has brought low, he lies low.

Though he is a conqueror, he has been conquered

The blessed Jesus comes a Conqueror, a Deliverer, a Redeemer, a Saviour. He treads down the devil, and gives deliverance, redemption, salvation to all the children of men, who stand under His banner of victory.'

Praise the Lord!

Reflection

Is God calling to you – 'Where are you, my child? I want to fellowship with you. Why are you avoiding me?'

If so, come out of hiding right away – now – tell him in the quietness what has caused the rift between you, and in repentance receive forgiveness and restoration of a walk with Him.