

“Long Story Short - The Fall”

Scripture: Genesis 3:1-23

Graphics: puzzle, sin, The Fall, snake

Big Truth: The Bible tell us the grand story of God’s redemptive plan for the world. Though Creation, the Fall, Israel, Jesus, the Church, and New Creation, the Bible is sufficient for our salvation. Every person who comes to Panama UMC is called to love God, self, others and the entire creation because God created the universe complete, purposeful, from and for community.

Focus phrase:

1. Introduction

- A. There was a church in Florida that was doing some renovations on a 50-year old part of their building. During renovations, after removing the old wall-board, the construction foreman found something odd in the wall. In a bag in the cavity in the wall the foreman found a very old Schlitz beer can.
- B. Now, you’re thinking, “What in the world would a beer can be doing in the walls of a church?” The honest answer is, “I have no idea!” However, isn’t this a picture of lives sometimes? Don’t we all have some destructive secrets ‘hidden’ - better known as sin - in the walls of our lives, even though we’re called to offer our lives for God’s holy purposes? I suspect we all do.
- C. But here’s the deal: **God wants to tear down the walls in order to rid us of those hidden things...so that his glory can shine in our lives more and more, without any hidden burdens to weigh us down.**
- D. Today is Part 2 of our Long Story Short series of messages that we started last week. It all began with **Creation**...and will all end in 5 weeks at the **New Creation**. In between, there’s a **WHOLE** lot of ground to cover.
- E. The Bible tells the grand story of God from Creation to New Creation. Last week, we took a 30,000 foot view of the beginning. Creation led to The Fall, which we’ll look at today...which led to the nation of Israel. Israel led to Jesus, who is the head of The Church, which is waiting for the New Creation. The whole Bible, in 6 simple parts, over six weeks.
- F. As we move from Creation to The Fall, we start to see that the goodness of God who created the universe complete and perfect, for and from community, leads to the disobedience of God’s **people**. The Good News is that the Bible not only helps us **describe** our hidden brokenness, but offers **healing** for it!
- G. Before we get to The Fall, why study the whole Bible in 6 movements...or read the Bible at all? Well, our church is a United Methodist Church which puts us in the tribe of the John Wesley and the early Methodist movement. Wesley was the leader of a movement of passionate followers of Jesus in the 1700’s in England... who came to America and spread like wildfire.

- H. John Wesley was a child of the church, who had his **heart strangely warmed** at a gathering of believers in **1738**. The name “**Methodists**” was a term of ridicule like “holy roller” might be used today.
- I. Part of the “method” in “Methodist” was a deep conviction about living the Christian life in an intentional or “**methodical**” way. Of the Bible, John Wesley wrote these words: “I want to know one thing,—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. For this very end He came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*. Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I open, I read His book; for this end, to find the way to heaven.”
- J. “**Homo unius libri**” is Latin for “**a man of one book.**” Wesley understood that for an **apprentice** of Jesus to grow to become a **fully devoted follower** of Jesus, regular reading and reflecting on the Bible was essential.
- K. The Barna Group does an annual report on the “State of the Bible.” In their most recent research they discovered: *Overall, about half of Americans are “Bible users” — that is, they engage with the Bible on their own by using, listening to, watching, praying or using Bible text or content in any format (not including use at a church service) at least three to four times a year (48%)... Adults who use the Bible daily account for only 14 percent of the total adult population... (barna.com)*
- L. **The Bible matters to Americans yet only 14% of us read it on a daily basis.** The influence of Bible reading and reflection on a Christ-follower’s spiritual growth is **greater than any other spiritual practice.**
- M. So, last week we began our survey of the Bible’s big picture at the Creation. This week we’ll look at The Fall... at sin and its consequences.
- N. Now, it may seem strange that we’d be moving to The Fall and sin on a day when we’re honoring our mothers, right? I’ll admit, it’s a little different. But everything is a little different right now.
- O. The real story in this next movement, and the whole story of The Fall, is NOT who did what and why and how, and blame, BUT **how The Fall and the decision to sin led to a changed world**, where the first two humans created a family (through childbirth now) and worked together in their new reality. Adam and Eve - father and mother - **partnered to persevere through this life...** a life that doesn’t always have the best circumstances, as we know all too well.
- P. Let’s pray and then we’ll dive into this next scene in our Long Story Short.

