



Sermon – March 14, 2021
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Verses Covered This Week

Genesis 3:8 – 24

Romans 5:15 - 18

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me to Genesis chapter 3 this morning, Genesis 3, as we start our four-week Easter series called Love Reigns. And if you rewind the clock a year from right now, on this Sunday last year was our first Sunday where the church was shut down. Where we were gathered together by video, sitting in our living rooms. And isn't it great to be back together in person here in the room? You know, last week we were working through Colossians and we paused there. But we saw in 2:15 the way that Paul portrays how God accomplishes our victory over our enemies through the cross of Christ. And now for the next four weeks, as we work through the Old Testament, we're going to see ways that God anticipated that same victory over our enemies that would come through the cross of Christ. And we're going to do that now beginning in Genesis 3 and verse 8, if you'll follow along with me.

⁸And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰And he said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" And the women said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Let's pray.

Right now, each of you take a moment in the quietness of your own heart to ask the Lord to clear the distractions from your head and to focus your attention on Christ.

Father, we're coming to You with expectation that You will meet us in Your word and You will make us more like Jesus and we're praying that You do that even now through Your Spirit. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Well, have you ever walked into the front door of your house and just felt like something was off? That something wasn't the way it was supposed to be? That exact situation happened to an old college roommate of mine from here at A&M. His name was Isaac, and after he finished school, he travelled internationally. He was living in Thailand at the time and his wife and him had come back from work. And when they entered into the front door of their apartment, they were expecting what they normally experienced. To be greeted by their cat who would crawl across that pathway and welcome them and everything would be as they expected it to be. But when they walked in, something felt different. The cat wasn't there. There was an eerie sense that something wasn't right. And as they came into the apartment, they began to look around and from down the hallway, towards their kitchen, they could hear a dull noise. It sounded a bit like a hissing sound. And as they made their way into the kitchen, and they looked into what they saw there, they were shocked to see that their cat was in a standoff with a snake that had gotten into their apartment. Now this is Thailand. It's not just any old garden snake or even a rattlesnake like you and I might see. There was a King Cobra in their kitchen. And this cat was holding it at bay. And if you're them, imagine, what do you do in that moment? Of course, they retreat as fast as they can. But they're fairly new to this area. They don't know, is this a normal occurrence or not. So they walk down the hallway of their apartment and they knock on their neighbor's door. Now, granted, they don't know how to speak Thai very well and so they're trying to communicate across a language barrier. And they get their neighbor to come down to their apartment hoping that he'll know exactly how to fix the problem. Well, he walks in and they walk him down, and I don't think he really fully understood what he was signing up for. Because the moment that he rounded the corner and looked into the kitchen and saw that cobra, he was out of there as fast as possible. He probably moved apartments the next day. There's an unsettling nature to what happens when you have a serpent invading your home.

When we come to Genesis 3 this morning, that's precisely what we see happening in the Garden of Eden. That the home of Adam and Eve now has an invasion taking place. And this reality, this passage, echoes down all throughout the ages. That what happens to Adam and Eve in the garden in Genesis 3 transforms the world in a way that anticipates what God is going to do at Easter. And the problem with coming to a passage like this is it can be too familiar to keep its force. We've seen it in children's story books with strategically positioned hair and there's a familiarity, the story of what happens. It can lose its sense of punch; its sense of power. But as I serve as our pastor, you will probably hear in the months and the years ahead me refer to this passage, this text, almost as often as any other one in the Bible. Why? Because it's so foundational for what life is like in a broken world. And what we're going to find this morning is that Genesis 3 points ahead to Easter. And it does it by showing us three things about the way that God is going to save us in the future through the cross of Jesus Christ. And you'll notice the first dimension of that back in the passage we've already read. When we see how God restores our brokenness.

So think about what's happening here in Genesis 3. There is a reversal. You move now from creation to, in a sense, a de-creation. Where God has turned away from man, man has turned away from God. The man now submits himself to the beast. The creation now rebels against mankind. There is this reversal that takes place through the fall of sin. There's a brokenness, a shattering. We know that concept of a fall from grace. It means that you were at a high point and now you're brought low. Man is made in the image of God and yet like that cell phone that you

drop where the screen cracks but the display still shows its image, it is now a fractured image. It is shattered. There is a brokenness that enters into the world. And what Genesis 3 will show us this morning is how Easter restores several relationships that are broken by sin. You'll notice back in verse 8 how Easter restores our broken relationship with creation. So why is our relationship broken? Well, when sin enters into the world, it fractures all of the universe and that's why it tells us in verse 8 that the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. Their guilt overwhelms them. Their running to sin causes them to run from God. And now they are hiding in the abundance they were intended to enjoy. And I can't help but wonder if that same reality is true for some of you in the room or watching online. That guilt disqualifies us in our own minds from following after God. We run from that call to missions. We run from that place of service. We run from that commitment that we know we are supposed to follow through on because we're hiding with Adam in our sin. It breaks our relationship with creation. But notice in verses 9 and 10, Easter also restores our broken relationship with God Himself.

