

THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

Second in a Series: What Does The Church of the Covenant Mean?

First Sunday of Lent --March 9, 2014 --Genesis 2: 15-17; Genesis 3: 8-13& 17-24

The Church of the Covenant

We refer to ourselves as “The Church of the Covenant”; the covenants are on every page in the Old Testament; the New Covenant in Jesus Christ is front and center in relation to the cross and the new relationship established through our Lord Jesus Christ. The covenantal nature of the church is as Presbyterian as you can get. So Pastor Emily and I will be preaching on the nature, meaning and significance of Covenant in Lent this year, asking, *What does The Church of the Covenant Mean?*

The first covenant we consider comes from the Old Testament and is the covenant which God makes with Adam and Eve. It is referred to as the “Adamic Covenant”. In the act of creation God enters into a covenant with Adam and Eve. He sets them apart from all of the rest of creation, creating them in His own image, and God places them in a perfect environment, the Garden of Eden. There is no stress of the modern world in Eden; there is no pain, nor disease; there is no death whatsoever. The abundant fruit of the Garden of Eden supplies their every need. There is no work in the Garden of Eden –God supplies His people with everything they need Himself. And God has created Adam and Eve to walk with Him in a perfect relationship. God walks with Adam and Eve hand-in-hand if you will in the Garden. *‘And (Adam and Eve) heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day.’ (Genesis 3: 8)* God walked with Adam and Eve in a perfect relationship; Adam and Eve walked with God in a perfect relationship. God knew them and they knew God, perfectly, face-to-face, heart-to-heart. What God wanted, they did; what they needed HE perfectly provided. It was paradise. It was the way God created the world and mankind to be. It is why at creation God looked at humankind and declared us to be “good”. We indeed were created “good”, established in a perfect place, and given a perfect relationship with the perfect and Holy God. God wants to be in perfect relationship with us again. The very heart of God is His desire to walk with us in paradise once again. The Church of the Covenant means that church in relationship with God through a restored relationship in Jesus Christ, His Son.

The covenant which God made with Adam is this: *“The Lord God took the man and placed the man in the garden of Eden...And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.’” (Genesis 2: 15-17)* The creation of life itself and the creation of humanity was an act of covenant, of entering into relationship with the very human beings God had created. Note two things about this: FIRST, this is all at God’s initiative; there is no initiative by man. It is God who initiates covenant, not man who initiates covenant with God. *“I have chosen you, you have not chosen me.”* says the Lord Jesus Christ. A covenant is God’s will initiated in our lives. It is HE who reaches out to us, not we who reach out to HIM. In every covenant in the Old and New Testaments we will discover this; there is not one covenant where humanity initiates relationship with God. It is God’s will, not our will, that establishes covenant and relationship with human beings. *“I made a choice for Jesus.”* No. Jesus reached out to me. SECOND, this Adamic Covenant is a conditional versus an unconditional covenant. While God unconditionally enters into covenant with Adam and Eve, nevertheless there is a condition – *“You must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if you do, you will die.”* The condition is to not eat of the fruit of just one of the trees in the Garden of Eden. Because if you do, you will break the covenant, you will be kicked out of paradise, and you shall surely die.

We know how the story ends. We know that Adam and Eve eat of the prohibited fruit. This is not a good commentary on humanity. Presbyterians do not have an optimistic view of humanity apart from

God. In other words, God places human beings into a perfect environment, gives them everything, gives them eternal life, there is no pain, no disease and no death. But God gives us just one little rule, one tiny commandment, one little miniscule condition on all this –just don't eat of the fruit of just one of the trees in the garden. But of course the story is that Adam and Eve do the very thing which God has commanded them not to do. In the eating of the fruit from the prohibited tree, in the disobedience of Adam and Eve, our forbearers, the perfect relationship God had established in covenant in the Garden, was broken and lost and humanity was cast out of paradise, East of Eden, inherited pain and death and work, and broke the perfect relationship which God had initiated with them from the beginning.

Given a perfect environment, humanity disobeyed and broke the covenant with God and replaced a perfect relationship with a broken relationship. Education alone cannot solve the problems of humanity. Science and medicine cannot solve the results of the fall apart from God. Government cannot recreate the paradise lost in the Garden no matter how hard it may try apart from God. Humanity will always choose the wrong thing left to its own devices. That's the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Human beings will choose the very options which lead to war and death and pain and enmity with God. The reason why our free will and choice is so limited in its power is because humanity left to its own devices will always choose the wrong thing. It is God's will and God's choice reaching out to us that can restore paradise lost. If we think as 'humanists' we can restore the Garden on our own and apart from God, through our own knowledge, skill and wisdom, we will only discover the depths to which humanity will fall when it seeks to do so apart from the Lord God Almighty. Many may try but they will always fail. Apart from God, we will create a world where sin and death reign because it has rejected a relationship, a covenant, with God.

One little rule and we disobeyed. We are no better than Adam or Eve. One little rule broken and paradise was lost and the perfect relationship God had sought to establish with us in the Garden was lost. But the hope is that it is not lost forever...

Because Jesus Christ is the second Adam. God sends Jesus Christ, His only Son, into the world to reestablish covenant with us, to reestablish the perfect relationship with God through the perfect obedience of His Son. If through our disobedience death came into the world then through Christ's obedience eternal life came back into the world. It is our knowledge of HIM that allows us to eat of the Tree of Life forfeited in the Garden by our sin and disobedience. God, at God's initiative, sends Jesus Christ into the world to reestablish the broken covenant, broken in the fall of Adam and Eve. Paradise lost through our disobedience; paradise regained through the perfect obedience of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the second Adam. *"For as in Adam all die; so also in Christ shall all be made alive."* (1 Corinthians 15: 22)

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ today? Does this perfect Savior live within your heart? Do you know Him and does He know you? Do you seek to walk with Him, through His Spirit, living within us? Do you seek to eat of the tree of life or of the tree of death, seeking knowledge apart from God? Lord God, make us into The Church of the Covenant, the church where a restored, life-giving relationship to You is made manifest, and Your Kingdom comes, and the hope of paradise restored is reborn into our heart. Life and eternal LIFE is the covenant, God reaching out to us, through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Are you in covenant with God? Will you eat only of the tree of life today? Or like Adam and Eve will you eat only of the tree of self-will and disobedience and death today? Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*

