

Wreckage In The Temple

Bible Reading:

Genesis 3: 1-24

Romans 6: 1-14

John 14: 1-7

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From the very highest point to the absolute lowest;
 From brilliant creative beauty to sinister destructive horror -
 Between Genesis 2 and 3 we move from joy to sorrow.

If you were with us last week, you may remember how we celebrated the wonder and marvel of God's creative genius. We looked at the second chapter of Genesis, which is the telling of humanity's place in the Cosmos. Visually, we were carried along by the first panel of the triptych hanging in the fellowship hall. In the setting of Paradise, God created and placed His holy human servants - male and female. He designed them to live in three relationships:

- S** there was the grounding of their very existence in the primary relationship, the relationship between people and Creator. It was a moral relationship where people were called to exercise their will and choice; **choosing** to live and walk and serve in obedience and love.
- S** then there was the relationship between people and Creation. Humanity was called to exercise dominion over the earth, "*to till and keep it.*"
- S** and finally, the beauty of relationships between people and other people. It is reflected in the primary relationship between husband and wife. God declares, "*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.*" So He creates a being to complement the man - from the rib, to walk side by side through life. Then God both officiates at the very first wedding and serves as Father of the bride. In this first marriage we see the pattern for all human marriage - man and woman joining together, fully united in body, mind and spirit. They are completely exposed to each other. Nothing is hidden. There is no shame. Though not to the same degree, of course, we also see here the God-intended pattern for all human relationships – a pattern of trust, of openness, of no shame, of care, of partnering.

Genesis 2 is an absolute high point. It is brilliant, creative beauty; full joy.
 And then we plunge head-long into the absolute low, into sinister destructive horror, into sorrow.

This morning we read the heavy passage of Genesis 3. It is a drama in two scenes:

- Gen 3:1-7 the disruption in the garden
- Gen 3:8ff the judgement and expulsion

Gen 2 ends with solidarity, well-being, trust... **oneness**.

It is the beauty of relationship, of covenant in all its God-designed wholeness.

By the end of the next scene of this unfolding drama, by 3:7, all that is stood on its head. The covenant is shattered; and all three Creational Relationships are mangled, like some crumpled, smoldering plane wreck.

- S** Humanity no longer takes the command of God as a given; as the bedrock for their existence. It becomes just another option. God becomes a "*maybe.*"
- S** The boundaries of safe living are violated, and existence in the Garden is now filled with threat and uncertainty.
- S** Man and woman see each other naked - open and vulnerable - and they reach for covering.

What follows in verses 8 and beyond is the inevitable result of the crumbled trust and twisted relationships. The horror of sin, and all its effects, are clearly shown. Look for a moment at three little phrases in v.10 - so tragic:

I heard....

I was afraid....

I hid....

Creational Relationships?

Hardly!

See the difference from the first panel of the triptych to the second?

Where creation was *all things bright and beautiful*; now the hues are sombre and dark.

The tree which represents the relationship between people and the Creator is dark and sinister, now. Evil has dulled it. Creation was given light by the Creator. But as the moon cannot shine without the light of the sun reflecting from it, so the glory of creation, even though still hinted at, is darkened – removed from the immediate glory and splendour of heaven. Including humanity - we, too, have been removed from experiencing the immediate glory and splendour of God's presence in some intimate relationship with our lives. The relationship is deeply damaged.

Then the relationship between people and Creation. Oh, it is still there. But now it is a relationship filled with pain. There is suffering, sickness, weeds where once only lush vegetation grew. There is desert and drought. There are the resources of Creation - great riches - now exploited and raped and hoarded instead of being managed and developed and shared in a holy, stewardly way.

And the third of the three Creation Relationships? The relationship between people and other people? Ah, the man and woman - they reach for each other, but even in reaching there remains a barrier between them. Intimacy and trust are shattered.

There is fighting.

Murder.