Q. PRAY!!!

2. Scripture

- A. If **Genesis 1 and 2** describe a very good and holy God **creating** the world unique and special with man and woman as the **pinnacle** of his creation in paradise, then **Genesis 3 is the how paradise was lost**.
- B. After creating Adam and placing him in a garden, then creating Eve as his partner, because being alone was “not good” for Adam, **life was good**.
- C. Genesis 2:25 ends the Creation story with these great words: “*And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.*” Perfect!
- D. All is well in their garden paradise between themselves and God...with each other and in their own souls. **This was and is God’s intent for all of creation**.
- E. Interestingly enough, the word “Eden” in Hebrew means “**delight**.” The garden was created to be a place for our first parents to live in **delight** with God, themselves, each other, and the entire good creation of God.
- F. But that quickly changes as we turn to Genesis 3.
 - i. In Genesis 3, sin enters into the story as our first parents claim anarchy by **choosing their own way**. Paradise was **disrupted**. Harmony with God, each other and within themselves was **damaged**.
 - ii. The place of “delight” became a place of “**disobedience**.” Because unlike the rest of God’s creation that functions by divine instinct, **humanity is given the capacity to choose**. Lions roared and birds flew by instinct. Adam and Eve alone in all of God’s creation had **free will**. This story in the garden illustrates **what sin did** to them and **what sin still does to us**.
- G. Often theologians call this “the doctrine of the fall.” It describes how humanity “fell” from their created perfection. But it’s not just “their fall” but **it’s “OUR FALLING.”** Each of us commits high treason and declares our declaration of independence from our good Creator God. Sin is not something someone else has done but it’s something I have done...something YOU have done.
- H. So, today, we want to consider this question: **What does sin do?** Genesis 3 helps us. Here’s six things sin does to you and me.
 - i. **Sin challenges the authority of God**.
 - a. Genesis 3:1 reports: “*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?”*” Genesis 3:1
 - b. (scary movie voice) **Enter the Tempter**. In other places in the Bible, we learn that this Tempter is **The Devil or Satan**. We won’t talk too much about Satan, but about **what the serpent tempts** Eve and Adam to do. He tempts them to question the authority of the good God who created them.

- c. The serpent asks a simple question, “**Did God REALLY say...?**” This temptation puts **questions and doubts** about the power and influence of the Creator in the heart and mind of the Creation...especially humans.
 - d. Sin can be thought of as missing the mark of God’s best desire for our lives...out of sync with God’s best intention for the world.
 - e. In John 16:9, Jesus said this about sin, “The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me.”
 - f. Do we believe in God and his authority or not? Sin tempts us to want to **take the control that is rightfully God’s...to be the ruler of our own** lives. But, either God calls the shots or I do. Ask yourself:
 - i) Do I believe my **fear or God’s promises?**
 - ii) Do I believe my **impatience or God’s timing?**
 - iii) Do I believe my **guilt and shame, or God’s grace?**
 - g. **Sin**, then and now, **challenges God’s authority** in my life by asking, “Did God really say that?” Did He really say that I’m loved? Did He really say I’m forgiven? Did He really say I should be holy? Or loving?
- ii. Second, **Sin questions the holiness of God.**
- a. Verse 2 tells us: “² *The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; ⁵ for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* Genesis 3:2-5
 - b. Eve and Adam **know the instructions.** “Don’t eat from THIS one tree... but the rest are OK.” The enemy of our souls will exaggerate and misrepresent God to us every time. Eve even tells the snake that God said they **would die if they ate it!** But the snake questions God’s holiness by basically **calling God a liar.** “You **won’t die...**”
 - c. We’ve all felt sin’s tug to challenge the holiness of God. “It’s not that big a deal.” “No one’s getting hurt by it.” “God’ll forgive me.”
 - d. **God is loving and gracious, yes He is!** But God is also **HOLY** and created **US to be holy** - to be set apart for His purposes, fleeing from any sin that weighs us down or challenges God’s holiness.
 - e. The Bible describes Jesus as being, “**full of grace and truth.**” He mercifully extends forgiveness to us, but also says, “Go and sin no more.”
 - f. Sin questions God’s holiness.
- iii. And #3, **Sin distorts the image of God.**

