

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday In Lent, March 1, 2015

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 369, 323:1, 318, 321, 373:5-7.

Lessons: Genesis 3:1-15, 1 Peter 1:23-2:10, Matthew 4:1-11.

Sermon Text: Genesis 3:14-24.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

There is a law of physics, a law of nature and of course of nature's God, which says that for every action there is an opposite and equal reaction. We could illustrate this in many ways, but I want you to think of a ball suspended on a rope. If you push that ball, it will swing back at you.

Have you ever thought of the sin of Adam and Eve in just these terms? Because Adam and Eve sinned, all mankind since that time has been suffering the results or "reactions" of those sins.

When we think of Genesis chapter 3 and the fall into sin, the chief result that we usually think about is the first gospel promise. That gospel promise assures us that a Savior will come. That is found in these words: "*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.*"

Those words are the promise that Satan, the old evil foe, the enemy of God and of all mankind, who took the form of a snake at this temptation, will be destroyed. His head will be crushed, which will be a fatal blow, but the one who kills him, the descendant of the woman, will suffer great harm, great injury. In that we see the fact that Jesus Christ suffered a great deal, and died. That is the fulfillment of this, the first gospel promise in the Scriptures.

But we don't often look at the specific curses of sin that we humans must live with here on earth. Today we look at

THE CURSES OF SIN WE MUST LIVE WITH HERE ON EARTH

1. God defines specific curses for Eve.
2. God defines specific curses for Adam
3. God defines curses for all mankind.
4. So what hope is there?

God first speaks to Eve. "*To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.'*"

Childbirth, I have been told and many have observed and even experienced, is or can be one of the most painful things a woman can endure. Sometimes other severe pains are compared to childbirth. That tells us it is a terrible pain. God says he will increase women's pain in childbirth. In childbirth she will experience greater pain than she might normally experience from other illnesses. Every time Eve or one of her descendants would bring a child into the world, the pain of childbirth would be a reminder that sin brings sorrow and suffering instead of satisfaction and joy.

In the fall into sin Eve sought to act independently of her husband. She had assumed a position of leadership and so God reminded her that his creation order still stood and would continue to stand. "*Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.*"

Sin and selfishness would now affect the wife's relationship to her husband and his to her, yet sin has not changed God's original design for headship in the family. The New Testament reaffirms this and asks Christian women to find joy and contentment fulfilling God's role for them. "*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must*

be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." (1 Timothy 2:11-15 NIV)

This was the woman's burden and punishment for her transgression. Whereas without sin the propagation of the human race would have been a completely welcome, joyful function and all the other work of life would be a pleasant burden, the troubles and burdens of woman, especially those connected with pregnancy and birth, are most severe. Moreover, woman was to be dependent upon her husband. She was to be in submission to him, and he was to exercise authority as ruler in the house.

However, we must remember that the husband is not to be an unloving, hateful, spiteful boss, tyrant, dictator in the marriage. Scripture never gives unlimited power and dominion for a man to be mean, spiteful, and hateful toward woman, especially toward his wife. Listen to the mutual responsibilities of husbands and wives, as God writes in Ephesians 5: ***"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church."*** (21-29)

The Lord God then addresses Adam and announces a discipline suited to his particular sins. Remember that Adam had surrendered his leadership role in marriage. Adam had been the stronger vessel, even before the Fall. But he obeyed the voice of his wife and ate of the forbidden tree. Because he had submitted to his wife instead of leading in love and had gone contrary to God's command not to eat the forbidden fruit, he would experience insubordination on the part of the soil, which up until now had been under his complete control. Even the soil would rebel. To remind Adam of his sin and to help him in his daily battle with a sinful nature, the Creator cursed the ground. Adam and his children and all generations to come would experience misery and difficulty gaining livelihood out of the soil. Therefore the soil, which until had now brought forth willingly and in rich abundance, was to be stricken with the curse of God, with the result that man would be able to eat the fruit of the soil only with sorrow, with the continual consciousness of the constant hard labor which is now necessary in bringing forth food. It will be an unceasing battle with thorns, thistles, and weeds. Only in the sweat of his face, through difficult toil, is man now able to eat his food.

