

SERMON THOUGHTS ABRIDGED **Genesis 3:8-20****ADVENT HOPE FOR HEAVY HEARTS**

And they [Adam & Eve] heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

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"So, the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field. On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life."

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: Cursed is the ground for your sake. In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

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And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

The word "advent" means "He's coming." There are two very opposite ways one can say, "He's coming." With fear, terror, and dread—as when the sheriff is getting close to you after breaking and entering a store and emptying the cash box. Or with eagerness, joy, and relief—as when you're stranded on a highway and the sheriff is coming to help you get going again. In our text for today, we see both of those meanings.

Adam and Eve had just disobeyed God! consciously and deliberately. They knew better. God had done everything for them in love—made them, gave them the beautiful Garden of Eden in which to live, cared for them, and commanded them not to eat from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil or He would punish them with death. However, they bought Satan's lie that God was not being 100% forthright and willingly disobeyed God. God entered the Garden and was looking for them. Their consciences must have been screaming at them. Trouble! Trouble! They had already made garments of fig leaves, lest they be exposed to God for what they were, sinners. Now they hid from His presence. He's coming! Fear and dread must have overwhelmed them. They didn't want to meet God or welcome God right now!

We are about to celebrate Christmas, that holiday which looks to the Son of God entering our world. He was born at Bethlehem in concern for us. But how eager are you to celebrate Christmas and Christ's advent to this earth? Is there reluctance and even dread? All the cheer and singing, and you don't feel much like being cheerful or singing right now. I remember as a child complaining to my Mom, "telling on my sister" who was singing, It bugged me. I wasn't happy at the moment, and I didn't like, nor did I want, her to be so happy. Or maybe you find the exuberant handshaking and "glad-handing" of Christmas season to be most annoying. You are convinced people don't mean it, and maybe they don't. You are convinced it's all empty show, like that of many a politician campaigning for office, or of a distant aunt who acts so happy to see you. Just forget it! Or maybe celebrating Christmas is a big bother, because all it means is spending a lot of money that you'd rather not spend. I worked with a fellow who was very plain about his feeling for Christmas that way. Or maybe you dislike Christmas, because it more or less forces you to take stock of yourself and your life before God, and you'd rather not do that. Like sitting down to balance the checkbook or pay the bills. You come up short.

That was Adam and Eve's situation. Meeting God in the Garden right now was going to be a time of taking stock and answering to God for what they had done. It didn't look good and wouldn't be fun. When God called to him, Adam knew better than not to answer. He even explained his reluctance, "I was naked and I hid" likely hoping his attempt at honesty would help. But God knew, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I said NO?"

Adam wasn't so forthright now. God's coming to him, God's advent, wasn't very comfortable, because he had disrespected God and he knew he was going to get it. Like every guilty school boy, he passed the blame—to Eve, his dearest companion, friend, and wife—actually even to God, "the woman YOU gave me." Anything not to look so bad, but Adam had done bad. Eve was no different. The serpent—the snake—fooled me. Although she didn't say it, the snake GOD had made. Are you any different, trying to excuse your conduct before God and others? Actually it's my brother's fault, my sister's fault, my parents' fault, my wife's fault, my husband's fault. Seeking to dump your guilt on even those who are closest and dearest to you! The same happens at Christmas. The holiday wouldn't be so sour if you had done like I told you, if you hadn't come up with this idea to travel, or buy, or stay up late. Such cowardly sinners we are, blaming anybody but self. Meeting God at Christmas can be ruined by Satan. Why? because your own ears all too often listen to Satan's lies and tricks. He will take anything, any blessing, and convince you to misuse it to your own harm—guns, cars, computers, cell phones, money, time, the Bible, and church. Satan does not want you meeting God with joy, when He comes at Christmas or at the end of time. He wants that advent to be very unpleasant. OH NO, THE LORD IS COMING!

God had some very unpleasant words to say in the Garden of Eden. Against the animal the serpent, the snake, God pronounced a curse. To this day it slithers on its belly in the dust. Eve? For Eve, childbearing would now be painful and Eve would desire and need her husband to lead, rather than the way she had done with the fruit. Adam? For Adam, life would be harsh and painful just to stay alive--sweat, toil, labor, and in the end, death--death anyway. Humiliating, decomposition minded death, by which Adam would return to just a pile of dust. Harsh.

Harsh. But I skipped something here, didn't I? After cursing the creature the snake, and before giving Eve and then Adam the sad but deserved consequences for their sin, God said, "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*" What about those words?? Mysterious words at first reading. To whom was God speaking? Many might say, He was talking to Adam, for now there is enmity—fighting, warfare, enemy status—between men and women. Gender warfare. But incorrect. God is NOT talking to Adam. When He said those words, He had started out talking to the serpent, "On your belly you will go," but He switched His direction. He was now talking to Satan himself, who used the serpent. God says to Satan, You are done. You and mankind, who will all be born of the woman, will be at odds. Indeed, they will never be a match for you, EXCEPT that a Seed of the woman will be born, a man will be born who will take you on! He will confront you and beat you. Using the picture of a man without a weapon, dealing with a snake, God says He will bruise your head and you will bruise His heel. He will stomp on your head with His foot, no shoes—Adam and Eve didn't have shoes yet—and bruise and crush your head. You in the process will bruise Him, bite Him in the heel inflicting pain and injury but not defeat. God was talking about Jesus coming to beat Satan, at the cross and empty Easter tomb. Satan's power would be broken by the Seed of the woman who would be more than just man. He would be the God-man, who would live without sin, and then take Satan and his wiles out of the picture. God gave Satan the bad news right up front. But Adam and Eve were standing there listening. Before God even talked to Adam and Eve about pain in childbirth, desire for her husband to take the lead, thorns, thistles, sweat, and death, Adam and Eve heard Him say, One will be born from these people who will straighten this all out, who will undo the disobedience and sin, the punishment of death, that you, Satan, have brought to them.

This was GOOD NEWS! for Adam and Eve. This was a Promise of a Savior, the first Promise of Jesus, the he first Gospel. Did Adam and Eve understand what God had just said to Satan? Or was it all dark and mysterious, like it first seems to us until someone explains it? Oh, they got it! I am convinced they got it. They took God at His Word and trusted His promise with joy. How do I know that? It says it right here. Adam named His wife Eve. Eve had not yet been given her name. Now Adam gives her the name Eve, which means "Life" because she would be the mother of all living. So true, But wouldn't it now have been more appropriate to name her the mother of all dying? Yet Adam named her Life. With simple faith Adam was trusting God's Word. The Savior who could and would defeat Satan was coming to be born from the human race. They were going to be safe. God had mercy, forgiveness, and life for them!

When Adam and Eve walked out of the Garden that day, in fact God would send them out, surely they were thinking those same words, with just the opposite meaning. "HURRAY! HE'S COMING!" He's coming to rescue and save us!

That same sure and certain hope is yours God does not lie--that's Satan's game. Jesus has come, born at Bethlehem, crucified at Calvary, risen on Easter, to rescue you and save you from your sins, from this life of pain, toil, sorrow, and death! Jesus has come to open heaven's doors again. Celebrate Christmas with joy, because you know HE'S COMING to take you home with love and forgiveness for guilty, burdened, weary sinners.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach ---