

So today - we're continuing our *Advent* series of talks

Advent literally means the "*coming of a very important person*"

That person, of course, is our Lord Jesus - the Son of God

Throughout the Sundays in Advent we're exploring why Jesus is so important

You have an outline in your bulletin

Please have your Bibles turned to Genesis 1:31 to begin with and then Genesis 3

Let's ask for God's help and understanding, before we begin. Let's pray

Intro (Gen 1:31)

[PowerPoint 1-Forever Young]

[PowerPoint 2-Blank]

Forever young - would it really be good to be forever young?

Young people act invincible - don't they?

As we get older, we start to understand our mortality

Especially if people our own age start to die

This song raises some serious questions though?

[PowerPoint 3=Questions]

- Why do we have to die anyway?
- Should we be scared of dying?
- Why can't we just live forever?

Maybe we can...

(pause)

In our OT reading from Genesis 1:31

[PowerPoint 4-Gen 1:31]

When God created everything - just by speaking- He declared that it was very good - literally exceedingly excellent - i.e. perfect

At that moment - everything was perfect - there was no rebellion against God - no death or decay in the world

BUT - something went wrong in the Garden of Eden

What went wrong? (Gen 3:1-19)

Before we see what went wrong

We need to remind ourselves of the **one rule** God gave the first man - Adam from Gen 2:15-17

[PowerPoint 5=Gen 2:15-17]

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

One rule

Break the one rule and they die

But as we read in our OT reading from Genesis 3:1

The Serpent came to tempt Eve

Who is this serpent?

[Powerpoint6a-Satan tempts]

We know from OT book of Ezekiel 28:13-19 that Satan was in Eden

And we know from Bible passages like Job 26:13; Isaiah 5:9 and Rev 12:9, 20:2 that a serpent or a snake-like creature is associated with Satan

Ezekiel 28 also tell us that Satan, before his fall, was an angel of the highest rank and Isaiah 14 tells us Satan's fall had to do with his desire to be equal to or greater than God, so God cast Satan out of Heaven

So here in the Garden of Eden Satan (in the form of the serpent) tempted Eve
And notice how subtle Satan's temptation is

[Powerpoint6b-doubt]

He sows a seed of **doubt** - "did God really say?"

If Satan can get the woman doubting herself - his battle is half-won

He tempts the woman - because he perceives her to be more vulnerable because she didn't receive the command, *to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, directly from God - but from Adam

And look how Satan works - he take's God's positive command - '*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*'

And he rephrases it in a negative way - '*Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?*'

Notice how Satan is trying to **discourage** Eve - implying - God doesn't want you to eat from any tree

[PowerPoint 6c-communication]

It seems too that Adam didn't do a good job in communicating God's rule to Eve.

Eve's description of the rule - in v2 - is a bit flimsy - she doesn't say 'the tree of knowledge of good and evil' - but 'the tree in the middle of the garden' She also says she can't 'touch the tree' - but God didn't say anything about not touching the tree

[PowerPoint 6d-restraint]

Now this one rule might seem like a small thing to hinge the destiny of the whole human race and all creation on. But the tree was a restraint on Adam and Eve. It reminded them they were not God, that God had a legitimate claim on their obedience, and that they were responsible to Him.

[PowerPoint 6e-lie]

Satan's next ploy is to lie he says - You will not certainly die. This is a blatant lie on Satan's part

Satan wanted Eve to forget all about the consequences of sin. When we don't think about the consequence of sin, we are more likely to keep going with that sin.

Satan wants Eve to doubt God's goodness. If Satan can convince Eve that God lies to her, he can then make her question - *how can God be good?*

[PowerPoint 6f-attractive with truth]

Satan's next tactic is to get Eve to **doubt the badness of sin**. See v5 - Satan says eating this fruit will open her eyes and she will be like God - knowing good and evil - surely that's a good thing Eve!

