



Pentecost 3

June 10, 2018 – 9:00 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

Theme: OUR TRAGIC SITUATION HAS BEEN REVERSED BY GOD'S GRACIOUS WILL AND BY THE GIFT OF HIS VERY SON!

Sermon Text: Genesis 3:8-15 New International Version (NIV)

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this,

"Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

The ancient Greeks developed theater in remarkable ways that still influence Western playwrights today. One of the genres they created is called "**tragedy.**" Three authors—Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles—achieved greatness in this form of literature. They lived 400 years before Christ, yet they influenced the likes of Shakespeare, who drew upon

their work in his tragedies. The plot of a tragedy typically features a central figure who exhibits many virtues, but has one fatal flaw that undoes them. Usually these figures are fictional or drawn from ancient mythology. Today's text describes the greatest tragedy in all of human history! Moses—its inspired writer—sets before us the movement from a blissful existence of unencumbered life with God to the crushing reality of a world of decay, destruction, difficult labors, death and eternal damnation. It's not fiction; it's not mythological; it's the **factual story** of mankind's tragic fall into sin!

If you've ever driven on I-90 between Spokane and Coeur d' Alene then you passed through Post Falls, Idaho. Well, today's text is a post-fall text. It takes place immediately after Adam and Eve disobeyed the LORD and ate the fruit of **"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"** (Gen. 2:17) about which God had warned them that if they did, they'd surely die. Instead of heading God's truth, they succumbed to Satan's lies and were instantly plunged into sin. They **"realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves"** in their newfound shame. Now what? That's where our text begins. Moses writes, **"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden."** God takes the initiative. He seeks out His fallen creatures, and He doesn't begin His conversation with a blanket condemnation. Instead, He asked them, **"Where are you?"** An ancient rabbi once observed about God's question that it wasn't that God needed to know where Adam was, but Adam now needed to know where he was in relationship to God. The way God began His post-fall discourse with Adam and Eve already displayed His merciful disposition!

This real-life tragedy isn't a drama that we simply observe like we would a play at the 5th Avenue Theater. No, we actively participate in it! In fact, the cast of this real-life tragedy consists of every single post-fall human being, from Adam and Eve to the last baby born before the Son of Man returns on the Last Day as Judge of the living and the dead. Tragically, in their misguided quest to **"be like God"** (3:5), our first parents lost their innocence and forfeited their freedom. Prior to the fateful moment—pre-fall—Adam and Eve's identity was wonderful beyond our comprehension. The **"LORD God"** personally **"formed [Adam] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and [he] became a living being"** (2:7), hand-crafted in the perfectly holy **"image"** (1:26) of his Triune Creator. That very day, the LORD formed Eve as a **"suitable helper"** for Adam in an equally personal way: He **"caused [Adam] to fall into a deep sleep"**—a coma induced by the Great Physician of soul and body, if you will—**"and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs"** and made Eve from it (2:20-22).

Adam and Eve were creation's crown jewel! They alone were forged in God's holy image and endowed with His perfect morality. The portrait Moses paints of God and His actions in the first 2 chapters of Genesis displays His benevolence. All of God's gifts were for Adam and Eve's benefit and support.

God was, is and always will be the immutable **"Father of the heavenly lights"** who gives us **"every good and perfect gift"** (James 1:17) from His gracious hand! He's a Giver! He's the Giver of the heavens and earth; of the sun, moon, stars and seasons; of every land, sea and airborne creature—great and small—over which He gave us dominion; He's the Giver of language, of love and of laughter; of marriage and family.

And, in a remarkable act of giving, the LORD endowed Adam and Eve with free will. They had the capacity to turn away from the One who'd given them everything. Some say that's the one fatal flaw in God's plan: that ability of our first parents to choose whether or not to follow the LORD, or turn their backs on Him in their desire to be **"like"** Him. Ironically, they were the most like God of any human beings that ever have or ever will grace the face of

the earth. The graph illustrates the spiritual condition of mankind, pre-fall, post-fall, after they've been reborn by the Holy Spirit and once they've been glorified in God's presence in heaven:

Pre-Fall Man	Post-Fall Man	Reborn Man	Glorified Man
able to sin	able to sin	able to sin	able to not sin
able to not sin	unable to not sin	able to not sin	unable to sin

Sadly, Adam and Eve opted to exercise their free will in a selfish, self-centered way. And that decision not only impacted them, it impacted every single human being conceived and born since. Their tragedy became our tragedy; their sin, our sin; their banishment from Eden, our banishment from Eden; their hard labors, our hard labors; their “me-first” attitude, our “me-first” attitude; their inevitable condemnation in the fires of hell, our inevitable condemnation in the fires of hell. Like our first parents, we get so wrapped up in our own desires that we overlook the genuine needs of others. Like them, we assert our own rights over the rights of others. And the results of this ongoing tragedy that’s played out on life’s stage, are ominous and pervasive. Preoccupation with self at the expense of others is more than just “breaking a rule.” It breaks down all that God’s so freely given us.

Our foolish, sinful pride breaks our relationship with God. Now, like Adam and Eve post-fall, we try to hide from God; now, like them, we blame others for our sins. It breaks our relationships with our loved ones. Now, like Adam, we blame our Eve; or, like her, we blame the devil, other people or our circumstances. It breaks our relationship with the world we live in. Now long hours at the office or job site, traffic jams and paper jams, hard labor and excruciating labor pains are required in order for us to make a living or to bring new lives into being. It breaks our relationship with our own being. Now we’re confused about our identity, our purpose in life and our role in life’s unfolding tragedy.

But, in an amazing plot-twist, the LORD didn’t abandon His disobedient children! He came looking for them, sought their repentance and issued the very first pledge to send a Champion one day: His eternally-begotten, equally-divine, one and only Son—born of the human race but with the perfectly pristine pre-fall nature that Adam and Eve forfeited when they succumbed to Satan’s temptations. Speaking of Satan, God told His arch rival, and our arch enemy:

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” And so, He came, this Victor of ours, to vanquish Satan, reverse the curse that Adam and Eve caused, and even conquer sin and death as well! He came to restore our relationship with God. As Paul states in **Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** He came to restore our relationship with others. Jesus urged: **“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27-28).** He came to restore our relationship with a renewed creation. God inspires Isaiah to foresee a future in which He promises, **“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind” (65:17).**

In the **“seed of the woman”**—Jesus Christ—we are forgiven and our identity as God’s beloved children is restored! As Paul wrote, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17)!** So rejoice and be glad! In Jesus Christ, the tragedy of our sin and self-will is reversed. Unlike the Greek tragedies that ended in despair and death, our tragic situation has been resolved by the One who took all our sin—all our selfishness—into His holy body on the cross. There

God's character as the Giver of lavish love was once more revealed just like it was post-fall when He came looking for our fatally flawed first parents, Adam and Eve, in Eden. **"This is love,"** John wrote, **"Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins"** (1 John 4:10). That's *unconditional* love!

Now, as new creatures in Christ Jesus, we have the privilege of living and sharing that reality of new life in Christ with others, be they family, friend or foe.

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The darkness and death defined us as children of Adam and Eve are now gone. The days and nights of our life are no longer limited by our self-absorption, self-will or self-assertion. Rather, by the narrative of our lives—our identity—is defined by Jesus' death and resurrection, to which we've been joined in the blessed sacrament of Holy Baptism. Paul wrote in **Romans 6:4**: **"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."** So rejoice as you live out your new life in Christ! From His throne at the Father's right hand, He vows: **"See, I am making all things new"** (Rev. 21:5). Amen.