

**ALIVE: EASTER 2024**  
*"ALIVE in the beginning..." Genesis 1 & 2*  
March 17, 2024

**INTRO.:** Good morning and welcome to our Easter series entitled, **ALIVE**. Praise God that our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is alive. He is risen.... These next four messages, 3 Sundays and Good Friday our themes will be:

Today: **ALIVE** in the beginning...

Palm Sunday: **ALIVE**...RSVP

Good Friday: **ALIVE** then dead

Resurrection Sunday: **ALIVE** together

So, today we're looking at this thought, **ALIVE** in the beginning... from Genesis 1 & 2. I think this is an appropriate place to start since we have been slowly working our way through Genesis. Why are the events leading up to Easter important? Why did Jesus die such a violent and cruel death on the cross? Why is the resurrection such a necessary truth for us today and all believers who have gone before us?

In thinking about this message and passage I'm drawn back to my experience in running. As a runner you learn what might be the "ideal" conditions for doing your best in a race. Marathon races often start early in the morning, usually no later than 8 am, and when I ran marathons, I wanted it to be in the high 40's or low 50's when the race began. I knew that it would only get warmer as the race progressed. It's also better to have an overcast day so the sun doesn't take up any of your energy. That's how it was the first marathon I ever ran, and everything was going fine until I hit the 20-mile mark. It was at that point I began to have some trouble with my legs and assumed I had hit the proverbial "wall." I was ahead of the time I wanted to attain so I knew I could back off. A few weeks later, after the pain hadn't subsided, I went to my orthopedic doctor. He scheduled an MRI, and it revealed that I had a torn meniscus which needed repair. So, even with the best conditions I had trouble finishing the race. As a coach we train our runners in all types of conditions so they can feel equipped no matter what the race day may bring. We want them to feel prepared to run in the rain, wind, heat, cold, and even snow.

This morning, I want us to think about how God provided everything for Adam & Eve, providing them with the best environment and situation for them to live for Him in a continual state of worship and adoration of Him, their Creator. As we have worked through the first chapter of Genesis we have noticed several things. God created out of nothing and after He created, we often see this phrase:

**Genesis 1:10** God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

**Genesis 1:12** The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

**Genesis 1:16-18** God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. **17** God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, **18** to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good.

**Genesis 1:21** So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Can you see any pattern? This all leads up to the sixth day which brings me to my first point showing God's provision for them.

### **IT WAS VERY GOOD**

This statement comes after God had created Adam and Eve. Humankind, the apex of God's creation. They were created in the image and likeness of God. No other created being is described in this way!

**Genesis 1:31 (NASB95) — 31** God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

This verse points out several ways in which this sixth day of creation is unique. Arnold Fruchtenbaum points out three things:

1) "*God saw all that He had made:*" In other translations we read the word, "everything." In Genesis 1:26-31, Moses, the author, is concentrating on the sixth day but verse 31 he is tying together all six days of creation. The verdict: "*behold, it was very good:*" not merely good, but **very good**.

2) For the first time, in the description of the days, the definite article is used, not *a sixth day*, as was the case with all the others: *And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

3) The description of the sixth day is the most detailed of all the days. God wants us to sit up and take notice. Hey, check this out; what I have created. Man and woman could not have possibly had a better situation.

What does God say about the garden of Eden, which, by the way, was an actual location? Let's read these few verses together.

**Genesis 2:8-17** Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Twice, in verses 8 and 15, we read that God "*put*" man in the garden of Eden. Arnold says that this word, *put*, in the Hebrew, carries the meaning of "resting." "The garden was for Adam, a rest, just as in Psalm 95:11 the Promised Land was a place of rest for Israel.

**Psalm 95:11** So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest."

What are some things we immediately notice about this garden? We see something about the trees. God *made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground*. God, with His creative power, made a large variety of trees. In our country alone there are many kinds of trees but some trees grow better than others, depending on the weather. We lived in Maine for several years and some of the trees that grow well in Pennsylvania don't do as well in Maine and the opposite is true as well. Maine has a relatively short growing season, and it is cold for many months of the year. In the garden of Eden there were "*all kinds of trees*."

What else do we notice about these trees? Moses continues, "*they were pleasing to the eye and good for food*." These trees were nice to look at and they produced fruit you could eat.

The third thing we notice is two trees that are described as being in the middle of the garden of Eden, *the tree of life*, and *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, which we will talk more about later.

The fourth thing described are the rivers, the gold and some other precious jewels.

Then, God gave Adam a job to do in the garden, which was two-fold.

**Genesis 2:15** The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

"*to work it*:" he wasn't just going to lay around in the garden. This is a word used often to describe cultivating the soil and is also used in a sense of serving God (Gordon J. Wenham).

"*take care of it*:" this literally means "to guard." It is the same word used in Genesis 3:24 of the cherubim, who were placed by God to guard the garden after God removed Adam and Eve from the garden following their sin.

**Genesis 3:24** After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

As I think about the garden of Eden, I am drawn back to my opening illustration of running a marathon. This was an ideal place where God placed Adam, and then Eve. It would be like getting to the starting line of the marathon where it was 45 degrees, no wind, and overcast the whole race. Everything is set up for success. Not only does God describe what He created as very good and not only did He create this wonderful garden where He placed Adam, He also gave some commands and consequences if these commands were not followed.