Satan wants Eve and us to see sin as something good that a bad God doesn't want us to have. - Satan's main lie is "*sin is not bad and God is not good*"

Satan's temptation was all the more powerful because there was some truth in it. It was true that their eyes would be opened (fulfilled in v7) - but their eyes were instantly opened to their own sin and rebellion

Satan's final enticement is the most powerful of all - that they will be like God, knowing good and evil - because this was how Satan himself fell - wanting to be equal to God

Con-men are usually successful because they're charming, believable and offer something that seems reasonable - or even great

So, Eve gave in to the temptation

She ate the forbidden fruit - and she gave some to Adam and he ate it too

God caught them red handed

And so, sin and rebellion against God came into the world!

[PowerPoint 7a-blame]

And then the blame game started

Adam first blamed God - "*the woman YOU put here with me*"

Adam second blamed Eve - "*she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it*"

But Adam is the one at fault - he was given the rule from God first - he knew the rule - he should've said: "*No Eve, don't eat it - God said we will die*"

But Adam was weak!

The blame game continued

Eve blamed the serpent - "*the serpent deceived me, and I ate*"

Illustration of blame [Olivia]

It's easy for us to blame someone or something else for our sin and rebellion against God - like:

- It was the people I was hanging around with - they were a bad influence
- I was so tired - I had a brain explosion
- I'd had a tough day or week at the office - so I flipped
- I'd had a bit too much to drink - so I over reacted
- Or the classic - the devil made me do it!

[PowerPoint 7b-Eph 4:27]

The Apostle Paul gives some great advice in Eph 4:27

... do not give the devil a foothold

(pause)

These verses from *Genesis 3* - also give specific punishments for the 3 characters involved in this rebellion against God

[PowerPoint 8a-Punish - Serpent]

For the serpent (Satan)

The first part of the punishment is in v14 - directed at the animal that Satan used to bring the temptation. God commanded that the serpent now crawl on its belly - the assumption is that perhaps snakes/serpents may have had legs prior to this

[PowerPoint 8b-Punish - Dust]

The term "eat dust" has the idea of **total defeat** - like we would say "so and so has bitten the dust". Here we have a picture of Satan defeated

[PowerPoint 8c-Punish - Enmity]

The term "God will put **enmity** (hostility or opposition) between the serpent and the woman" - indicates there will be hostility between the serpent and the woman from now on

And we see this today where many people have a natural aversion to snakes

[PowerPoint 8d-Punish - Fear]

The second part of the punishment related to the serpent - is to do with who the serpent represents, namely Satan. There will be enmity - mutual opposition and hostility between Satan and the woman and her offspring

From that point forward there is a natural fear of Satan in the heart of humans

Each human being is born naturally rebellious against God (original sin) and naturally cautious and afraid of Satan. People must develop hardened hearts to willingly and knowingly serve Satan. If we don't serve God or Satan, but serve ourselves - Satan is fine with that too - because we're not serving God

For the woman

[PowerPoint 9a-childbirth]

The punishment for the woman - is that women will experience pain in child birth - not just in the act of giving birth - but in the raising of children - which is never easy

[PowerPoint 9b-strife]

And the second part of this punishment is the idea of the husband ruling over his household - where the man is meant to be head of the household and the inherent challenges facing the man as he leads home and family

Biblical scholar, Susan Foh puts it like this: *"As a result of the fall, man no longer rules easily; he must fight for his headship of the home. Sin has corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband. The woman's desire is to control her husband (to usurp his divinely appointed headship), and he must master her, if he can. So, the rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny and domination"* (Susan T. Foh, cited in Boice)

For the man

[PowerPoint 10a-earth]

Because the man - listened to his wife - instead of God - there is a curse upon the Earth

Before this curse - the ground only produced good

After this, it still produced good, but also thorns and thistles which come faster and easier than good fruit

[PowerPoint 10b-hard work]

Before the curse Adam worked with joy. Now work has a cursed element to it, with pain and tiredness a part of work

[PowerPoint 10c-dust/death]

The last part of the curse for the man - would be an end of his toil and labour on earth - but it wasn't an end of deliverance but an end in DEATH - all humans return to dust.

As 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 people, because all sinned—

So, because of Adam's sin

We all inherit sin and we all inherit death

Physical death - we all die one day

Spiritual death - our relationship with God is broken - it's like something is "dead" in our relationship with Him

But why do we have to die?

Can't God just forgive us?

