

“Garden to Garden” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Lent Midweek 1 March 9, 2022

- I. **Genesis 3:22–24; Revelation 22:1–5.**
- II. **Have you ever considered what creation was like in the beginning?**
 - a. The Bible tells us it was a beautiful, perfect place... a true paradise.
 - b. God created the heavens and the earth... He created all living creatures that could walk, fly and swim...
 - c. God created humans... different than all the rest of the creatures... man and woman were created in His image... kind of like the pinnacle of God’s good design
 - d. The Book of Genesis says over and over, “God saw that it was good.”
 - i. Not only good, but it was perfect...
 - e. So, He puts the man and woman in the Garden of Eden, this beautiful environment that required no hard labor to exist.
 - i. Everything was in abundance... the weather was not an issue... disease and death were not even considered... It was perfect.
 - ii. Adam and Eve didn’t have a worry in the world, because everything was exactly right...exactly how God intended it to be.
 - f. At the top of the list in this whole picture is the relationship that God had with humanity.
 - i. The intimacy and connection that God had with man and woman was amazing... and a harmony existed that was based on perfect love.
 - ii. Recently, we remembered how Moses was unique in his connection to God, but in Eden, God and man walked hand in hand, talked face to face, and lived in perfect communion.
 - iii. Imagine that for a moment, as the Creator dwelled with the created.
 - g. All this perfection and goodness is the beginning of the story...
- III. **But somewhere along the line, humans decided to be like God.**
 - a. Of course we see satan at work (just like Sunday’s message on the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness) when he tempts Adam and Eve.
 - b. As perfect and blessed as everything was, the devil was able to cast doubt on God’s integrity and His plan.
 - i. He was able to get Adam and Eve to question their relationship with God... to wonder if maybe God was hiding something from them... maybe God was holding out on them and their ability to be like Him.
 - ii. As their pride took over, all the good around them couldn’t overcome the need to be God, and they went for the power grab.
 1. Literally they grabbed the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... and as good as it looked... it meant death.
 - c. This harmonious...beautiful... perfect place was lost.
 - i. Paradise lost in an instant.

- ii. The perfect relationship was broken... and a huge gap between God and man opened up that never existed before.
- iii. Even eternal life was traded in for eternal suffering and death.
- d. The pinnacle of God's creation, Adam and Eve were now on their way out of the Garden of Eden and God's angels blocked the entrance.
- e. Can you imagine the hopelessness, shame, and sadness that they felt as they walked out of that gate?
 - i. They were exiled from a perfect place of all good things and a perfect relationship with God – into darkness, death, struggle, and the harsh reality of being cut off...
 - ii. They were cut off from the Garden, and cut off from the Tree of Life.

IV. **Dust to dust.**

- a. We're created in God's image from the dust, and now we return to the dust in shame.
- b. We're created to live forever in the presence of God, and now we're exiled... we live in darkness and fear and death.
- c. It's a tragic story when you think about Adam and Eve... but that also extends to their kids... and even to each one of us.
- d. We don't get a pass just because it was a long time ago!
 - i. We are born in exile – without access to God and His presence
 - ii. We are born in a world of sin that has made its way into creation itself along with our own hearts.
 - iii. Sin is what separates or exiles all humanity from God.
 - iv. Sin also exiles us from heaven, or paradise and perfection.

V. **I guess there is a way to return by our own doing...**

- a. If we can become perfect – never sinning against God and His perfect will for us – then we would be seen as righteous in God's sight.
 - i. As perfect people, we could approach the blocked gate at the entrance of paradise and just walk right in...
 - ii. We could fix everything on our own that way – even hang out with God just like Adam and Eve did.
 - iii. All it takes is being absolutely perfect and righteous in every way
- b. But the truth is that it's impossible to fix or save ourselves by being perfect... our sin is a part of us that requires an outside intervention.
 - i. We cannot return from our exile without God's help.
 - ii. We cannot be in God's presence without His change in us...
 - iii. So we're stuck... sinful people who got exiled like all the rest.

VI. **Our only hope is the One who can restore us.**

- a. Only one Person can get us back to the garden.
- b. The Redeemer... the Messiah... the Christ

- i. Just as God promised Adam and Eve as they were exiled from the Garden of Eden, He would send a Savior to fight the devil and restore what was lost.
 - 1. That's exactly what Jesus the Messiah did when He fought the battle by dying on a cross.
 - 2. Our sin and exile became His burden... and His body was the sacrifice that should have been ours.
 - 3. He took on what we could not, and in the end, He did win the battle so we could return from exile...
 - 4. By God's grace we are not resigned to the exile of sin and death.
- c. And now, the work is done.
 - i. Jesus won.
 - ii. All that was lost and hopeless has changed to a huge victory because of God's faithfulness and love in Jesus.
 - iii. For all the work we do to keep ourselves out of the garden, God has done that much more to bring us home.
- d. We can believe the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross when He promises paradise to those who trust in Him.
 - i. This is the paradise that was lost, and yet we will experience when we go home to Jesus one day.
 - ii. I can see it now... the gates of Eden wide open...
 - iii. The Lamb on His throne... the waters of life flowing around the tree of life...
 - iv. The light from God that needs nothing else to supplement it... and God dwells with us just as He spent time with Adam and Eve.
 - v. This is the bright, hopeful future we now have... coming out of the exile and into paradise. Amen. ¹

¹ based on the sermon series, "Return from Exile: A Lenten Journey," Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 2017.