

God's Promises for Us
Genesis 1-3
July 30th, 2017, Leora Sawatzky

When I think of God's promises, I will often go back to the first story. The story where we get to see for the first time who God is and what He is like. It's the story that shapes the rest of the story that has unfolded and will continue to unfold before us. We can find it in the very first book of the Bible. Genesis.

I'm not going to focus too much on the part where God spoke and created the world with such care and design. It's an important part of our story and important for understanding who God is and what He is like, however today, I want to start in chapter 3 of Genesis.

Adam and Eve were made in the image of God. They were made to be like God, in that they would reflect or show back the character of God. People were created to be creative, like God is creative. We were created for relationships, like God is. However one thing that Adam and Eve were not created like God is knowing about both good and evil. Adam and Eve knew good because that was all that they had experienced. Adam and Eve had never felt pain, sadness, anger, hurt, they had never thought about what bad was. They had nothing to compare their good life too. Adam and Eve had no clue what evil was that was until...

One day while Adam and Eve were in the garden, doing what they were created for, taking care of the garden and enjoying it. The Bible tells that a serpent came along and started to cause Adam and Eve to doubt the heart of God for them. He asked them this question.

"Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" - Genesis 3:1

This is a trick of course. It's the same trick that is still used on us today to doubt the heart of God for us. To cause us to wonder if God is holding back on us, to cause us to think that maybe God doesn't have the best for us and we should probably go our own way instead of God's way.

When we forget about God's promises or start doubting if they are true for me - this is where we can get into trouble like Adam and Eve are about to.

Eve answers the serpent with this:

“Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.... It’s only the fruit from the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said ‘You must not eat it or even touch it, if you do, you will die.’” - Genesis 3:2

The tree that Eve is talking about is the tree that was named “The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” It stood in the middle of the garden as an option for Adam and Eve, for God did not make Adam and Eve into robots. He did not program into them a “must obey God” button that he can set off. Knowing that all the rest of the creation would choose Him out of their natural, way they were born state, God made people with the option to love Him back. He would love them unconditionally, however people have the choice to love God back.

When the option came for Eve, the first response was “no, we are not allowed or we will die.”

The serpent, being really sneaky and clever, kept on with his best trick. His trick is to try and get us to think that God doesn’t really care about us, that He is holding back from us, that we could do better if we just did what we wanted.

He replied to Eve with this:

“You won’t die...God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it and you will be like God knowing both good and evil.” - Genesis 3:4-5

Well, this is a half truth, but it isn’t the whole truth. Adam and Eve wouldn’t physically die right away, but death, dying and decay would begin on the earth as soon as they disobeyed God. And they would know good and evil - but they wouldn’t just know about it - it would become a part of who they are. It would infect their lives and cause all kinds of brokenness in the world because of their choice.

Adam and Eve thought about it and went ahead and ate the fruit, disobeying God.

As soon as they ate the fruit that changed everything, they looked down and all of a sudden felt a feeling they had never felt before. They felt shame. They felt that who they were wasn't good and so they tried to hide what they could see with leaves. Not liking what they felt on the inside, they tried to cover up what was on the outside.

The next part of the story is the part I love the most. I think it's become one of my all time favourite reminders of who God is and what He is like.

Adam and Eve had covered themselves with leaves and went to hide, they didn't want God to know what they had done. (But He already knew)

It was the cool of the day and God came walking in the garden. God knows everything. He knew that Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit that would cause death. He knew that they had disobeyed Him.... yet - this is what He did.

“Adam - where are you?”

Do you think that God knew where Adam is? Of course He did. One could never play hide and seek with God. God knows where we are, what we are doing, what we are thinking, how we are feeling all the time.

I love what this part of the story tells us about God and how He loves us. God called out to Adam, even when he knew what Adam had done. He knew that Adam had disobeyed Him, He knew that death and dying was taking over the world. He knew all that and still - God's heart was to call out for Adam to come near Him.

Adam replied to God:

“I heard you walking the garden so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.” - Genesis 3:10

God asks Adam how he knows He is naked. Again, God knew, but still asked Adam. Even when Adam and Eve sinned - God cared about them and He continued to love them. That never changed.

Adam, God, Eve and the serpent have a discussion - where there is a whole lot of blaming. "He made me do", "she gave it to me", "it was his fault!"

God hears out their excuses. He doesn't point who was more in the wrong, He doesn't tell them how wrong they are for doing what they did... He doesn't yell at them, or tell them that they have to do better next time. He doesn't even tell them to get their act together. Instead He reminds them of their consequences AND the promises to send someone to correct the mistake they have made. Someone to deal with sin forever.

The consequence: God declares to Adam and Eve that because of sin, work is hard, relationships are hard, there is hurt and brokenness in the entire system that is in the world....

AND

The solution to sin: God promises to send a solution to the sin problem of the world. God promises that one day He would send someone to defeat the enemy of God forever.

In Genesis this promise written like a riddle - it's said like this:

"And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head and you will strike his heel" - Genesis 3:15

When I think of God's promises this is where I go back to often, it reminds me in the deepest way of who God is and what He is like.

