

Conflict in all of Life

Sermon for September 19, 2021 (Genesis 3:1-21)

Introduction

This is our third week in a sermon series on marriage.

Last week I told our single friends that I know that a sermon series on marriage can be hard sometimes.

But marriage is important to understand because it is the foundation of human communities and a central metaphor in the Bible.

You don't have to be married to be an important part of God's Kingdom, however.

God wants to use all of us, married and single, to build this church.

But Satan knows that conflict in marriage is one of the best ways to make everyone in the family unhappy.

That's why I am praying a lot for the marriages in our church, and why we are doing this series.

Let's pray together now before we look at God's Word and see what he wants to teach us today.

Holy Spirit, please open our hearts and minds to Jesus the Living Word.

Father, we want to be obedient, joyful, and productive sons and daughters.

Please use your word, by the power of the Spirit, to make us more like Jesus.

We pray in his name.

Amen.

Point 1. Sin Breaks Relationships

Point 2: Who is Responsible?

Point 3: Conflict in all of Life

Point 1: Sin Break Relationships

Genesis 3:1

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'?"

This serpent is not a normal snake.

It is Satan.

Satan was an angel who did not want to follow God, so he left heaven and took one-third of the angels with him.

Satan wants these new human beings to join him, too.

Satan begins his attack with a sneaky lie.

He asks a question to make Eve doubt God's goodness.

God told Adam that they could eat from every tree in the garden, except one.

But Satan suggests that God would not allow them to eat from any tree at all.

Satan wants Adam and Eve to believe that God was being too restrictive and selfish.

My friends, be careful to remember God's goodness.

Sin can grow in our hearts when we believe that God is keeping good things from us.

That's why people steal and commit adultery.

Those sins begin when we are not happy with what we have, or we are not willing to wait for God to meet our needs.

Let's see how Eve responds to Satan's attack, in verses 2 and 3.

Genesis 3:2-5

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."

Satan is a liar, my friends.

Jesus said that he has been a liar from the beginning.

Satan usually is sneaky about his lies.

He tries to make us doubt the truth.

But in verse 4 Satan lies directly and boldly.

He says that God is wrong.

He tells Adam and Eve that if they eat the fruit "You will be like God."

I think that is the statement that really got the attention of Adam and Eve.

It is tempting to think that getting more power and freedom will make our problems go away.

We want control, so we can decide what is best.

The problem is, we do not know what is best.
Remember that God said everything he made was "very good."
But we don't believe it.
We don't believe that his design for marriage is good, so we want to redefine it.
We don't believe that God's personal plans for us are good, so we make our own plans.

These are the lies that Satan whispers to all of us.
And underneath all of them is this idea that we should take control away from God, because he is not trustworthy.
The first sin began in the minds and hearts of Adam and Eve.
That is where sin always begins.
Sin is not an action in the beginning.
It begins with a bad idea in our mind that we keep thinking about.
That bad idea moves to our heart.
In our heart that idea becomes an unhealthy desire.
Those bad ideas and unhealthy desires are the reasons we do sinful actions.
We see this in James 1:13–15.

13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.
14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.
15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Sin begins with a desire to take for ourselves what God has not provided.
Let's see what happens when Adam and Eve take for themselves in verse 6.

Genesis 3:6

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.

Who sinned first?

Unfortunately, this verse has been used by some people in history to say that Eve was the first one to sin.

They want to blame Eve for introducing sin to the world.

I think they are wrong.

It is true that Eve took the first bite of the fruit.

She believed the lies of the serpent, and she trusted her own ability to decide what to do.

But notice the last phrase in verse 6: "her husband who was with her, and he ate."

Adam was there the entire time.

God created Adam first, gave him the responsibility to take care of the garden.

God gave Adam the duty to be a leader and protector of his wife.

And Adam failed at his job.

Adam listened to the lies of Satan and did nothing.

Adam saw Eve looking at the fruit with desire, and Adam was silent.

Adam failed to lead and protect his wife.

Most importantly, Adam failed to obey God.

Before Eve was created, God gave Adam the command not to eat the fruit from this tree.

Adam knew he was disobeying and rebelling when he ate.

If you want further proof that God holds Adam responsible, not Eve, for the introduction of sin into the world, look at these verses from God's Word:

1 Corinthians 15:21–22

21 For as by a man [Adam] came death, by a man [Jesus] has come also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Romans 5:18–19

18 Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

19 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.

