

Eastward in the Garden II

05/26/24
Sermon 28

I want to continue the topic I began in my sermon last month on the Garden and The Fall, thus I've titled today's as Eastward in the Garden II. The reason for the title is the special meaning of the word East or Eastward.

Gen 2:

8 "And the LORD God planted a garden **eastward** in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed."

"Eastward" means that which is beforehand, before time or in the beginning before the dawning of all things. It is the description of Christ the Creator.

John 1: (Revised Standard Version Alternate)

1 "In the beginning was the Word..."

3 "All things came into being through Him and without Him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in Him

4 was life and the life was the light of all people."

We know therefore that the life of Adam was created in Christ, never apart from Him or autonomous to Him. It was the breath of Christ that filled his lungs for the first time. It was the first vision he had as he opened his eyes for the first time and gazed into the face of love itself holding him in His arms.

I want to emphasize this picture as we continue. I believe that as a result of the teaching most of us have received growing up, there's a perception of God that we unconsciously gravitate to as we study these passages. We tend toward a picture of an angry God who is offended by the audacity of His creatures and rightfully determined to punish them. The face of anger they would observe henceforth was an appropriate one because of His immense displeasure. This is virtually baked into the narrative as our view of God, and particularly the Father. It would carry through mankind's history for millennia, including and up to today.

But is this accurate? As we saw previously, He with a heavy heart allowed them to leave the Garden. But in the same gesture He placed the Mercy Seat of the Ark at the entrance as a sign. The cherubim and the flaming sword continually protect and turn man back from the world of darkness to the heart of God residing in the Tree of Life. The way would be kept by God Himself for the day of man's return. It's the same message we see concerning the New Jerusalem in

Revelation 21:

25 "and its gates shall never be shut by day--and there shall be no night there;"

The same applies with the Garden. It is helpful to see the narrative not only literally but through symbolic imagery. The garden represents the heart and mind of man. It is the inner man, the sanctuary in which Life itself abides, the life of Christ. We are a derived being and do not possess life apart from Him. It is His Life that indwells; therefore, it is impossible to escape Him even if we desire to.

“Where can I flee from Your presence? Even if I make my bed in Hell You are there.” Psa. 139:7-8

Why? Because if you are there, He is there. Therefore, that which is most often taught simply cannot be true. God never separated Himself from us even though in our delusion we believed He had. What Jewish scholars refer to as a serpentine mindset that continuously coils back upon itself going nowhere, Paul called the futility of the mind in

Eph 4:

17 Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds;

18 they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness (or blindness) of heart;

Eve was deceived and, in that deception and confusion, she lost her grasp on reality, no longer knowing truth from lie. She had been blinded by darkness to the point of being unable to remember *who she was*, much less who God was. This aptly describes the picture of a soul in hades, blind and in darkness.

Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. He was there and present to the couple on that day, observing their struggles with unconditional Love and compassion, not anger and wrath.

He was not undone by the series of events but already knew how He would address it.

Isa 42:

3 “a bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not quench; He will faithfully bring forth justice.”

The justice that makes all things right once again in the reassurance of His word.

Psa 136:

26 “O give thanks unto the God of heaven, for His mercy endures forever.”

The word for mercy is *cheded* (or *hesed*) and is translated in various places as kindness, goodness, favor, love, etc. It is most powerfully expressed as tender mercies and loving kindnesses and describes our covenant relationship in God. A covenant that can never be broken or God would have to break His word and He cannot nor will not do that. To do so would result in the God of Truth ceasing to exist. Therefore, His covenant love endures without end.

Paul echoes this in

Romans 8:

38 “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

So, in light of *this God*, not the angry punitive one we've been taught about, let's continue to examine the story as we move from Adam and Eve to Cain and Abel. Note that even though the characters have changed, the overall perception of man toward God has not. We left the first couple in a state of absolute confusion in terms of who they were. What they couldn't see was that the impending punishment they felt awaiting them for their actions wasn't retribution by an angry God but an altered state of mind. God had not changed; they had. The result was darkness and terror in perceived separation. Their fear was palpable as they remembered the words of warning concerning transgression. So much so that they sought further separation by hiding amongst the trees, only making their fragile mindset worse. It was never God turning His back on them but they running from Him. Sadly, this continues to this day, and the further a man runs, the darker his world becomes.

Let's pick up there with the next generation in

Gen 4:

"1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." 2 And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground."