So God appears in Eden like He had done many times before and He says to the man, "Adam, where are you?" Now why does He ask this question? Well, it's not because God is unaware. It's because He is undone. He sees their sin and it burdens His heart. He confronts them in their brokenness. And that brokenness is on display because of the way that they react in verse 10. It tells us, "I heard the sound of You in the garden and I was afraid." The brokenness of our sin separates us from God. Where once Adam and Eve were fearing God, they're not afraid of Him. And that same reality, that same brokenness is experienced by each one of us because of our own sin. But notice what happens next. Because in verses 11 to 13 we see the way that Easter restores our broken relationship with each other. And so why is that relationship fractured? It's because our alienation from God can overflow in an alienation with one another. And we see that playing out in the life of Adam and Eve where after the first sin of eating of the forbidden fruit, you'll see the second sin taking place there in verse 12. That when God confronts Adam, He shifts the blame. He says, "The woman You gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I ate it." He blames the woman. Then he blames God. And then when God confronts Eve right after that, she blames the serpent. And that same tendency to shift the blame, to move the responsibility to others, echoes through the ages. This time last year, my family was heading out from Nashville on a Spring Break road trip down to College Station in anticipation of a view of a call the next weekend that didn't happen until a month later. Well, right now, there are also spring break trips happening all around our state as families head out on the road. And I imagine if your family road trips are anything like ours, they're not always full of joy and excitement. There can be some hostility in the moment. And I can notice when I'm looking in the rear view mirror and see two of our kids at odds with one another and I confront them in that moment, so often the first refrain is to say, "He did it first." Or when I ask them what they did, they'll explain in perfect detail what the other person did, but somehow they can't remember what they themselves did in that moment. Unless we think that's only something that happens we are young, we just get more sophisticated as adults. It's easy to blame a spouse, a coworker, a boss to do exactly what Adam and Eve are doing to shift that blame. It's like one author says, the fastest way to pull two people apart is sinning together. There is a broken relationship with God that overflows in a broken relationship with one another. So how is it that Easter restores the brokenness of sin?

Well, I want you to see on the screen the way that the New Testament speaks to this in Romans 5:15 – 18. We see this contrast between the brokenness that comes with the first Adam and the restoration that comes with the second Adam, Jesus Christ. Here's what it says:

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. *And he keeps going.* ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

So Paul paints this picture contrasting the first Adam and a second Adam. Jesus succeeds where Adam fails. And through this new Son, this anticipated Messiah, He restores what is broken in this world. He brings things back together. So this passage speaks first of the way that Easter restores what is broken. But notice with me next, we're going to see now back in verses 14 through 19, the way that second, God reverses our curse. Look at what he says here beginning in verse 14.

¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, but you shall bruise his heel." ¹⁶To the woman He said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." ¹⁷And to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

So what we see here is that sin brings a curse upon the world and with that curse comes a judgment. But what we find as we turn our hearts towards Easter is that Easter reverses the curse. It changes the curse that takes place here in Genesis 3. You'll notice the way that it speaks there in verse 14 first of a curse that comes upon the serpent. Look back at 14. He says, "Cursed above all livestock, above every beast of the field." And that it tell them from, that he will, that dust he will eat all the days of his life. There is this sense of judgment that comes upon the serpent because he has led humanity into sin. In this picture of eating the dust, in that ancient culture was a picture of victory. After your enemy had defeated you, they would lay you low in surrender where it's as if you're licking the dust from the ground in surrender to a conquering king. And that's what he is hinting at will happen through the gospel of Jesus Christ. I can't help but wonder this morning, how many of you like me are afraid of snakes. I remember a couple of years ago when our boys were young, we went out to the Park Hudson walking trails not far from here down Boonville Road. And when you park and you begin on the path, it's got