God had given Adam dominion over his creation, in order to protect and preserve it. That had been Adam's attitude while he still possessed the image of God, that is, perfect and sinless. But a terrible change came over him when he lost God's image. You remember how Adam had tried to hide from God, how he lied to God, how he tried to take advantage of his wife by shifting the blame to her.

We see the same trends in the human race today. God's human creatures, originally designed to exercise God-like dominion over creation, now take advantage of it and exploit it and one another. One writer said "ugly words have entered our vocabulary – words like smog and pollution and acid rain and endangered species and abortion." It's clear why God would not want such creatures to have unlimited dominion over his creation.

The final penalty God pronounced for Adam's sin was that his body, into which the Creator had breathed the breath of life, would one day return to the material from which it had originally been made. What a terrible message for Adam to hear! Dust was your origin and dust will be your destiny. In God's solemn announcement we see the reason people are afraid to die. Death is something that should never have been, something totally unnatural, a violent intrusion into God's good plan. For with the Fall the curse of God went into effect. The germ of death was placed into the body of man. His body was now mortal, and destined to return to the earth from which it was originally taken. That is the wages and the curse of sin. This curse has extended over the entire world, the result being a degenerating of all creation, corruption, death, and destruction. And all that God created would now suffer. If it were not for the fact that the promise of Christ, the Messiah, stands between sin and punishment, we should be without comfort in the misery, distress, and tribulation of the earth.

The faithful God had appeared to Adam and Eve in an amazing display of his mercy. Not only had he exposed their sin, but he had announced his great good plan of deliverance from their sins and that was the first part of his message. He had designed appropriate discipline for each of them. And another terrible result of these first sins against God is the fact that man was forever driven out of paradise.

“Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.” The name which Adam applied to his wife called her “life,” or “source of life,” because she became the mother of the entire human race. The birth of children and all human life was dependent upon her.

We see also that ***“The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”*** So the first real clothing of man was God’s work. He gave them coats of skins, which they were to wear as a covering for their nakedness and as a protection against the rigors of a changed climate. Before this, there was no death in the world. Now men were permitted to kill and sacrifice animals for their own use. This act of God also serves as a basis for all order and decency in the matter of dress under all circumstances. If, however, clothing serves sensuality instead of modesty, then it becomes a tool in the service of sin.

Up until now man had it easy. But the garden contained something unusual which could make man’s sinful life extremely difficult. ***“And the LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.”*** Man had become, in a manner of speaking, like one of the persons of the Godhead. He knew good and evil. Unfortunately, it was because of his disobedience that he came to know evil. Up until now man knew only good. We could say that he was naïve, and didn’t see sin in all its horribleness.

He brought sin upon himself, and it was not something mankind should be proud of. Man had disobeyed God, and the sentence of punishment had been spoken by God. But God did not want man to live forever under the curse of sin. So, to prevent that, the Lord now formally expelled Adam and Eve from the lovely, perfect garden which had been their home.

“After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” Man could not get back into the garden because of the fact that God placed cherubim armed with a flaming sword on the east side, which appears to have been the only accessible entrance. Now when we think of cherubs, another form of the word cherubim, we may think of cuddly, angel-like creatures. However, these were fierce creatures to keep man away. To attempt to pass meant certain death. Man would henceforth know of the existence of paradise, and may even know the location of the tree of life, at least until the time of Noah and the great flood, but man could not return. This fact was to remind him also of the time of the final perfection, when sin will be destroyed forever, death will be abolished, and the true tree of life will bear fruit for those who partake of salvation throughout eternity.

So what hope is there? God tells us again of this tree of life in the book of Revelation. ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”*** (Revelation 2:7) In the last chapter of the Bible we read: ***“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*** (Revelation 22:12-14) Then we will live forever, not under the curses of sin, but in perfection and blessedness.

So in the promise and the curses spoken after the fall into sin, we find a sobering reminder of the results of sin. But despite these curses, we must never forget the grace-filled Gospel promises of Genesis 3:15: ***“I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*** Both Adam and his wife received the first Gospel proclamation and they believed the promise. That points forward to the Savior to come, who would crush Satan and earn eternal life for mankind. May we, by the working of the Holy Spirit, always believe this promise, never doubt God, and seek to live in God’s ways until he calls us home through death to eternal life. Amen.