So, we see in spite of man's self-inflicted wounds, God's word to be fruitful and multiply in the form of procreation was still intact. Adam knew Eve and she gave him two sons, twins in fact. Anytime we read in the Bible that a husband knew his wife once but she bore twice it is referring to having twins. Such were Cain and Abel and as is the case most often in scripture they were quite different. We see this clearly evidenced in their attitudes toward God. In the later story of Jacob and Esau also twins, we're told that the older will serve the younger. In the story Esau was portrayed as the hairy natural man, intent only on satisfying his five senses. Jacob, who would become the spiritual man, would eventually rule over Esau for the spiritual is greater than the physical. This would have been the case with Cain and Abel as well had events unfolded differently. Some believe it was the reason for the argument that took place in the field. The position of the first born provided precedence over any siblings thereafter yet based on God's reaction to the two brothers' offerings, Cain's role appeared to be in jeopardy to his usurping younger brother. The invitation to go apart and discuss the matter resulted in the older brother rising up against the younger. The word for rise up also means to stand up. Did Cain stand up for his perceived rights against Abel? There was no word from God proclaiming it as with Rebekah, nor was it tradition for there was no tradition as yet. I believe it resulted from the seeds planted by their mother Eve. After all she had called him Quannah, meaning a man acquired from God or more accurately 'I have gotten the God man', alluding to the promised seed. Her name for Abel on the other hand meant a wisp, a breath, that without substance. Did her words fuel the attitude of Cain toward his brother? Apparently, their argument became heated to the point that Cain's rage was kindled and he struck and killed his brother.

This story conveys a much greater truth than the tale of these two brothers. It is God recounting the history of fallen man from its outset. We see Cain and Abel as the first men born by a human father and mother. The haunting primal fear of God in Adam for his disobedience was still alive and well in Cain, his firstborn. Adam had reasoned in the darkened recesses of his mind that in order to survive he must somehow ultimately eliminate God by imposing the death penalty on Him. Knowing this, God acquiesced to man's basic fear of death and allowed them to eventually fulfill their longing at the Cross. Here we see the old man will always desire to destroy the new one. It is grounded in the pride of the flesh evidenced in:

Isa 14:

13 You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God, I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.'

The plan to accomplish this was to live from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil surpassing God in wisdom. For wisdom and intelligence meant power and wealth. Solomon had asked for it and became the greatest king on earth. Yet at the end of his days he proclaimed that it only held grief and sorrow for it was only vanity. It was based on the idea if I simply knew more I could do more. I will prove my worth through keeping rules and laws of behavior rather than believe God for who I already am. This is the bondage we know as religion.

The first man Adam became a living being, the last man became a living spirit. Even though we accept the story as literal, it is also a type and shadow of heavenly truth. The symbolic meaning of the twins was that they represented the same man. The first had to die in order for the second to manifest. Just as with each of us we must recognize that we have been crucified with Christ, buried in death and resurrected in Him to new life. We must allow the darkness to be penetrated and the light of truth shone within our hearts. The spiritual is not first but the natural man, afterward the spiritual man. Cain chose the life of fallen Adam, by killing the second man, the Lord from Heaven. This is the way of mankind. Yet in man's most treacherous hour, the murder of our Lord, He wrought our salvation by taking us into His death with Him that we might be raised to new life.

1 Cor 15:

49 "And as we once bore the image of the man of dust, let us now bear the image of the heavenly Man."

Cain represents the man of dust or the natural man who does not receive the things of God for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. The offerings of the two weren't primarily about vegetables vs. animals but was a metaphor for their hearts. Abel's offering revealed his heart and was regarded favorably by the Lord. Cain, however, brought what was convenient and essentially valueless. He attached no spiritual meaning, thus revealing his heart toward God. We read then that the Lord did not regard it. The word for regard is used (shaah) both times but with different meanings. The first time it meant to have compassion toward the heart of Abel but the second time it was to gaze bewildered and dismayed at Cain's. It appears that God was saddened as He observed the effects of death upon His creation.

Prov 21:

2 "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD examines the heart."

We're told little about Abel other than he was a keeper of sheep while Cain was a tiller of the ground. So, Abel was a shepherd while Cain was a farmer. Is there anything better or worse in relation to these professions? Not at all. That's why we must look at the deeper meanings of the words in order to understand. The Hebrew word for sheep is tson. The language is written in anagrams which means the letters of the words are represented by pictures with symbolic meaning. For example if we look at the letters of Tson we see it consists of three letters (the T is silent). Reading right to left they are:
 Ayin meaning the eye or to see or be seen, understand
 Aleph is the ox or bull symbolizing gentle strength and leadership, God
 Vav is a peg, joined to, made secure, nailed to or being attached

Thus, the meaning of sheep in Hebrew is to be securely joined together to God with an eye to see and understand or to see with a single eye. It is Jesus' words on the Sermon on the Mount in

Matt 6:22

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light;"

Adamah on the other hand means ground and is a play on words taken from Adam. It describes the fact that man was formed with the dust of the earth and is descriptive of man's return to this former state.

The word consists of four letters:

Aleph as mentioned is the gentle strength of the ox in leadership, most often referring to God

Dalet meaning a door, a path, way of life

Mem is the mighty or massive waters represented in the chaos of the deep

Heh is to behold or reveal

Taken together it is a warning which means to behold the revealed and mighty chaos of the deep in this path or way of life according to God.