the sign next to it that shows you all the wildlife you might see on the trail. It's got some fun, pleasant ones, but then it's got this long list of snakes on there. And then some of them have like a skull and crossbones on them to signify they're poisonous. And my boys were at the stage in which when they saw the sign, they took that to mean we were guaranteed to encounter those animals on the walk. So they weren't having any of it. They wouldn't even think about walking on the path. And so in a moment of brilliance, I thought to myself, "I'll prove to them how sure I am that we don't need to worry." And I said to them, "I'll tell you what, I'm so confident we're not going to encounter a snake, if we come across one, I will let it bite me." That's how confident I am that it's not going to happen. Well, guess what, that totally backfired. That made them more afraid. "No! You're going to get bit, dad! We can't go!" There is this inherent fear of snakes in many of us. Genesis 3 explains the reason why. That there is an innate human rage against the serpent that is rooted in this curse that comes upon him in this moment. This curse upon the serpent that goes hand in hand now with the curse that comes upon the man and the woman. Because we see the way that the curse goes on in verses 16 when he speaks a word of curse upon the family to the woman. He says to her, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." Now notice what God does not do in this judgment, in this curse. He does not curse her with barrenness. And we'll understand why that's significant when we look in just a moment at the promise of Genesis 3:15. Because he tells her that an offspring will come from her that will reverse the curse. If he curses her with barrenness, then that promise will fail. But instead, the curse that comes upon her is the agony of birth and the animosity of a broken relationship in marriage. Those two things at the core of what it looks like to be faithful to God in the family will now be affected by this curse. But it goes on right after that to show that the curse doesn't just affect us at the level of our family, but also at the level of our work. So when he speaks to the man in verses 17 through 19, notice some of the things he says. "Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life." Skip down to verse 18. "Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you." Verse 19, "By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread." There's a sense in which the creation will now fight back against the leadership and rulership of humanity. That there is a resistance from the ground to what God has called us to do in our vocation and in our work. Perhaps we feel that in unique ways over this pandemic season. I came across a scientist who said, "If you were to gather all the microbes of the disease or COVID and gather them from all across the world and put them together in one place, it would be so small that you could fit them in the size of two Dr. Pepper cans. Infinitesimally small. And yet with this massive effect in our broken world. The creation is against us. There is this opposition whether it's the weeds that are already growing in your yard or the blue screen of death that you experience on your computer. That resistance, that opposition, that comes is a part of the curse and the danger for you and me is that we can get so used to the effects of this curse that it feels like it's normal. It just is what it is. That there is no problem, that we can become content with the broken world that we experience. And yet in this Genesis 3 promise of a curse, there is also the promise of a reversal of the curse. A reversal that comes about through Easter. And that reversal is seen, first described in the Scripture in Genesis 3:15. Don't miss it. It is a promise of spiritual warfare. Notice how he says it there. I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring. This is the first promise of salvation. It radiates through the Scriptures and from this moment forward, every passage of Scripture is transformed by this verse. The entire Old Testament is an explanation of how this becomes a reality. So when you are reading your Bible in the Old Testament and you come across those genealogies that list those difficult names that you can't

pronounce that are in there for purposes that you don't understand. The reason they are there is in order to show you that God is faithful to keep His promise in Genesis 3:15. That one day, the offspring of this woman would come who would wage war against the kingdom of darkness and deliver us from the oppression of sin. And the way that that happens, it tells us, is through a victory that comes through sacrifice. That's why it says in verse 15, "He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel." Remember those nails that stapled Jesus to the cross? Some through His hands, others through His feet. It's a reminder to us that as His heels are bruised, when that piece of iron is plunged between His feet. That in that moment of sacrifice, there is a victory that is happening. A victory that comes in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. A crushing of the serpent's head. That's why the Apostle Paul can tell us in Galatians 3:13 and 14 that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree. So that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. So Adam and Eve went from being rulers to slaves. Now each one of us are slaves of sin affected by the curse that is brought when we pursue our desires over pursuing the delight of God. And yet God meets us in the middle of that curse and He reverses it. How? By becoming a curse for us. Jesus becomes the curse so that He might break the curse. That's why Romans 16:20 can tell us that the God of peace will soon crush Satan underneath His feet. As we march our way to Easter, we know that at Easter Satan is fully crushed. But we know there is coming a day when Christ will return in which he is finally crushed. And in that time between the times, we are the people of the promise called to live out this spiritual warfare that Genesis 3:15 models for us. So when you volunteer in the preschool, when you serve in Special Needs, when you care for our elderly and our shut-ins, when you disciple your children, when you receive that stimulus check this week and prayerfully consider using it for kingdom purposes rather than for selfish purposes. In each act that we take of serving the kingdom, we are reminding the serpent of this Genesis 3:15 promise that his time is short. That the victory is secure. That the curse has been reversed.

Now notice with me the way that this passage ends. Because we're going to see a third reality here when we find that God recovers our hope. And we're going to see that in verses 20 through 24. Notice how he says it here.

