

Recap of The Fall -

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.”*

(Pastor prays)

In August 1979, my sainted Episcopal grandmother gave me a Living Bible. I was 10 years old and I started reading it. The following summer, a Presbyterian minister shared the gospel of mercy with me in the foothills of North Carolina at Camp Awanita, and Christ entered my heart and life and saved me.

Not long after that, I was called out and convinced by God that I was to be a proclaimer of the great grace and mercy that is found in Jesus Christ. Grace and mercy. Last week we focused on grace. This week we see God’s mercy. But in order for me to share God’s mercy, I’ve got to take you to man’s darkest hour. We know it as” The Fall.”

Here in our text, the paradise called the “Garden of Eden” crumbles. And as Eden crumbles and the serpent is judged, there is one verse (15) that shows the shift and saving mercy of God. In the middle of God’s anger at sin and His divine judgement on Satan, God promises mercy. Even before judgment is pronounced on Adam and Eve, we find mercy. Grace is getting what you *don’t* deserve. Mercy is *not* getting what we *do* deserve. I want to convince you that...

Jesus Christ is God’s Mercy for Sinners

Notice several things.

Notice the Perfect Timing of Mercy

Let's get to the story. By their own doing, in the text, Adam and Eve have sinned and rebelled against God. The utopia of Eden is fouled now by the rotten stench of sin. The perfect fellowship they had with God was forever gone. Up in verse 8, God came looking for His children in the pleasant cool of the day when refreshing breezes would blow and Adam and Eve, our first parents, wanted nothing to do with Him. In fact, when they heard the majestic sound of God walking in the garden and felt His presence, they hid themselves.

Darkness had entered their sinless hearts and now, written in permanent ink like a jailhouse tattoo across their virgin hearts, is the word "sinner." Alienation had come and it was permanent. The point where we pick up in the text, is where God is pronouncing judgment. Paradise will be overcome with thorns and thistles. Dark shadows are cast over the future of humankind and in the very middle of God's pronouncement of judgment, there is an unforeseen proclamation of mercy.

It's like a stray sunbeam streaming through a thundercloud. Mercy. Listen, in the midst of pronouncing judgment, in verse 15, God makes a promise of mercy...a promise that one day, one will be born who will provide victory and hope and mercy.

Do you see that since the dawn of creation, Jesus Christ has been the one and only hope for mankind? In Revelation, it says that Jesus Christ was the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. In our darkest hour, God has given us mercy! While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

As paradise crumbles, in the midst of God's wrath, which man's disobedience aroused, God shines forth His grace and mercy. Now think about this: Adam and Eve didn't seek God out. God sought them out! He came looking and calling and asking, "Where are you? What have you done?" Paul wrote, "There is none that seeks after God." Jesus said, "You have not chosen me, I have chosen you." John wrote, "We love him because he first loved us." The timing. God's mercy was secured *before* you sinned...when we need it the most. You don't know what you are looking for but you are needing just a

glimmer of hope. And just in time, in our deepest hour of need, that's when God comes with mercy. There is something else we notice...

Notice the Real Struggle for Mercy

As God speaks to the serpent, notice there is a struggle for mercy. Look at the word "enmity." That's hatred, hostility or warfare. The language of the passage indicates a life-and-death struggle, a struggle that God has put there. It even shows up a chapter later with Cain and Abel. Cain is so angry and God says to him, "sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you. But you must master it." God put hatred there in verse 15: "I will place enmity."

He put hatred and evil there and He refuses to let it die down. And if God put hatred and evil in place, why do we try so hard to make friends with those things we should hate?...Things like pornography, greed, the status quo? Or as John Piper describes it, maybe a "drifting away" from the anchor of Christ.

We are in an epic struggle, a violent war. But most Christians have settled into a comfortable peace treaty with sin. We must not shake hands with our sin. We don't shake hands with it, we nail it to the cross. Notice the perfect timing of mercy. Notice the real struggle in mercy.

Notice the Stunning Miracle of Mercy

To see it, you've got to read slowly. Look at the promise in Verse 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."*

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring." A more literal translation would say "between your seed and her seed." Notice that the Lord says this promised mercy comes from the seed of a woman. That is a peculiar way to describe offspring. The typical way to describe offspring in the Old Testament would be "the seed of Abraham" or the "seed of David," not the seed of a woman.

From the very beginning, the earliest interpretations of the Bible thought this text pointed to the miracle of the Virgin Birth. This passage points directly to the miracle of the incarnated God becoming man...Born of a woman without the need of a man. The miracle surrounding the birth of Christ is a stunning miracle of mercy. In fact, one of the bedrock fundamentals of our faith is the miracle of the Virgin Birth. It's foundational.

Any other explanation of the birth of Christ takes away from the deity of Christ, making him just another man. And if Jesus Christ was just another man, then we all stand condemned. But God said at His baptism and again at the transfiguration "this is my beloved Son." Paul tells us how it happened. Paul says in Philippians 2:6-7, *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped¹⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* The miracle of mercy. The Christ we believe is supernaturally, otherworldly and completely God. We have to have faith to believe it. There's another thing that I want you to notice.

Notice the Divine Person of Mercy

In Verse 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.*"

The seed of the woman is none other than Jesus Himself. At the dawn of creation, during the judgment of Satan and The Fall, God says there is one who is coming. Here is the first promise. Here is the first prophecy. Here is the first Gospel.

We have here in Genesis 3:15, the earliest promise of redemption. Think of it like this - as the acorn contains the oak, so this small phrase contains the hope of all humanity. Martin Luther said, "This text embraces and comprehends, within itself, everything noble and glorious that is to be found anywhere in the scriptures." It's worthy of the title - Proto-Evangel - The First Gospel. This passage holds up the person of mercy before our eyes. This passage is the mother of all God's promises and as the gates of

paradise crumble, the hope of Christ emerges. In the shadow of paradise condemned, Christ is promised. Jesus Christ in the person of mercy.

Satan has harassed man so greatly that the Lord declared war and His dread champion is none other than Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only hope for man. From the foundation of the world to the crumbling of the Garden to where you are this morning, Jesus Christ provides mercy. But there is a cost. That's what I want you to see.

Notice the Cost of Mercy

We have already seen the enmity. The war that has been declared against sin and Satan and that the woman's seed, Christ, will crush (bruise) Satan's head. That is a mortal blow. Christ, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life. At His baptism, God proclaimed, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased." In the wilderness, after fasting, Jesus was tempted in every way. He battled Satan so fiercely that the Bible says the angels ministered to Him. In the garden, He sweated and prayed and pleaded with God. He was betrayed, mocked and cheated by earthly justice. They pierced His hands and His heel...As prophesied in our passage, all under the sovereign eye of our God. In fact, Isaiah says it like this in Isaiah 53, The Lord was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief.

In crushing Satan, Jesus would be crushed. In bringing death to the enemy, He himself died. There was a severe and drastic cost. But what looked like a mortal blow at the cross was in fact a gateway to our victory. The prophecy in Genesis 3:15 is that the woman's seed, although stricken and smitten of God, would deal a mortal blow to the serpent, crushing his head so that we can rejoice when we read Romans 16:20, *The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.*

And here's the result: The way Paul writes it in Colossians 2:13-15 is *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

Although Satan bruised His heel at the cross, Satan could not touch His head. On that head is the crown of victory that makes Jesus Christ King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It's the first Gospel, found in the first book – and it's the promise of mercy that is found in Christ. We are commanded to repent and believe in the mercy of God that is found in Christ. Why do we need mercy?

(Pastor shares the gospel and prays)