

Sermon #1,186: Genesis 3:1-15

2-14-16, Lent 1, Bethany-Princeton MN

(Hymns: 302, 430, 125.4/593; communion 251, 175, 325)

END OF THE COMMANDMENTS: SONS OF ADAM & DAUGHTERS OF EVE

Prayer: We give thanks to You, Lord Jesus Christ, for You accomplished the salvation of mankind by the tree of the cross that, where death arose, there life also might rise again; and that the serpent who once overcame by the tree of the garden might likewise by the tree of the cross be overcome. Help us to triumph by the victory of Your cross and passion! Amen. (*First part of the prayer – proper preface for Passiontide*)

The Sermon Text, Genesis 3:1-15 (v. 13-15). ¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” ²⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. ²⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the Chronicles of Narnia, C.S. Lewis calls the humans in his story “sons of Adam and daughters of Eve.” The Christ character, Aslan the Lion, says to Prince Caspian: “*You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve. And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth. Be content.*”

The 10 Commandments reveal that you are sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. As we finish our study of the commandments and all the sins they reveal, we go all the way back to the scene of the crime, the very first sin. Genesis 3:1 lets us enter Adam and Eve’s world when there is no sin in the world yet – how wonderful would that be! Over the next 13 verses we enter their world when there is sin but not yet a promise of forgiveness – how horrible is that! –as their sin ruined all creation.

They were facing God's judgment without the Gospel yet. That is the first thing you must hear about your sins. That they condemn you.

This is what we hear in the conclusion to the commandments: ***“God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore we should fear His wrath and do nothing against these commandments. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore we should also love and trust in Him and willingly do according to His commandments.”***

Although God had not given the commandments yet in Genesis 3, all of this was contained in God's command to Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He had given it to them for their good, to show forth their righteousness and holiness and live in contentment and praise of God. They must resist transgressing His commandment. They must exercise their righteousness. If they did so they'd continue to live in the favor of God in the Garden of Eden.

This is the message of the Law. It's all *if, if, if*, and *should, should, should*. It's only a comforting message to those who obey. The promises of the Law, which promise God's acceptance and approval, are given to those who do it; once you break His Law and disobey His command, the threats and punishments come. If this is the only message of God's love, then we must conclude we're excluded from it.

So what do the commandments do? They show you your sins and your sinfulness. We see this in our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Notice especially what the serpent didn't say. He didn't remind Eve that she had everything. He did not show her a panoramic view of God's creation that was only good, so she could be reminded that it was all made for her and her husband. He didn't let her see that God was taking perfect care of her in every way. He only showed her the tree with desirable fruit that was kept from her. He spoke lies to her about God. She listened to his words and wanted what God had forbidden.

This is the first sin, not the grabbing but the wanting, when Eve had this sinful desire. Then she came to Adam not just with the forbidden fruit, but with this desire for what God had forbidden, and Adam agreed. The first thing they felt after satisfying their sinful desire,

once they heard the voice of God, was shame. They tried to cover up, whereas before they sinned, Genesis records, ***“they were not ashamed”*** of their nakedness. Then they began to blame each other. All of this happened just before we hear God speak to the serpent in Genesis 3:14.

But think about what was going on inside them at the time God says these words. This is all so real! How many times haven't you thought: “What have I done?” or “How could I have said that, to my own parent, to the love of my life, to my child, my friend?” or “How could I have such an evil thought? Shame on me!” And you're glad people can't read your mind or know your thoughts.

The first sin tells how you could have done it. The devil does the same thing to you: keeps you from seeing how God is taking perfect care of you, makes sure that you look away from all the blessings, keeps you from being restful and contented, and reminds you only of what you don't have, what everyone else gets to do, how hard God is on you, tells you lie after lie, repackages sins as “choices” that you should have the power to make for yourself. You can look back at every sin and see how you did that; moreover, here you learn that Adam and Eve passed on to you, their own descendants, a constant inclination to do what Eve did.

But here we don't only see what sin is. We see the enormity of sin, one thing that is especially denied in our time. What Adam and Eve experience is not only guilt and shame, but also the recognition that your sin doesn't just affect you, it affects everyone and everything around you.

God said to Adam, **“Cursed is the ground for your sake.”** In the book *Crime and Punishment*, the main character who had committed a senseless murder asks the woman who loves him, *“What am I to do?”* and she says: *“What are you to do? Stand up! Go at once, this very minute, stand at the crossroads, bow down, first kiss the earth which you have defiled and then bow down to all the world and say to all men aloud, 'I am a murderer!' Then God will send you life again.”*

If it's shocking to hear such a sentiment, it's because we get used to thinking of our sins as not such a big deal, either because they don't seem to affect others very much, or they aren't the “big” sins, or they don't seem as bad as what others do. But God says in the Bible that if you commit one sin you are ***“guilty of all” (Ja 2:10).***

This is the message of the commandments, their first and main function: to show us our sins. But they also show us how much we need a Savior. This is when the first Gospel promise comes to Adam and Eve.