In these verses, we see that Adam brought death to the human race, but Jesus brings life.

Jesus provides a solution for the problems we make.

We have to turn to Jesus, because we do not have a solution for our sin problem.

We can see this in verse 7.

Genesis 3:7

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.

What has changed for Adam and Eve?

They were naked before, and they were comfortable.

But now they feel shame because of their sin.

Shame makes them uncomfortable with each other, so they try to cover themselves.

But covering our bodies to deal with our sin can never work, because shame is not a skin problem.

Shame is a soul problem.

Sin makes us feel guilty and ashamed so we want to hide from other people's eyes.

That's why they hide themselves behind clothing for the first time.

Next we see how they try to hide themselves from God.

Genesis 3:8-9

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?"

The horizontal relationship between Adam and Eve was affected by their sin, so they hid from one another.

In verse 8 we see that their vertical relationship with God was also damaged.

That's why they hid from God.

But before Adam and Eve tried to hide their bodies from God, their hearts pulled away from God.

The sin in our hearts says this to God:

"I don't like your rules, because I don't trust you.

I want to get away from you.

I want to live in freedom without you in my life."

We are all like the prodigal son in Luke 15.

Like that young man, we think we will be happier if we leave our Father's house and all his rules.

But when we separate ourselves from the Father's house, we also lose relationship with the Father.

In verse 9, God does not ask Adam "where are you" because God can't find him.

God is giving Adam the opportunity to repent.

It is an invitation from God to Adam.

God invites Adam to recognize what he has done.

God makes the same invitation to every human being.

Acts 17:26–27

26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

My friends, I can't see your hearts.

I don't know if you are a child of God, or if you are far away from God.

Maybe you are hiding from him today?

God our Creator is saying to every one of us today the same thing he said to Adam, "Where are you?"

And "Yet he is actually not far from each one of us."

When you hear God call "where are you?" you can say to him, "here I am, Lord.

I want to know you, and follow you, and worship you."

Jesus Christ has made a path back to God.

Will you walk on that path?

Only Jesus can make that path for us, because our sin separates us from God and from one another.

Let's look at that separation in the next few verses.

Genesis 3:10-11

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?"

Verse 10 is one of the saddest verses in this chapter.
God made Adam and Eve in his own image.
They enjoyed a close, open, trusting relationship with their Creator.
That relationship has been broken.
Adam is afraid and hiding from God.
Is it because God changed?
Did God do anything different?

No, Adam and Eve are now afraid of God because they know he is holy and good, and they are not.
They thought they could hide their shame behind fig leaves.
Now they are trying to hide their entire bodies in the garden.
Do you think that will work?
Do you think God can't find them?
Of course he can, my friends.
He sees everything I do.
He knows everything I think, even all the bad stuff.
But God does not hide himself from sinful people like me and you.

No, God comes to look for us.
God pursues relationship with us.
That's why God asks Adam two more questions.
God knows the answers.
He is helping Adam see how serious his sin was.
Let's see now how Adam and Eve answer God's questions, in verses 12-13.

Point 2. Who is Responsible?

Genesis 3:12-13

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."

When God created people in his image, he created them for relationship.
We have vertical relationships with God, and horizontal relationships with each other.
Sin damages all of these relationships.

Satan wanted Eve to detach from God and to attach to Satan instead.
Sin creates separation where there should be connection.

Look with me at verse 12 and see how sin caused distrust and separation between Adam and Eve.

Adam does not take responsibility for his sin, does he?
Who does Adam blame for his sin?

He blames Eve.

Adam says it was her fault that he ate the fruit.

But first Adam blames God.

He says, "the woman whom YOU gave to be with me, she gave me fruit."

Adam is saying this was all God's fault.

"Maybe if you didn't give me a wife at all I would not have sinned.

Or maybe if you gave me a different kind of wife, I would not have sinned."

Adam is not accepting responsibility.

He is trying to cover his guilt with words, like he covered his body with fig leaves.

Eve does the same thing.

Look at verse 13, where God asks Eve to explain her actions.

Eve does the same thing Adam did.

She blames someone else and does not take responsibility.

Look at all the damage that sin has done to the relationship triangle.

Immediately after the first sins, conflict enters into the world and damages every relationship.

