

Texts: Genesis 3:1-15

Sunday 1st September 2019

Brightons Parish Church

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Last week we began our new sermon series on ‘the kingdom of God’ and we read from chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, where we saw the pattern of the kingdom, with God’s people, living in God’s place, under God’s rule and enjoying God’s blessing.

We saw that God made mankind in His own image, and then placed humanity in a garden, to tend it and care for it, and with only one rule, under which they were to fulfil their mandate, thus living within God’s ways and under His care, enjoying His blessing, His presence, and His rest.

Life was perfect, there was perfect relationship between humanity and God, between Adam and Eve, and between humanity and the wider creation. It was a perfect creation, described as ‘very good’, and it gave the pattern of the kingdom.

But, can I ask – do you feel that perfection? Is life a bunch of rosy relationships and experiences for you? Are you living the dream? I do hope life is good for you, but even if it is, not one of us escapes the brokenness of our world.

There may be tensions at home, or in the family – it’s easy to roll out of bed and straight into an argument at the beginning of the day. Or maybe you are on your own, with a different kind of brokenness, with a yearning for companionship, maybe where there has never been one, or maybe where one has been lost.

You may experience that brokenness in your place of work, or in the community, with the people you see and interact with. There's that individual you just don't get on with; there's that feeling you don't matter, or you're being overlooked; there's that guy down the road who's in a dark, dark place; there's that young family who come to the foodbank.

And in the midst of all that hurt and brokenness, there's that question, that frustration which comes to mind: where are you God? Do you exist? Do you care? Because I just don't feel you close right now.

I think we all know that we live in a broken world, that it's not quite as it should be, that there is something deeply wrong, but not only around us, but it's also within us.

Because if we're honest, we know that we cannot live up to our own standards and hopes. We made that promise to change, and well...we've still not changed. We want to be more loving and gracious and kind...but, well, criticism and anger just come so much more easily. There's something deeply wrong, and it's not only in the world around us, it's within us as well, and I'm sure you can put your finger on the things, where you feel the brokenness.

The claim of the Christian faith is that here in Genesis chapter 3, we see where it all began to go wrong, where that brokenness entered in. For in Genesis 3, we're taken back to the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve in perfection, with only one rule, **given in Genesis 2:**

'...you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

And then, Genesis 3 comes along, where Adam and Eve are persuaded to doubt God's word, it is distorted and questioned by the serpent, such that God's motives are distorted as well:

'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' (Genesis 3:4-5)

And so, Adam and Eve give way to temptation, they take and eat the fruit of the tree, that fruit which was forbidden. But the thought might come to our minds, why was this so terrible? Surely it's good to know the difference between right and wrong?

Well, what we need to understand here is that...

‘the knowledge of good and evil’ refers not simply to knowing what is right and wrong, but rather to *deciding* what is right and wrong.

In taking the fruit, Adam and Eve were in effect saying to God, “From now on, we want to set the standards, God, we want to be the ones who make the laws.” It was a blatant act of rebellion to the King who gave them life and every good gift. And that has been at the heart of our problem ever since, that is at the heart of what we call ‘sin’: our rejection of God, and the establishing of our kingdom.

And maybe that seems like no big deal to you, maybe it seems quite trivial. **But the brokenness of our world**, of our lives, begins here in Genesis 3 and it ripples out. **For with Adam and Eve**, where there had once been complete trust and intimacy, that is now gone and replaced...

with shame and distance, they seek to cover their nakedness. And then the battle of the sexes begins, and relationships within humanity are broken.

Also, where once Adam and Eve enjoyed the perfect creation, and life was very good, now God foretells that life will be very different, with greater pain, greater toil, greater wrestling with the issues of evil. Indeed, in the chapters after this, the world goes so horribly wrong.

But finally, Adam and Eve, who once enjoyed perfect relationship with God, wherein they experienced His blessing and rest, they are now told to leave the garden, they are driven out of God's presence. And with the breaking of that divine-human relationship, what God foretold comes true: death comes into human experience.

The pattern of the kingdom is lost, for now no one is God's people by nature, we've turned away from Him. We no longer live in His place; we are banished from the garden. And instead of living under His rule and enjoying His blessing, His rule is now rejected, we live in disobedience, and we experience the brokenness of our world.

That is where the Bible could have ended, it might have been only 3.5 pages long, with a perfect world destroyed by human rebellion.

But God is a gracious God, and whilst there is no reason He should do anything to help us, nevertheless He does. And He does so even with Adam and Eve, there is still hope here in Genesis 3, for in the darkness there are glimmers of light.

In verse 9, we read:

‘But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’’

This comes straight after their rebellion, Adam and Eve are trying to hide from Almighty God, and yet He comes seeking, He comes calling, He comes in grace.

At the opposite end of the tale, there is grace once more, for God takes those shabby, pathetic coverings of their fig leaves, and replaces them, **we read in verse 21:**

‘The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.’

God gives a more fitting and proper covering for the life they will now live outside the garden. In this act of grace, a life is laid down, so that humanity can continue to live.

And then in between these two acts of grace, **we read in verse 15:**

The Lord God said,...‘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.’

In grace, God makes a promise, hinting to a time in the future when a son of Eve, a human being, will destroy evil.

And all three of these acts of grace are most fully completed and displayed **in the life of Jesus**. He is that son of Eve, but also that son of God, who came to destroy evil, who came to destroy sin and hell and death itself.

In Jesus, we find provision, a covering, wherein guilt and condemnation, wherein shame, are dealt with completely, and we are restored to right standing with God. In Jesus we also find freedom from bondage to sin, to our rebellion and disobedience, for through faith in Jesus, God promises to begin a new life in us, to overcome our internal brokenness, and bring forth the character of Jesus. What's more, God promises in Jesus, God *evidences* in Jesus, in His death and resurrection, that death is conquered, it does not have the final say, in Him there is a means to return to the garden, to the place of life, and share in life eternal with God. In Jesus, life can and does begin again, and it does so because He laid down His life for us on the cross. Finally, in Jesus, God comes to us, He comes seeking, He comes calling. He comes inviting us back into relationship with Himself...

that even amidst the brokenness we feel, there might be hope, there might be promise of a future day wherein all will be made right once more.

And to share in that hope, we need do nothing more, than what Caroline has done – not in becoming a church member, that's not how we share in the promise. No, we share in the promise through faith, through faith in Jesus, through confessing Him as our Lord and Saviour, to which Caroline testified this day, as she confirmed her faith.

Friends, I hope you share in this faith, in this hope. But if you don't, it's only a step away – all you need do is put your faith in Jesus. If that's something you'd like to do, please come have a chat with me.

To all who claim such a faith, there is hope, and there is the invitation to share in the meal of the Lord's Supper, for here, we feast and rejoice in all we have in Jesus, for He is the embodiment of God's grace amidst our brokenness, and the means by which the pattern of the kingdom of God will one day be restored.

To Him, be all glory, now and forever. Amen.