

# *The Big Picture: Rescued!*

*Bible Reading:  
Genesis 3: 1-24*

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Begin with reading:

**Genesis 3: 1-24**

It's a rather depressing story - one with which we tried to come to grips last Sunday. We celebrated the life of 3 young children entering our community.

But not with rose-coloured glasses.

Instead, we acknowledged that precious though these children were, valuable though they remain in God's eyes, and as much as they are and always will be people created in the image of.....

little reflections of.....

God

as much as all of that is true

so also there remains a smudge on the reflection.

Something went wrong way back when, affecting the whole human race - including Jakob, Anke and Skyler. And that wrongness has been hounding us ever since.

We.... **all of us**..... tend to be like cars with front ends out of alignment. Take the hands off the wheel, let your attention slip for a moment, and the whole thing begins to veer towards the ditch.

It's a product of the Fall in Paradise. The curse. Affecting not just intentional human behaviour and various kinds of inter-personal activity. Not just society and social structures.

The curse of sin cuts a wide swath right across creation.

Bodily disease, disabilities and impairments, degeneration, and death.

And not just in human life. Weeds, drought, rot, flood, frost, earthquake.

In all these ways God's good creation has been distorted by the Fall.

[Walsh, Middleton *The Transforming Vision* IVP p.79]

We called it "*The Great Disaster*", noting that all of this is a very real part of the way in which Christians view the world. It's part of what we call our **worldview** — which is the subject of our summer morning sermon series here at Calvin.

A real part..... but not the only part.

The story of Creation doesn't end with the Fall.

Even in the tragic account of Genesis 3 we find a glimmer of hope. It is the *proto-promise*, the seed of the Gospel - v.15:

*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*

It's a faint glow that would brighten through the centuries, and that promises to explode in a dazzling blaze of holy brilliance and renewal on the last day of time;

the first word that points to the coming of Jesus, descendent of Eve, Son of God and Son of Man;

the One who will, in the fullest moment of time, crush the head of the Evil One and reverse the curse on Creation.

After centuries of God working in the human race, preparing the setting

the promise becomes reality.

Christ is born.

One day He enters the house of worship, picks up a scroll and reads.

Please follow along:

### Luke 4:14-21

What you are looking at in these words is the Mission Statement of Jesus.  
This is what His work on earth is all about.

It is what the other gospel writers refer to as “the Kingdom.” Kingdom is a term that Jewish readers would have understood. They understood God as King of Creation, claiming ownership over every aspect of their lives. They understood the curse and the promise of Paradise restored.

Luke, however, is writing to a Greek audience. They wouldn’t have a clue about that stuff. What they **would** know, however, is the stuff about suffering, about sickness, about struggle, about sorrow. They’d pulled weeds. They’d buried their dead.

So practical words about freedom, sight, release - that makes sense.

“*Jesus comes to bring that? OK, I understand.*” the Greeks would say.

Lest some of us here this morning somehow get sidetracked into thinking that these words of Jesus are meant on a purely spiritual level;

that’s he’s pointing ahead to heavenly, post-earth reality,  
we’ll want to look ahead to Luke 7.

Christ’s predecessor, John the Baptist, is having a tough time. Though once very confident, he now questions what Jesus is all about. So a message is sent to him, one which says in effect -

“Can we be sure about you?

How can we know what you’re about?”

And Jesus responds, “*The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the sick are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.*” (v.22).

Which they were.

Really.

This isn’t other worldly, spiritual stuff.

It’s very here and now, very physical.

Jesus’ presence and work is about the everyday elements of life, which have been tainted and twisted by the curse of sin, experiencing renewal;

the pains, thorns, thistles and sweat that worked their way into creation in Genesis 3 are being uprooted; their effects reversed.

Jesus came to rescue creation from the Great Disaster.

Jesus came to launch, to inaugurate, to plant the seeds for the New Kingdom. He, to use military imagery, led the invasion that one day will see the total eradication of the forces of evil which had so illegitimately crept into Creation in Genesis 3.

Some time after issuing His great Mission Statement, what some have dubbed “*The Nazareth Manifesto*”, Jesus was questioned about what was going on and what He was all about. The confrontation is detailed in Luke 11.

Jesus compares Satan to a strong man in possession of a house. He says,

“*When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.*” (Luke 11:21-22)

Jesus has come to Creation to overpower the strong man, Satan.

Romans 5 tells the same thing from a different angle, contrasting Jesus to Adam; Jesus recapitulates Adam’s journey;

fixing what that first human parent damaged so terribly.

Which is why the Cross is so central - to scripture, our faith, our lives.

That is where the rescue happened.

That is where the curse was broken.

That is Satan at his strongest and deadliest, overcome by the stronger power of the Resurrection.

That, then, is where we focus our faith, and ground our belief.

The cross and the empty tomb.

Free from sin.

New life in Jesus.