Adam and Eve did not have to get their act together and figure things out for God to pursue them after they had sinned. In fact they were thinking that who they were was so bad that God wouldn't want to be near them - so they hid.

What is true about God is that He loves us, the way we are. Just like He came and called Adam and Eve in the garden - while they were still in sin, is how He comes for me and you today. He calls us - not when we are perfect, not when we have it all together, but when we are a mess. He

doesn't come to us expecting us to have solutions and to do more or be better. He comes to us with a plan, with compassion and with love.

Is God just? Yes. Are their consequences for our sins. Yes. We often have to live them out. But that does not change how much God loves us or the fact that He will chase after us to get us to come near to Him.

Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves up with some leaves. They tried to make themselves look and feel better before God. This may seem really silly - but how often do we do the same thing? How often do we try to hide our brokenness and shame - from others and from God. I know I do. I sew my own clothes of fig leaves and try to make believe like everything is ok. God sees past that and says - I have made you new clothes. Bring your brokenness and shame to me. Don't hide it, don't try to cover it up - bring it to me and I will be your solution. I will fix it.

What is true about God is that He loves you just the way you are. There is nothing you can do that will make Him love you any less. There is nothing that you can do that can make Him love you more. He already loves you 100%.

God's solution to our sin problem, that we all have, is the in the fulfillment of the promise that He made to Adam and Eve back in the garden of Eden is the He would send His Son Jesus, to pay for the consequence of sin.

There is so much history that goes between the story we heard about today in the garden of Eden and Jesus - and you can look it up and read it in the Bible, in fact I highly recommend that you do. The Bible is where we are going to find out what is true about God. If you're just starting your relationship with God - just trying to get to know Him, start by downloading the Bible app and looking for a devotional that will take you through the Bible. Or just start reading in Genesis and look for things that are true about God in every chapter. He's in every one.

I'm going to skip over a whole lot of stories that would give us even more truth about who God is and what He is like - we don't have enough time today to talk about them all. However if you're interested in the story of God - we are going to be starting a new series in September unpacking the whole story - start to finish.

But for today - I am going to move to the story of Jesus.

God came to earth as a human being. His name is Jesus. He came to show everyone who God is and what He is like. He came to show what God's love looks like in the biggest display of love we will ever know.

He spent hours healing the sick, he noticed and spent time with the lonely and the hurt. He talked about what God's Kingdom is like, He lived what God's kingdom is like. I know that God's plan was not for there to be brokenness, hurt and pain because of the way that Jesus spent all of His time with people talking about this and doing something about it.

Jesus showed with his actions and words who God is and what He is like.

In the first part of the story I talked about today - God told Adam and Eve that the consequence to sin was death. That choosing sin meant that death was the consequence. We would live in pain and brokenness on earth and then physical death would come and then forever separation from God.

I told you earlier that God loves you. I am talking to you. I mean you. The excuses you think you have, the things you have done, or the way that you feel towards God doesn't change the fact that He loves you.

Jesus came to die in your place. He came to pay for your sin debt. He didn't have any sin debt to pay for Himself so He choose to die in your place. He is perfect and had no reason to die. He loves you and came to take your place.

How hard is it to get Jesus to pay for you sins? Maybe you don't know and it may seem like a big job to do to figure out all the steps. It's not. I'll tell them to you.

Do you believe that you are a sinner? That you have chosen even just one time your own way instead of God's way. If your answer to this is yes - let's talk about the next part.

Do you think you can save yourself? That you could do something or be something to make your sin go away? Doing more good things, doesn't take away the bad things. If I was making a sandwich and on it I put a pile

of dirt and then covered it with peanut butter - did the peanut butter make the dirt go away? Nope. It will just be a dirty peanut butter sandwich, which is the same with our sin. We can't get rid of it on our own, we can't cover it up with enough good things to make it go away. If you know you can't save yourself from your sin - we can go to the next part.

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came into the world to live a perfect life without sin - and then die in your place?

From here - you tell God what we just talked about. It could sound something like this: **I know that I am a sinner. I know that there is nothing I can do myself to pay for my sin. I believe that you love me and sent your Son to die for me. I accept your gift of life forever with you. Thank-you.**

If you have said something like this to God and wondered what to do next, I can sum it up in one word - Respond.

Respond means to say or do something in return. Your life will start to change, what you choose to fill your time with will start to change and how you view others will start to change as you continue to understand God's love for you.

I'm a list person - so in some ways I'd love to give you a check list of things to do and not do as Christ - follower, but our hearts get stuck too easily on lists and we forget to draw near to God to respond to His love for us. You can draw near to Him by getting to know Him. The best place to get to know Him is in His Word the Bible. The next thing that helps us grow is being in a community with other believers, like church. You will learn to respond to God the more you know Him.

This last week at IAC we talked a lot about God's love and His promises for us. God's promises tell us about who God is and what He is like. As you leave here today - this is what I want you to bring with you in your hearts and minds.

God says this to you.

I am with you.

I care about you.

I will give you what you need.
I will save you
I will answer you.

God is faithful. He will do what He says He will do. We can trust Him.