

February 13, 2005

Lent 1

"You Can't Cover Sin with a Little Band-Aid"

GENESIS 2:7-9, 15-17, 3:1-7

The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground-- trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." ^{3:1} Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.

Imagine for a moment that a man goes to the doctor and discovers through a series of tests the arteries that feed his powerful heart muscle are severely blocked and restricted by cholesterol deposits. The doctor tells him the only option is to perform open-heart surgery that involves taking veins from other parts of the body and using them to bypass the blocked arteries. The man comes home and discusses this with his wife. Together they decide that they are going to solve the problem their own way without the doctor's help. The man is going to wear a little band-aid over his chest to cure the problem with his heart. When they tell their friends and family what they plan to do, all shake their heads in disbelief. How could two people, normally intelligent, be so strange in their thinking?

Talk about people acting strangely. Look at what Adam and Eve did after the fall into sin. Foolishly they thought that they could cover their nakedness and make themselves more presentable to God by sewing together fig leaves and covering their private parts.

Every person ever born after the fall has ingrained inside of them the thinking that they can cover their problem of sin by something they put together themselves. It is only by God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit that human hearts are led to see God must be the one to remove sin from us and cover us with a righteousness that only Jesus can provide. This morning we want to speak to you from these words in Genesis about the fall into sin. We want to make the important point that **"You Can't Cover Sin with a Little**

Band-Aid."

1) God's perfect world needs no band-aids

The original world that God made needed no band-aids. There was no heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other medical problems that need help. There were no broken relationships among people that always need patching and mending. Our text says, "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." There is something so majestic about these words. It does not say, "God formed man" it says, "The Lord God formed man." Genesis 1 uses the name "God" or "Elohim" for the creation of the world. Genesis 2 uses the name "Lord God" or "Yahveh" for the creation of man. It was the loving hand of the Lord God that formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

As we meditate on these words we think of the words from Psalm 139 that tell us, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I will praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." In Isaiah 64 it says, "Yet, O Lord, you are our Father, we are the clay and you are the potter, we are the work of your hand." The people that God made were not subject to death and decay, nor were they afflicted by the sin that makes our lives so miserable each week. How different is this account compared to the belief that people evolved over millions of years of time and that our ancestors were the apes that lived in the trees!

The love of the Lord that we see here in Genesis is seen further in the special place the Lord designed for these people. "He planted a garden in the east, in Eden." The word for garden has the thought of a splendid park. Can't you see the trees, the ferns, the flowers, the streams, the pools, the colorful birds, and the exotic animals living in harmony with each other? It was all intended to overwhelm these first people with God's personal care and love for them. No landscape architect today can ever come close to matching what the Lord provided for these people. The park like Garden of Eden needed no trimming, no irrigation lines, no fertilizer and no constant attention such as our parks and backyards needed today. Within this garden was the tree of life. Eating from that tree provided for them a life with God that would go on forever. What an amazing world the Lord had given to our first parents. Is it any wonder that we have inside of us this morning an aching and yearning for this Eden or this Paradise that will only be restored for us in the new heaven and new earth the Lord?

What about the other tree in the garden? Perhaps you have found yourself struggling with the question, "Why did God place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden and tell them they would die if they ate from the tree?" If you tell a little child, "Whatever you do not put that bean up your nose," you know what will happen when you turn your back. When you see the sign on the park bench that says, "Wet Paint. Do Not Touch" You can't help yourself. You just have to touch the paint to see if it is real. God is not setting a temptation in front of his people similar to a bean up the nose or wet paint on a park bench. The Lord is giving his creatures, his living creatures filled with love for him, one command to obey. They are not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He is giving them the blessing of exercising their free will and thereby worshipping him.

Martin Luther said in his lectures on Genesis, "This tree of the knowledge of good and evil was Adam's church, his altar, his pulpit. Here he was to yield to God the obedience he owed, to give recognition to the word and will of God, to give thanks to God, and call upon God for aid against temptation." Adam was created holy and righteous before God, and in love the Lord God gave him the opportunity to put this into practice in his life. He could use his intellect to put into practice obedience to God, and exercise his will and enjoy every moment giving free rein to his emotions and feelings.

Imagine living in world where you do not have to put band-aids on problems to fix them. No visits to the doctor for the ailing body. No worry about making things right after you have really made a mess of things whether it was a project at work, or some careless words you spoke to someone in your family. So much of life is spent fixing things and trying to make them better. That was not God's original plan for us.

2) Our sinful world needs more than band-aids

What a contrast we see in the perfect world of Genesis chapter 2 and the imperfect world that comes through the fall into sin! Notice first the power and strength Satan has to deceive and twist the truth. Genesis 3 says, "The serpent was more crafty than all of the wild animals." Our Lord Jesus identified this snake when he said to his Jewish leaders who twisted the truth, "You belong to your father, the devil... he was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. He is the a liar and the father of lies."

The other day I was listening to a radio show as I was driving and it was called "The No Spin Zone." What amazes us about Satan is his ability to twist or spin the truth. We see this ability to spin the truth in the way he tempted Jesus during those 40 days in the desert. He twisted and spun the truth about satisfying hunger by turning stones into warm hot loaves of bread. Are you hungry? Take this stone. Make it a bun fresh out of the oven, dripping with butter, and even a little honey or strawberry jam it. "Look at all the kingdoms of the world, bow down and worship me, and if you don't want to do that, why not devote yourself to making this world a better place to live instead of suffering on a cross."

Satan sure shows his cunning deceit in the way he approached Eve. He tries to raise doubt in her mind with the words, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from the tree in the garden?'" How many times has Satan not tried to raise doubt in your mind, or at least been successful in getting you to forget the promises of your God? And then he appeals to pride. "You will not die, for God knows that in the day that you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." He showed her a path that he said would lead to greater happiness and joy in her life. It says that she looked at the fruit and came to the conclusion it was "desirable for gaining wisdom." Examine some of the times this past week that you took a path that led you to sinful behavior. Look at how you started down the path, and you will always discover it began with Satan telling you he had a better way for you to live your life that would make you much happier.

Notice what happens to Adam. "She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." Adam was there all the time, Adam, the man God made from the dust of

the ground, the man who said of his wife she is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, the man who was to be the head of the home by order of creation. He stands by her side. He watches as she is tempted, watches as she eats, and even partakes of the fruit with her. The Christian church in these last days does not need more men like Adam. It needs men who take a leadership role in the home, leading and guiding the family, and loving their wives as much as Christ loved the church.

"Then the eyes of both them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Their eyes were opened to see that good was lost and evil was firmly entrenched in their lives. Their puny methods to cover their nakedness shows a sinful nature that will try all sorts of band-aids and quick fixes to cover the problem of sin. In the next verses we hear how they try to hide from God when he comes to them in the cool of the day. Even their understanding of the God who made them became corrupted by sin. You and I were born into this world with this corrupted thinking in our hearts. Romans 8 says the natural mind is hostile to God and his ways.

The merciful, kind and gracious God who saw his people rebel against him and sew fig leaves gave a promise that filled them with hope. He promised a Savior who would crush the devil's head. Today on this first Sunday in Lent we see Jesus begin his work of crushing Satan's power. Hand to hand and toe to toe, Jesus battles with him in the desert for 40 days. Only in Jesus do you have a robe of righteousness that actually covers you and precious blood that cleanses you from all the victories the devil won in your life. Only in Jesus do you have hope of standing before God not naked in sin or covered with little band-aids of good here and there, but covered in his righteousness. Amen.