**Genesis 3:1-21 (ESV)**

[1] Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" [2] And 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 midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " [4] But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely 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." [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 themselves loincloths. [8] And 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 God among the trees of the garden. [9] But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" [10] And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." [11] He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of 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 of 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 deceived me, and I ate." [14] The 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. [15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." [16] To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." [17] And 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; [18] thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. [19] By 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." [20] The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. [21] And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

**“God Engages The Enemy”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. The Sundays in Lent are not part of Lent. Throughout these forty days, every Sunday serves as a small Easter. Yet, we dare not deny or look lightly upon the darkness during Lent. In the epic story written by J.R. Tolkien called, “Lord of the Rings.” Everything revolves around one ring that holds boundless power and with it all evil. It was designed by the Dark Lord in order to enslave the whole world. Only when finally being exposed to fire does the ring yield up its dangerous secret. Inside glows the words, “One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

 If we in the 21st century church have the full revelation of the Gospel given in Jesus Christ as Savior. Then our first parents in this world, Adam and Eve, had the full revelation of what it meant to have fallen into Sin. As Graham Leo puts it,

“It ought to be transparently obvious to every Christian, that to deny the truth of the first three chapters of Genesis…is to totally undermine any belief in the fall of man into a state of sin, and thus to deny the necessity (and, by association, the truth) of the cross of Jesus Christ.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

To take away the truth of what God says, to diminish the sacrifice made by His Son, or to stand on the strength of men is a death sentence. Only God engages the enemy so salvation rests on His saving work given in Jesus.

For the sake of Adam and Eve and the human race God first spoke to the Devil. He made a 1/3 of the angels fall from heaven with him. He is the source of man’s temptation in the Garden and still torments us today. He is also the most lonely and selfish creature in all of creation already judged by God. The Lord cursed the most beautiful serpent in the Garden used by the Devil against our first parents. It became a visible warning to Adam and Eve of the complete treachery and disgrace of how evil works in this world. Along with exposing the Devil, God spoke the first promise of salvation directly to him. He would not receive any of the benefit, but the Savior to come stood as a sign against him. As stated, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” The influence of the Devil over Adam and Eve after the Fall was inseparable. Only God could disconnect such a bond of darkness. His Word promised hostility between Satan and humanity set upon sending the Savior.

 Everything is taken so personally today. Where our first parents heard God speak judgment to the Devil. We have been tricked again, like in the Garden, to believe God’s Word stands against us! Of course, being left to our own devices is just what the Devil desires. As our Lutheran Father’s note,

“World history itself shows the great power of the devil’s rule. Blasphemy and wicked doctrines fill the world, and by these bonds the devil has enthralled those who are wise and righteous in the eyes of the world” (Tappert 106:47).

Without Jesus Christ being proclaimed as Savior from the Word of God, what separates humanity from the Devil? Oh, we might have science, power, money, humanitarian aid, opinion polls and whatever else. It can all be turned against us when God is silenced, when His preaching has no place. Only Christ fought the Devil in the wilderness because no one else stood on the Word more than the Word become flesh. As the Savior said, “It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'” This separation from the Devil worked by God’s Word must remain as the saving gift for sinful humanity.

 After preaching to the Devil, the Lord knew it was not enough. The darkness had gone into the hearts of men and changed us. In order for the woman to understand the extent of this wickedness fallen upon humanity. God made the reality very personal for every daughter of Eve. It would be in the “pain of childbearing” where generation after generation would feel the pain of our inherited sinfulness. As St. Paul said, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). It is far than a biological end to life, but the death of a right relationship to God and others. How much shock did Adam and Eve have when their firstborn son Cain killed Abel. Man created in the image of God was lost to self-service. What kept hope alive in the “pain of childbearing” was God’s promise that out of woman, out of sinful flesh, God’s Savior would serve and not be served.

 The sinful corruption of humanity is always hard to face. God never rejects the birth of children. Adam and Eve found no escape in abortion. Yet, the fact remains, since anything we have received comes from those before us. Original sin is what we have inherited the most from our parents. C. S. Lewis says it well,

“And if, now that we are grown up, we do not howl and stamp quite so much, that is partly because of our elders began the process of breaking or killing our self-will in the nursery, and partly because the passions now take more subtle forms and have grown clever at avoiding death…” (The problem of pain 81)

There is only one that did not look to self-interest but the cross. Only one that did not seek His own glory, even though, He was God’s Son. St. Peter told those troubled by their corrupt hearts to repent and be baptized in Jesus’ Name. " …For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off…” (Acts 2:39). Instead of testing God so that we can become gods by our own right. The baptized daily die and rise to trust in the saving love of God’s Son. The Savior would not bring doubts to the daughters of Eve. Christ as true man bore their pain in His body on the cross. His righteousness is for the children of men. As St. Paul said, “For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19).

 Since Adam was created first before woman, God spoke to him last. He too like the woman would have pain, but of a far different degree. Where Eve felt it in birth, Adam would have to see this pain fallen upon all of creation. Cursed was the earth because of man! As God said, “…in pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life” From the ground, to plant, to animal, to management of life. Everything would be unbalanced, nothing would be easy, and a peaceful life would be hard to come by. As King Solomon later said, “There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?” (Eccles. 2:24-25). More than creation working against Adam, the greater reality was the death of all creation came from Adam. For God said, “Dust you are and to dust you shall return.”

 So many things we have today to ease work and yet just as many troubles with work. The sons of Adam are being worn out by what we see and face in this fallen creation. The pains of childbirth are consistent, but the pains of creation is on a crash course. Luther notes,

“Hence the misfortunes which were placed upon Adam were insignificant in comparison with ours. The more closely the world approaches its end, the more it is overwhelmed by penalties and catastrophes. But, to make it worse, the more the world is smitten, the more hardened and unconscious of its own evils it becomes.[[3]](#footnote-3)”

Today the world’s troubles turn into the evening news. What do we see? The world’s greatest kingdoms falling short. Jesus rejected the Devil’s offer of man’s glorious works. There is only one Kingdom worthy to stand the test of time. It was carved out of Christ’s work on the cross, but remains unspoiled because of His resurrection. Rather than just solutions to a sinful world, the savior’s kingdom creates servants out of the cross to help those in a dying world. Unlike the beginning, the times are more painful and treacherous. Yet here at the end, it truly is more glorious for God engages the enemy. Such a time as today holds not a curse in a ring, but a promise in the redeemer. “One Savior to rule them all, One Savior to find them, One Savior to bring them all and in His light bind them.” Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. http://www.allgreatquotes.com/lord\_of\_the\_rings\_fellowship\_of\_the\_ring\_quotes.shtml [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/cm/v4/n1/evolution-and-english-literature [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Luther, M. (1999, c1958). *Vol. 1*: *Luther's works, vol. 1 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ge 3:20). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)