That's where we gain the promise and sure hope that one day death will be done away with for everyone; thorns and thistles eradicated; disability no more; frustrations gone.

Re-newed creation.

Every miracle done by Jesus, and every wonder performed by the Church in the centuries since stand as signs towards that day. Pillars of hope.

The rescue has begun.

In fact - that's what the whole existence of the Church on earth is to be about.

It's to be the central essence of your life and mine – as individuals and as a community.

That's why Calvin's mission statement, printed in italics on the cover of the bulletin reads:

*As members of a community that wants to glorify God, we are called to bring the life changing message of Christ to our neighbours as well as to each other.*

Rom 8:29 tells us that Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers

Eph 1 has a prayer, that we, through the power of the Holy Spirit, grow more and more into the likeness of Christ.

Eph 4:13 says that we, as Church, strive to live in the fullness of Christ

Eph 4:24 tells us that we are created to be **like** God

Col 3:10 we are being renewed in knowledge in the image of the Creator

All of which means that the work of God becomes our work.

The mission of Christ becomes our mission.

Which really hits home when we remember the teaching of 1 Cor 12:13, telling us that we are the Body of Christ.

Please understand -- this isn't just nice, pious faith talk meant to give us warm fuzzies as we sit planted firmly to a pew.

If you've ever been part of disaster relief, or seen media accounts of relief efforts, you know that it involves getting dirty, running the risk of getting hurt, and expending huge amounts of effort.

Jesus' hands got dirty in the rescue effort.

He got hurt.

He expended every ounce of life energy He had.

To rescue us.

To rescue all Creation.

He began the mission of overthrowing the Strong Man.

We now, in His holy power, are called to carry that mission forward.

Together.

Remember that, believers. Obedient Christian living is a **communal** task. Bringing healing, challenging evil, restoring broken and fallen areas of Creation is a task at which we struggle **together**.

Whenever the Bible speaks of becoming **like** Jesus, or being the Body of Jesus it speaks in the plural;  
It uses **WE** language..... not **ME** language.

And so **WE** face the challenge of bringing hope and restoration into Creation - into the lives of people we meet, into social structures that we face, industrial and institutional settings where we work and study, issues of nature and the environment. Infiltrating, influencing, challenging if needed, confronting at times.

Working the way yeast works in bread dough - bit by bit permeating the whole lump, shaping it, filling it.

In fact, in Luke 13, that's the metaphor Jesus gives to Christian living:  
Yeast in a lump of dough.

Actually, it's the only place in the Bible where the image of yeast is used in a positive sense. Everywhere else it represents sin, which in a negative way creeps through and permeates the whole of the lump of creation, causing disaster.

Jesus is saying that this negative influence now has competition. It is being counteracted. Meaning that life now has hope - tangible hope.

It doesn't mean that everything is going to slowly get better and better until one day we wake up and find ourselves in paradise. No. That is going to require a radical action - the dramatic return of Jesus at the end of time when He will, once for all, make everything new.

But it **DOES** mean that we are mandated to spread the hope, apply the healing, share the power of the Kingdom. We are called to live in the new Creation zone.

Everywhere - longing, praying, working toward the Day when, to swipe some language from the prophet Zechariah (ch.14), every horse, every pot, every bowl.....

**everything** in life and society

**nothing** exempt

will be restored and purified – holy to the Lord.

Which brings us to Communion.

Tomorrow will see the resumption of many challenges.

People that will need a listening ear. Difficult social issues that will need a Christian voice brought to bear on them. Economic challenges. Moral temptations. Environmental concerns.

And **we**, folks, aren't strong enough men and women to face them as images of Jesus. Not on our own.

We can't work signs, wonders, miracles.

We can't exude real hope.

We can't change lives.....

..... not on our own.

That can be done only by Jesus, the One stronger than the Strong Man.  
The One whose Manifesto, Mission Statement, we follow.

So come to the Sacrament.

Eat. Drink. Believe in Him who brings the Rescue.

We believe that the Bible teaches this to be a special moment.

That Christ is very tangibly, really, present.

His Holy Spirit works in a special, powerful way at Communion that takes it up a notch from what otherwise would happen.

It's much, much more than mere human commemoration.

We eat and drink heavenly refreshment and power.

So come!

Some of you have lives that are stuck in “disaster mode.”  
Feels like the Curse of Sin holds you down.  
Wheels spinning in the mud.  
Perhaps pain so bad you can hardly function.

Come to the Strong Man, Jesus, who alone can give you release.

Others of you know what Monday will bring.  
And you find it overwhelming.  
Come to the One who alone can give you strength to face it.

And then there are those of you not sure what to do.  
Come to the One in whose hands are all the wisdom of the Ages.

Eat and drink.  
And then go to live and to serve.  
Beyond the Great Disaster.  
In the hope and reality of Holy Rescue.

Looking, longing, praying and working towards the day of final Renewal.  
The Day of Christ's Return.