- a. Verse 6... *“6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.”* Genesis 3:6-7
 - b. The woman **bought the tempter’s lies** about God’s authority and holiness **“hook, line and sinker.”** With the hook set, the damage is done. The forbidden fruit looked good, delicious and desirable...it was too **much to resist**.
 - c. So they ate... and the woman and man who were naked and felt no shame, were suddenly **filled with shame at their nakedness**. The perfect and complete relationship they once knew with God, themselves and each other was **damaged**. The image of God in each of them was **diminished**. Their relationship of obedience and dependence was **tainted** as they declared their autonomy from the Creator.
 - d. Whenever we let sin in, we become less than we were created to be - in the image of God. **Sin distorts the image of God.**
- iv. Fourth, **Sin harms innocence**.
- a. Verse 8... *“8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife **hid** themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” 10 He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”* Genesis 3:8-10
 - b. Circle the word **“hid”** in both places it appears. Adam and Eve, who were created good, were now **afraid of the Creator**. The intimacy we saw in Chapters 1 and 2 is now **gone**. What changed? **God** didn’t change. **Creation** didn’t change. **Adam and Eve changed...and they hid from the One who loves them.**
 - c. I love that in this Hebrew story, **God initiates** contact. **“Where are you?”** Like a game of **hide and seek**, God calls out to them. God hasn’t given up on our first parents who hide in shame. Yet, the deadly relational trifecta of **guilt, shame and fear** has entered the picture.
 - d. We all probably have stories from our earlier years about trying to hide something from our parents...a **dent in the fender**, a **broken curfew**, a **forbidden relationship or music or under-aged drinking**. It causes us to **fear, lie, hide**, because we know that we’re hiding something that **isn’t right**. The innocence of our youth gets damaged when mom or

dad find out...and they **always** find out. Sin does the same thing in God's eyes and ours...it **harms our innocence**.

v. **AND...Sin damages relationships. #5**

- a. Verse 11... *"¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." Genesis 3:11-13*
- b. The blame game begins, right? **He did it. She did it. The snake did it.** The relationship between the first couple is **strained** and their relationship with God is **damaged**. Sin does that with every relationship.
- c. The fruit of my sin against God is that my **capacity to love** people, the creation and even God **is diminished**. How else can we explain the great **crises of this world**? People die of starvation on a planet that produces enough food to feed itself. Corrupt governments and regimes violently displace millions of people from their homes all over our planet.
- d. Jesus connects sin to lack of love in Matthew 24:12 (NLT): "Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold." Sin damages relationships...both far and near.

vi. **And finally, Sin produces consequences.**

- a. *"²³ therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden..."* Genesis 3:23a
- b. **Eden**, their place of "delight" where they would tend to and care for God's creation and one another, **was lost** because of their willful disobedience to God. **Banished**, the first couple were **suffering the consequences** of their rebellion.
- c. I think God gets a bum rap at this point. Think of it in this way. Every parent knows the drama that taking away video games has on our kids or grandkids because of their disobedience. **No parent delights in being a disciplinarian.** It's the right thing to do. Parents who **don't** do this have a **whole other** set of problems.
- d. **Imagine the heartache God must have felt at banishing his children from their place of delight.**
- e. Yet, and isn't this just like God, God **does not quit loving his first creation.** In this ancient story, after sin challenges God's authority, questions God's holiness, distorts the image of God in them harms their in-

nocence, damages their relationships and produces painful consequences, **God covers the shamed couple.**

- f. Genesis 3:21 says, “*And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.*”
- g. We have a picture of God’s grace and mercy here. God covers their shame-filled nakedness.

3. Conclusion

- A. 2,000 years ago, a Rabbi from Nazareth named Jesus came to be God with Us in order to find, see, and cover our sins and our shame...to offer **every** forgiveness from **every** sin **every** time. To BE our cover.
- B. In our temptation and sin, God offers us grace and mercy...forgiveness and new life. Jesus is our Redeemer and Savior! On the cross, Jesus defeated sin and will carry us through **every** temptation if we let Him.
- C. The story of the Bible may have taken a grave turn in this movement, but that grave could not hold Jesus...and when we follow Jesus, it can’t hold US either. Sin’s power is defeated because of Jesus.
- D. Our Mothers gave us physical life and nurtured us through all of our challenges and failures and mistakes. God does the same thing with our spiritual lives, loving us through all our mistakes and ways we try to keep control.
- E. Be thankful for your Mom and all the Mothers. Let that then turn your thanks to God for providing people who love you. And then, ultimately, let your thanks rise to the God of the Universe who loves and forgives you.
- F. Offer every part of your life to Him, nothing hidden, nothing withheld...God WILL cover you and love you.
- G. Next, we move to a nation of people that God chose, despite their sin and disobedience. He still loved them and called them to be holy...just like he does to us.
- H. If you want to dive deeper into all this, join us for our online Bible Study on Wednesdays at 10a or Thursdays at 7p. We had over 25 people join us this week, and want you to jump in anytime.
- I. Let’s PRAY! and sing...