²⁰The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Now imagine this moment for Adam and Eve. They recognize their sin. They realize they failed and there is a curse now upon them and the creation. There is a desperation, a despair. But what happens? God meets them in their pain with a promise. And it's a promise of the recovery of hope. And even right here in Genesis 3 we see some glimpses of the promise of that recovery of hope in this thread. We see the way, in verse 20, that the recovery of our hope is reflected through a new status. That's what happens to Eve. It tells us that the man called his wife's name Eve and that she would be the mother of all living. So that even in the giving of a new name, she

is given a new identity, a new purpose. And one that is rooted in the Genesis 3:15 promise that she will not just be the mother of all living, she will be the mother of the One who will defeat this serpent once and for all. But this promise of the recovery of hope also shows up right there in verse 21 when we see the way that it is brought about through a new sacrifice. So before we came to this text, back in Genesis 3:7, if you look back at it. What do Adam and Eve do after they sin? Before they even hide from God, they sew together fig leaves in order to cover over their nakedness, to cover over their shame. They try to do it on their own but it is insufficient. But now we find, in verse 21, what does God do instead? It tells us that the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Now how did He get those skins? Right here in Genesis 3 we see the first sacrifice for the sake of sin in the Bible. There is the shedding of blood in order to cover over sin. That's why the author of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 9:22 that without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness from sin. There is this picture here that where we try to cover our sin on our own, it fails. But when we look to a new sacrifice, one that is made for us, one in which blood is shed for the forgiveness of our sins, that's when the shame of our sin is now covered. There is a new sacrifice that occurs. And that new sacrifice comes right before Adam and Eve enter into a new situation. We see that new situation described at the end of this passage. It's one of exile and opposition. And this seems counterintuitive. This seems like it couldn't be good news. And yet what we find is that there is a kindness in the exile and opposition that occurs. Notice the way this exile is described in verse 23 when it says, "Therefore, the Lord God sent him out from the Garden of Eden." Now this isn't the equivalent of a parent looking at a child and saying, "If you can't live by my rules, then you're out of my house." There is more going on here in this moment. God is protecting humanity from perpetuating their sinless existence. In other words, if God leaves Adam and Eve in the garden, then they may eat of the tree of life and now live forever in this fallen condition. God saves us from ourselves. He saves us from a life of ongoing sin. And the reason He does that is because He knows that is what hell actually is. Being given over for an eternity in that sinless state, separated from God. And in His kindness, He exiles them. He sends them out from the garden. They head east of Eden and yet every one of us find ourselves in that same position now. Outside of paradise, trying to find a way back in. And that's where the problem comes. Because we'll find in verse 24 they're not just met with exile, but opposition. It says there, he drove out the man and at the east of the Garden of Eden, He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. God raises up these warrior angels to protect paradise, to prevent their re-entry into the throne room of the kingdom of God. They are now outside the camp. They are now banished. It seems as if all hope is lost. And yet in this moment, we see the first indications of how God recovers an Easter hope in an east of Eden world.

I'm sure you're wondering what happened to my friend, Isaac, after that Thai neighbor ran down the hallway never to be seen again. He figured out he had to figure out a solution on his own. And the best thing he could come up with was there was a hallway closet in which he had a broom. And he, what he did is he grabbed that broom and he climbed up on the countertops in the kitchen. And made his way, stepped over the island, and between the island and the back door, which he was trying to open, was where this cobra was. He had to reach over the top of it. He had to pull that door open. And then the best solution he could come up with was to sweep the serpent outside of his home and shut the door as fast as possible. That's a temporary success, but that's not a total salvation, is it? I imagine that might change the way that you experience walking into your home for many months to come. No question about it. But it was the best that

he could do in his own strength. The reality is that it explains so much of where some of us find ourselves spiritually today. Maybe you're hiding from God with Adam in your sin. Maybe you feel cast out of Eden because of your shame. Maybe you fled Eden like a prodigal and don't know if you can come back. Maybe you've sought to sew together fig leaves to cover over things. Maybe you're trying to find your way back into the garden on your own. Genesis 3 reminds us that we can't do it ourselves. That the only hope of salvation is through the Son who crushes the cobra on the cross. Think about how He does it. He does it by reversing everything that happens here in Genesis 3. Sin enters into the Garden of Eden but the restoration of the kingdom begins in the Garden of Gethsemane. Where Jesus is sweating drops of blood. He's surrounded by vegetation and then a crown of thorns is plunged on His head signifying the curse. He is stripped of His clothing. He is nailed to the cross to die in shame. He is exiled from the presence of God. He is laid in the tomb to dust He shall return. And by taking on the curse, He becomes the curse for us so that we might be set free from the curse of sin. So as we set our eyes on Easter this season, let's remember the reality that love reigns.

Let's pray together.

Father, I'm praying in this moment that if there are those in this room that have not yet come to know You, that have not yet experienced what it means to be welcomed to paradise. That if they're hiding behind those fig leaves, that they're running from You in their shame, Lord, that You will set them free. That You will rescue them. That You will show them that You have provided the ultimate sacrifice for them in His Son. And Father, for our church, we are pleading with You now that we might be the people of this promise who in every act of ministry we carry out in this city, are declaring that the serpent has been crushed, that death has been defeated, that Your kingdom is alive, and that hope springs eternal. Would You fill us with that hope this morning as we prepare our hearts to respond by the power of Your Spirit. And we ask this in Jesus name. Amen.