Well - we need to understand a couple of things about God

God's standards are perfect standards - because He's a Holy and perfect God

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

God's standards are perfect - He can't look at sin

As Habakkuk 1:13 says:

"God's" eyes are too pure to look on evil; "He" cannot tolerate wrongdoing

The Promise (Gen 3:15)

However

In God's grace - there is a great promise contained within the punishment of the serpent (Satan)

It's in Gen 3:15

It's the 1st mention of the Gospel [protoevangelium] - 1st mention of Good News of God sending a Saviour -

[PowerPoint 11-Promise]

And I [God] will put enmity

between you [Satan] and the woman [Eve],

and between your [Satan's] offspring and hers [Eve's offspring];

he [Eve's offspring=Jesus] will crush your [Satan's] head,

and you [Satan] will strike his [Eve's offspring = Jesus] heel

In this verse, God predicts the downfall of Satan - showing that the real battle is between Satan and the offspring of the Woman

There is no doubt this is a prophecy of Jesus' ultimate defeat of Satan

God says that Satan will wound Jesus (strike his heel) but Jesus will crush Satan with a mortal wound (crushing Satan's head)

The heel is part of the body within the serpent's reach. Jesus, in taking on humanity, brought himself near to Satan's domain - within Satan's reach - so Satan could strike Him.

Satan thought he had victory when he struck Jesus' heel so to speak and Jesus was crucified on the cross

But Jesus didn't stay dead!

Jesus rose 3 days later to show that Satan's power of inflicting death was now broken

The Promised Fulfilled (Heb 2:5-18)

Which brings us to our NT passage from Hebrews 2 [turn there now]

Which explains how this 1st great promise in Gen 3:15 is fulfilled in Jesus

Looking at Hebrews 2:14

[PowerPoint 12a-Promise fulfilled]

Since God's children have flesh and blood, Jesus too shared in their humanity so that by His death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil

So, Jesus has broken the power of death - He has crushed Satan's head - Satan is a defeated enemy - because Jesus defeated death and rose again

[PowerPoint 12b-crush]

And so V15 - says we are free from the fear of death

And we are free from the punishment of sin - because as v17 says Jesus death on the cross made atonement for sin (to put us AT ONE with God)

Application

[Powerpoint 13 - heading]

A couple of applications for us then to finish up with:

1. Assurance

[Powerpoint 13a-Assurance]

Adam and Eve's sin and rebellion brought sin and death into the world
And condemned us all to sin and death
Death separates us from God
Which means Hell is the verdict for us all

But 3:15 - the 1st Great Promise

Assures us that IF we believe in Jesus dying for our sins to be forgiven and IF we believe He has defeated death -

Hell is not our destination - but Heaven

2. Adam and Eve gave into temptation - we can also be tempted to sin in lots of different ways - but it's good to know we have help with temptation
 - a. Through God's Word - Jesus resisted temptation by using God's Word against Satan (Matthew 4:4-10)
 - b. Through Prayer - When we say the Lord's pray - we pray "*lead us not into temptation*" (Matt 6:13)
 - c. Through Jesus help - Jesus suffered and was tempted but didn't give in - but he understands our weaknesses (Heb 2:18)
 - d. Through God's help - see 1 Cor 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

Conclusion

We began by playing Forever young - do you really want to live forever?

And we asked some serious questions

Why do we have to die anyway? **Answer!** Because of Adam and Eve's sin and rebellion and our sin and rebellion against God

Should we be scared of dying? **Answer!** No - if we believe in Jesus - we're assured of a place in Heaven?

Why can't we just live forever? **Answer!** We can - if we believe in Jesus
We can live forever - in a place called Heaven

So, the 1st Great promise in the Bible - is in the 1st book of the Bible - where God turns something terribly terribly bad - the temptation, sin, rebellion and fall of the first humans - into a promise of love and grace and mercy - in sending Jesus to save us

That's why Jesus is so important - that's why Christmas is so important!

This Advent - I encourage us all to share the truth that - God made a promise in the Garden of Eden - a promise He kept by sending Jesus - who gives us the free gift - that when we die - we can return to Garden of Eden conditions - when everything was perfect

Let's pray...