There are the masks that we hide behind as we human beings now play all kinds of silly, pretentious games with each other.

There are the faceless ones – people that we should be in relationship with, but instead use and abuse, step around or step on.

In that deeply wounded, shattered Creation sentences are imposed by the Creator. It must be so.

Creation will suffer.

Humanity will suffer.

It is a dark, dreadful time.

But, brothers and sisters, fellow pilgrims in faith - let us **NEVER** allow our reading to stop here. And let us **NEVER** allow our souls to wallow in despair.

For it is not the serpent who has the last word.

Evil damages. But evil does **NOT** conquer.

The last word in the drama

- **even** in the midst of all the pain

the last word belongs to the Creator.

God speaks of the serpent - the serpent will be crushed.

Yes, **even** in the face of humanity's destruction of the three basic Creation relationships, grace still surfaces.

God still provides.

The Creator now becomes the Redeemer.

He provides with what is known the proto-gospel; the first good news.

The Creator-Redeemer declares that a descendent of Adam and Eve will be born who will crush the head of the serpent; He will utterly destroy the prime agent of evil and suffering and death.

Hear the gospel - Evil's voice does NOT have the last word in Creation!!

Or - look at the triptych.

Can you see the hint of a second tree?

On the right - there we see part of a cursed tree,
the cross.

And one hanging on it, life blood pouring from Him.

It is that descendent of Adam & Eve. It is Jesus.

Who came in God's perfect plan and time and way to crush evil;
to destroy the serpent.

Jesus came to rebuild the three creational relationships, between:
People and their Creator
People and the Creation
People and other People.

Please join me in reading words of Jesus -

John 14:1-7, p.108 (NT)

See the very first words?
They are words of hope - *Do NOT let your hearts be troubled.*

Friends, if there is one passage that I read over and over again with people in deep trauma, especially as they face the reality of approaching death in their lives, it is this one.
And over and over again people grab hold of it.
Do NOT let your hearts be troubled.....

And then comes the amazing assurance -
Assurance of once more living in the very presence of God; in the house of God.
Assurance of a way back to God.
To people who sometimes stand beside the disciple Thomas and have to say, "*We don't know the way - which way is the way to peace, the way to hope, the way to God?*"
To such people,
people such as you and I,
Comes the powerful and real words of Jesus –
"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Friends, there is no other way through the strewn wreckage of creation,
no other way back to intimate connection with God
no other way to find a truly meaningful basis to relate to our daily work
no other way to find a trusting foundation to relate to each other
than through surrendering our lives to Jesus.
allowing Him to take authority over all the damage in our lives.
allowing Him to take charge of and wipe away all the guilt and shame and wrong and regret.
allowing Him to touch our spirits with His Holy Spirit.

And then, as we come to know Jesus,
we will, in a miracle of a way, come to know the Creator again.
We will come to know Him as He was meant to be known -
as **Father**.

We will begin to feel and experience again the value that He created in us -
- deep, precious value.
We will be able to see the world around us, and each other, again with new eyes.

There is,
in faith
in Jesus
real
hope.

That's the hope which brings us to Holy Communion.

Where we will share the body and blood of Jesus in the deep mystery of faith.
As we take this ordinary bread and an ordinary cup, doing so in obedience to the command of Jesus to do so,
we believe that His Holy Spirit transports this event into holy time and space and
in some way beyond our ability to understand
connects us with the real body and blood of Jesus
connects us with the forgiving, renewing, restoring power of Jesus
connects us with Jesus Himself
and through Jesus
with the Creator,
our Father in Heaven.

As we said at the beginning, reading Genesis 2 and 3 takes us
From the very highest point to the absolute lowest;
From brilliant creative beauty to sinister destructive horror
From joy to sorrow.

But thanks be to God.
Through Jesus we are, in hope and faith and trust,
in very real ways
brought back to joy again.

Join me at the table now.
And let us celebrate - in peace!