And the LORD God commanded the man: this is the first time this word is used and is the first command that God gave man. What is the significance of this word, *commanded*? This was to let Adam know that God was the ultimate authority, and just because God, in chapter one, had given him authority over the earth, he wasn't to live independent of God.

### **YOU ARE FREE**

So many people picture God as someone who always just says "no," especially if it is something fun. Right from the beginning God said "yes" to Adam. God commands Adam:

You are free to eat from any tree in the garden

Adam, you see all these trees: you can eat from any one of them. Remember, earlier we saw, that they looked great, and they were good for food. I can't even begin to imagine how many trees were in the garden. Last week we highlighted the fact that God's commands are given to provide and protect. This also was the case in the garden.

### **YOU MUST NOT EAT**

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

When God created Adam and Eve, He created them perfect. They had the ability to choose to obey or not obey God. There was no sin nature as of yet. Even though they were created perfect, they had not been tested.

It is impossible for God to sin, otherwise He would not be God. Man, when first created, was given the opportunity to choose. Some wonder, "Why would God give them the opportunity to choose?" Wouldn't it be better, if God made man and woman without choice? What if God just made it so every human being would have to obey and worship Him?

Is it really worship if we don't have the choice to worship? Now, I understand that the Holy Spirit has to work in a person's life to bring them to the place where they see the need to worship God.

God even outlined the consequences for disobedience. There are ALWAYS consequences for disobedience to God.

Genesis tells us that when God finished creating it was very good, and the garden, which God created, was amazing. God said, You are free to eat of any tree, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it:

### **YOU WILL CERTAINLY DIE**

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

*"you will surely (certainly) die:"* this is a special construction in the Hebrew where they use the same Hebrew root together twice for emphasis. Literally, it means, "dying you will die." This is a divine decree of a death sentence. (Arnold Fruchtenbaum)

The idea is that, immediately upon eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will die. This has to be referring to spiritual death, separation from God. This is a warning of an eternal tragedy if they disobeyed. Of course, we know from reading Genesis 3 that they did disobey. It led to them being removed from the garden of Eden, along with many other consequences. We will be talking more about this later when we return to our series in Genesis. Most tragically, they were immediately spiritually separated from their Creator. Not only that, but every human being after them was born with a sin nature: sinners by birth and sinners by choice.

**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

Death came to all people (an accomplished fact) because all sinned (an accomplished fact). There is not one person here who has not sinned. We all stand guilty before God!! It's what John 3:18 tells us.

**John 3:18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Genesis 3:15 is the promise that a deliverer would come, one who would defeat Satan and provide the way for people to have the relationship with God restored, being reconciled to our Creator. This is what God says to the serpent following Adam and Eve's disobedience.

**Genesis 3:15** 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 doom of Satan is predicted. How will this happen? How is it possible that mankind could be reconciled back to God? It can't be by us trying to be good and earn God's forgiveness and restoration because we would still have sin. Also, if Adam and Eve, created without sin still disobeyed, what chance do we have to completely obey God? It is impossible because of our sin nature and because none of us can navigate life without sinning.

**Romans 5:6–8** You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

In the midst of our disobedience, God demonstrates His love for us, in that, while we were still sinning (present tense), Christ died for our sins. Jesus Christ is the ONLY answer for the forgiveness of our sin.

### **The "Preposterous" Truth of God's Wounds**

Christian minister John Dickson once spoke on the theme of the wounds of God on a university campus in Sydney, Australia. During the question time, a Muslim man rose to explain "how preposterous was the claim that the Creator of the universe should be subjected to the forces of his own creation—that he would have to eat, sleep, and go to the toilet, let alone die on a cross." Dickson said his remarks were intelligent, clear, and civil. The man went on to argue that it was illogical that God, the "cause of all causes" could have pain inflicted on him by any lesser beings. Dickson thought for a minute but he couldn't come up with a knockdown argument or a witty comeback. So finally he simply thanked the man for making the uniqueness of the Christian claim so clear. Then Dickson concluded, "What the Muslim denounces as blasphemy the Christian holds precious: God has wounds."

*Source: Timothy Keller, Walking with God through Pain and Suffering (Dutton Adult, 2013), p. 120*

Why is the resurrection necessary? Why is Easter so important? It wasn't enough that Jesus died on the cross, He had to raise again to provide victory over sin AND death.

**1 Corinthians 15:17–19** And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

Adam and Eve were created ALIVE and then died. God provided, through the deliverer promised in Genesis 3:15, the way to be made alive again.

Every person, since Adam and Eve, were born dead (spiritually), and can be made ALIVE only through Jesus Christ. Why would any one of us think that we could possibly live a perfect live when Adam and Eve, with the best possible situation, disobeyed God?

### **SO WHAT???**

It was mentioned earlier in our prayer time that we need to pray for the Kutcher family with the passing of Mark. On Saturday we are going to have a Celebration of Life Service here at the church. Why is it a celebration? It's because we know where he is: with his Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

**Job 19:25–27** I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Jesus, responding to Martha, before He raised her brother Lazarus from the dead.

**John 11:25–27** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

\*Where am I at in my relationship with God? Am I alive or still dead?

\*If I claim to know Christ as my Savior and Lord, am I living like it?

**1 John 3:1–3** How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. **2** Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **3** Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

Only Jesus can make dead people alive!!!

\*Who am I praying for to come to know Christ and who am I telling about Christ?

-Thank God for life in Christ!!