This is the drama of Genesis 3, a drama that is replayed in your life from day to day. The drama is when they have sinned, when they know their sin and are terrified because God had said, ***“In the day you eat of it you shall surely die,”*** but there is not yet a promise of the Gospel! This is hell. The mouth of hell is opening wide to receive them. The devil is taunting them. Just as when you know your sin, when you are filled with shame and oppressed by judgment, the devil is taunting you.

This is when you need the Gospel promise. It’s a dramatic moment in your life each day. Will you despair, give up, give in; or will you believe and have hope, will you smile and be of good cheer? This is where you are at the end of commandments, when they do their work. You can’t have a good ending by your strength! God must do this for you.

He does! Christ does it all, for you. In Romans 10:4 it says: ***“Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*** So the end of the commandments is not about you either having hope because you have obeyed, or being without hope because you disobeyed. The end of the commandments is Christ! At the end of the commandments you are intended to find Christ! God uses the commandments, it also says in the New Testament, as a tutor to lead you ... to Christ.

This is the picture: “There runs the endless way of the Law, bordered by naked trees whose branches hang down like whips. Steeper and steeper grows the pathway that leads to heaven. But suddenly Christ stands there in the middle of the road. The pathway has an end! The conscience, our own anxiety, and all slaves of the law bid us go the way of obedience to the very end in order to find peace with God. But the way of obedience *has no end*. It lies endlessly before you, bringing continually more severe demands and constantly growing indebtedness to God. If you seek peace on the road of the Law, you will find no peace. But now Christ is the end of the Law; the road ends at His feet, and here His righteousness is offered to everyone who believes. It is to that place, to Jesus only, that God has wanted to drive you with all your unrest and anguish of soul.” (*The Hammer of God*, p. 173, 2005 ed.; slightly edited)

This is how the fact that Adam and Eve are your first parents gives you not only the deepest shame, but also the greatest glory. We hear about this in Genesis 3:15. This is the Gospel – the first Gospel promise in the Bible. It was actually spoken to the devil, but listening in were Adam and Eve. That’s who it was for, troubled sinners: **“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”**

In such darkness that Adam and Eve were living with at that moment, this verse, this promise, is a bright shining light that totally shatters the darkness! Don’t you think Adam and Eve hated their own flesh, their own bodies, in which sin was now dwelling? Yet He says that their salvation would be found in the **“the woman's Seed,”** He would use their own flesh! This very name for Him, “Seed,” says that the Savior would be the promised “Offspring,” one who *shared* their human flesh, who would come in a very real way from their own bodies, would be born not of a *man and* a woman, but of **“the woman”** – a preview that He would be born of a virgin.

Also, He would **“bruise,”** crush, Satan's “head,” all his power. This foreshadows the very *method* of salvation, the cross, in saying Satan would **“bruise His heel.”** Adam and Eve, and all people, would be saved from this and every sin, by the promised Seed of the woman, the promised Son of the virgin, being the *suffering* Savior.

This is why it is glorious to be sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, to know them as your first parents. This promise belongs to you.

He came to share Adam and Eve's flesh, to take a true body. The human body God created out of the dust and formed Adam, and out of Adam's rib created Eve, and which, thanks to the fall into sin, must return to dust; your body that He formed meticulously and with loving care in your mother's womb, but in which you have committed so many sins in your life, the body in which you've been sinned against and hurt by others, and you feel all of it to the point that you wonder how your mouth and mind and hands can ever be clean from your sins; your body of which you can say with St. Paul, **“in me, (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells ... Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Ro 7:18, 24)** – it is that same flesh that Christ took as **“the woman's Seed.”**

In that body He kept from sinning, to count for you. In that body He bore your sins on the tree, not the Tree of Life but the tree of the cross that gives you life. In that body He crushed all the devil can do to you. He is still in that flesh, sharing your flesh.

You find His flesh in His Word where He speaks to you in human words, not only as God but also as Man. Also in baptism He came to you in His flesh and with His blood to cleanse you from all sin. And in His Supper He comes to be present with you not only as God, but also in the body He gave for you, the blood He shed for you.

His Word is preached, and His Supper is offered so regularly for you to meet Him, for Him to be the end of the commandments for you, so that on the road of the Law you meet the One who took all of your sins onto His back and into Himself, and walked the road of the cross to nail your sins to the cross and bury them in His grave.

We can do nothing better than to cling to His flesh in faith the way Adam and Eve did, to be sons of Adam and daughters of Eve by faith! *“You come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve. And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth. Be content.”* Amen!