Now we will see how God punishes everyone for sin and rebellion.

Point 3: Conflict in all of Life

Genesis 3:14-15

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."

God says that there will be enmity or hatred between the snake and the woman, and also between the offspring of the snake and the woman's offspring.
One of Eve's descendants will enter into battle with Satan.

It's amazing when you recognize what verse 15 is saying.
In the middle of the verses about God's punishment for sin, we find an incredible promise.
This is the first announcement of gospel hope in the Bible.

Look at Genesis 3:15b (the letter b means the second half of the verse).
"he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

"He" is Jesus.

And "your head" is Satan's head.

The promise from God is that Jesus the offspring of Eve will one day defeat Satan by attacking him in the head.

Satan will also attack, but his attack will not be as serious.

Satan will bruise the heel of Jesus.

Jesus died on the cross, and it looked like a victory for Satan.

But when Jesus was resurrected, Satan understood that he only bruised Jesus.

Satan was defeated, and the victory of Jesus promised to us a cure for sin and new life.

I love this painting.

You can see the guilt and shame on Eve's face.

But Mary is pregnant with Jesus the Savior.

And Mary is telling Eve, "It is going to be okay!

Jesus will defeat our enemy.

He will fix everything that is broken."

Genesis 3:16-19

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 contrary to your husband,
but 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."

The effects of sin penetrate every part of life.

There is still a lot to enjoy in the world.

God blesses us with food, a beautiful world to enjoy, with friendship and marriage and children.
But everything we experience on earth is affected by sin, like the ink that colors all this water.

In verses 16 to 19, we see the effect sin has on all of life.

1. Verse 16 says that God will bless women with children, but it will be painful.

2. We also see in verse 16 that there will be conflict between husbands and wives.

They will compete with each other for control.

Remember that the first sin was an attempt to take control of their lives away from God.

Sin tells us we will be happy and safe if we have power and control over other people.

This competition for power will make marriage more difficult.

3. Verses 17 to 19 describe how the work that we do on earth will be painful.

God gave Adam work to do before the Fall.

So work is not a punishment from God, it is a blessing.
But work becomes more difficult because of sin.

4. The last punishment in verse 19 is physical death.

We will all die.

Sin separates us spiritually from God, and it brought disease and war and death into the world.

But there is hope, my friend.

God loves us so much that he creates a solution for the problems we make.

Let's look at the last two verses now.

Genesis 3:20-21

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.

When God asked Adam and Eve about their actions, did either of them take responsibility?

No.

What did they do?

They blamed someone else, instead of accepting the responsibility for their sin.

The amazing thing about verse 21 is that God who has never sinned accepted responsibility for the sins of his children.

They were naked and ashamed because of their own sin.

So they made clothing for themselves out of fig leaves.

How long do you think those clothes lasted?

A day or two?

That is a picture of how incapable human beings are of covering our sin and shame.

Our sin is not a problem we can solve.

God killed some animals, and took their skins and made a better covering for Adam and Eve.

Blood was shed to cover them.

This is another picture of the gospel.

To atone for sin, blood must be shed.

God killed animals to cover Adam and Eve.

And many years later, Jesus the Son of God and descendent of Eve was killed to cover your sin.

We are like our first parents.
We blame other people for our sin.
We don't want to take responsibility for our sin.
But Jesus came and said, "I will take responsibility for your sin.
I will live a sinless life so that my sacrificial death will be sufficient payment for all your sin."

Do you believe that?
Will you open your heart to this good news?
Sin brought death and pain into this world.
But Jesus is willing to take responsibility for your sin, so that you can receive from him healing and hope and eternal life.
In a few minutes we are going to celebrate the sacrament of communion.
If you are not a follower of Jesus yet, then you can't eat the bread and drink the cup today.
But this will be a good time for you to talk to God about your own heart.
A good time for you to decide if you want Jesus to be your Savior and your Lord, so he can wash you of your sin and take you to heaven to live there forever with him.

Please pray with me now.
Jesus, we have a sin problem that we cannot solve.
Sin started with Adam and Eve, but we cannot blame them.
They are not responsible for my sin, for the sins of my friends here.
Thank you Jesus that you were willing to take responsibility for sins you did not commit, so we can receive the forgiveness and life we do not deserve.
Fill us with your life and peace and hope today, we ask in your holy name.
Amen.