

Sunday, September 2, 2018

Genesis 2:15-17, 20-22 and 3:1-7, 14-15

I Corinthians 15:54-58

John 14:1-6

Adam, Eve and Life and Death

On this Labour Day weekend we conclude our “At Your Request” Summer series which focused on the dreams and visions of different people—Joseph, Daniel, the prodigal son and his father, and John’s revelation. Today our focus is on the Genesis story of Adam and Eve and what we might consider to be God’s vision for his creation. We will also hear again of the hope we receive from God as we understand life and death and life eternal with Him.

Listening to the story of creation often gives people a sense of security for this story gives us a sense of time beginning and from where we come from. This story also leads to the questions of theology and faith. If God intended us to live forever in paradise, why did evil enter the world and how and why did God let sin change the future of his wonderful creation in the Garden of Eden? Why did God even put the temptation of the tree of life into the garden in the first place? Was it a test for his creatures?

Genesis gives two accounts of the creation story- in Genesis 1 to the beginning of ch.2 and then a second story in ch.2-3. God created the heavens and the earth but he didn’t stop there. He created sky, dry ground, seas, sun, moon, stars. Then God made living creatures- those that fly, live in the sea, and those that live on the land. Then God made human in the image of himself- both male and female. .

It is in Genesis 2 that we read that it had not yet rained on the earth and there was no one to work the ground so streams of water came up from the earth and the surface became watered as was necessary. It is then that God formed Adam from the ground and breathed into him the breath of life and this man became a living being. In a specific part of His creation, God planted a garden Eden and it is there he placed Adam. In this garden were the tree of life and tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And it is this tree of the knowledge of good and evil that he is not to eat from. For as God commanded the man, ‘if you eat of it, you will surely die.’ Death was not a part of God’s plan. God then formed animals –both livestock and beasts as well as birds. The man Adam named them. But then realized that Adam needed a suitable helper and created woman. The woman was named Eve and they became one together. They lived without shame in this Garden of Eden just as God had made them.

But what occurs next defines who we are in faith. The serpent was crafty and communicated with the woman about what they could and could not eat. How did this serpent become this way and how did this chat take place is uncertain. But it is through this discussion that the serpent states, "You will not surely die." God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

The woman sees the fruit of the tree and that it looked good. She looked at the tree, its fruit and immediate satisfaction. Did she also desire wisdom we are not sure but she took some and ate it. Adam also took it and ate it. In that moment, their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked. They sewed coverings as they became both ashamed and afraid. What would their Creator do?

Up until this time—the man and woman were living in paradise. They had limited tasks to do- Adam was to name all the creatures as he was working in the garden, taking care of it. Eve becomes his co-worker/ helper and together they live a care-free life. All they need is provided and God's plan is in place- paradise is complete. Nothing would interfere with all that is good because all that God had made was good.

God gave the human life by breathing into him the breath of life—the man becomes a living being. Eve coming from man also received the breath of life. And by God's all intentions and purposes they were to live forever. They would have children and continue in the cycle of new life with each generation that was to come. What would have happened had Adam and Eve obeyed God's laws? Would God's creation be overpopulated? Would the animals exist the way they do or would all people be vegetarian? What was God's purpose for creation?

But whatever God's purpose was, something occurred when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their eyes were open. Innocence was lost, understanding changed, their life changed and so did God's purpose for them. This was the Fall of Man and immediately God asks them questions. "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Adam blames Eve—the woman you put here, she gave me some and I ate it. God asks Eve- what did you do? The serpent deceived me and I ate. And because of this disobedience, God spoke first to the serpent—cursed you above all the livestock and animals—you will crawl on your belly and will eat dust. Prior to this the serpent did not appear as we know it. And then God states what the fall or disobedience means for Eve and Adam.

To Eve- pains in childbirth, in pain you will deliver life; desire for husband and he will rule. Although our world sees more partnerships in marriage childbirth still involves pain.

To Adam- because he listened to Eve, the ground is cursed and he will now need to work to eat. There will be thorns and thistles to contend with; he will work hard to produce food to live and this will continue until you return to the ground. Because you were taken from the earth, you are dust and to dust you will return.

God then made garments of skin from animals and clothed them. Thus the animal had to die in order to protect the people God had made. He then banished the two people from the Garden of Eden and then placed cherubim and a flaming flashing sword to guard the way to the tree of life. God did not want them to go near the tree of life because they had disobeyed God. God did not fully trust the people as they had disobeyed once, would they do it again?

What a different life they would now lead! Adam and Eve would have to work in order to live. And death would come. But God doesn't leave people alone. Adam and Eve continued to live and they raised a family and in time they died. Many generations followed; some turned away from God and many followed. This is what is contained in the pages of the Bible. What is significant is that God never gave up on his creatures and still does not. God knows that people today have more knowledge and wisdom of His creation and how it works and even more so from the last century until today. But what is amazing is that people still search for their creator and from where they have come.

God's hope was that we would live forever in Garden of Eden. Yet this changed due to the Fall of Man. But God still didn't give up on us. He still wants us to live for him and live eternally with him. But we must choose this for ourselves. It was God who gave us Jesus His Son who would enable eternal life to be possible. This is because Jesus taught the disciples that he would die and rise to life again. And because Jesus' did this, we too will die our human death. Our body will return to the earth, yet what makes us who we are—the spirit breathed into us at the beginning of our lives, will return to God our Creator—if we believe in this. According to Jesus, a place is being prepared for each of us and when the time is right he will come and get us. Jesus is the way to this eternal life in God's heaven. All we are called to do is believe in Jesus promise and gift, to know that he died and rose for us, to have faith and live telling others of this and to have hope that God wants us with him forever.

When Jesus died and rose again, he conquered death. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, death has been swallowed up in victory because of Jesus' resurrection. Because of the Fall of

man sin entered into the world and all people will die. But if we believe in Jesus' gift and promise of eternal life, we will be received by him and live with God the Father for all of eternity in heaven. And heaven will be more than we can imagine- more than paradise as God first created, and even only a glimpse of the new heaven and new earth envisioned by John and shared in Revelation. more than we can fully realize.

When one we loves dies we are saddened because of the separation that occurs. In some form or other, burial of body or ashes takes place, but their spirit which God gave them at their beginning lives on. And it is this living on—eternally with God forever that brings hope to all Christians. It is this hope that everyone is searching for. Hope that is being taken away by our modern secular society with many people thinking that this world as we see it is all there is.. But we who believe in God and in His Promise of hope and everlasting life know differently. We have faith and are able to determine what our futures may hold because we believe that God will indeed "make all things new.". We can stand on the promise of God that one day we will experience God's home, our heavenly home where "Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away." Our statement of faith, "A New Creed' states this very clearly. In life in death in life beyond death. God is with us we are not alone. Thanks be to God.