We see therefore that it's not about occupational choices but rather the heart and its attitudes concerning who they believed themselves to be. In other words, identity.

After God expresses His bewilderment at Cain's offering, He asks why he is so upset. The actual words were "Why are you so incensed and why have you ceased to stand face to face and eye to eye with Me." God then asks "if you do well will you not be accepted?" One meaning for "to save (sozo)" in Greek is to be well and the word accepted is to be exalted or elevated or be restored in heart and mind. It is synonymous with heavenly place in Greek.

"We are seated in heavenly places" isn't a geographic location but a state of mind.

God is reassuring the man of the incredible opportunity to be whole by ruling over the sin at his door. Bear in mind His statement is pejorative, not just for Cain but for all men. The alternative is sin, a disease that causes both spiritual and physical ruin. It is the loss of any recollection of man's true genesis in God. The warning being conveyed is if you continue in the path of Adamah you will certainly invite the mighty waters of chaos into your life with all its destructive results.

So why didn't God make this statement to Adam? He did but with different words. He was emphatic in saying to them that if they choose not to hear they will unleash the chaos of death upon the world. For the ensuing generation sin was no longer a warning but a reality. It was in the world but apparently was not yet in them. At this point we must pause for a moment to ask a glaring question. We've been taught most of our lives that Cain and Abel, as well as all mankind, inherited the sin nature of their father Adam. We had no choice in the matter because it was something inherent within us. Nature is the essence of that which you are created as, that which is your very being. Our nature is the image and likeness of God, not some depraved, distorted facsimile. Since we see this to be the case with the first naturally procreated man then sin nature is an obvious and blatant lie! The main thing Cain had in common with his parents wasn't a sin nature but the willfulness to not listen in disobedience. No, they didn't inherit sin for scripture clearly speaks against it.

Ezekiel 18: (Amp)

20 "The person who sins [is the one that] will die (in his dying). The son will not bear the punishment for the sin of the father, nor will the father bear the punishment for the sin of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be on himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be on himself."

The thing they inherited was mortality. What Adam passed to all of us was death.

Romans 5:12 “Therefore just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin so death spread to all men and because of death all men have sinned.

21 “...sin reigned in death...” Death did not reign in sin, as in sin nature as we’ve been taught.

In darkness and separation man sought every idol possible to cope with life in blindness other than God.

When He told him that sin was brooding at the gate of chaos with a desire for him, God’s greatest concern was the compromised condition of Cain’s heart revealed in its lack of trust in love. When love is present it redefines obedience, however, there’s no mention of love on the part of man toward God throughout the creation narrative. The man was swimming among sharks with blood in the water yet appeared to be oblivious to the need for obedience. To be infected with sin would only lead to even greater betrayals of himself through his own self-centeredness. As we know, that’s exactly what took place and in succumbing to it, Cain chose to murder his brother.

Then the Lord said “Where is your brother Abel? And Cain responded I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” Or how should I know, mine is obviously not the heart of a shepherd so why should I even care!

God confronts him directly with the truth of his actions as well as the consequences. The penalty of sin is death and its curse has now been revealed apart from their parents in the offspring of Adam and Eve. Not sin but death and its separation. The Adamah life was never designed to be self-sustaining. To believe so was an illusion.

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all are made alive” 1 Cor 15:22

So, “what is it you have done?” Same as “Adam where are you?” God knew but in each case it is rhetorical. The real question was ‘Do you truly understand what you have done?’ You have now brought upon yourself the very thing I attempted to warn both you and your parents about. The fallen Adam life of death has now opened its mouth and swallowed you. You are cursed for it has returned you to the dust from which you came. I believe we see here an allusion to divine justice for we read in

Isa 25:8 “He will swallow up death forever.”

1 Cor 15:54 “Death is swallowed up in victory”

What death did to humanity, Christ did to death!

You shall be a vagrant on the earth, one with no real home. Notice how God’s pronouncements aren’t curses but simple statements of fact as to the repercussions of man’s actions. It is exactly the same as a parent and child. Please understand that if you do this, that will result. He’s not a tyrant or overlord but a gentle and loving father who seeks only our good.

Finally, even when Cain accuses Him of exacting guilt and punishment by others beyond his ability to endure, God assures him of His never-ending tender mercy and loving kindness.

Cain whimpers that,

14 'Surely You have driven me out this day from (because) of my face **toward** Adamah as well as **from** Your face, I shall be killed by anyone who finds me.'

The term drove out is garash used in

Gen 3:24

24 "So He drove out the man (from the garden)

The definition of the word also means to allow to depart. I discussed this in the sermon last month. Did God force Cain to abandon a face-to-face relationship or was it the man's idea that He had. Cain chose to become a vagabond with no home in God or elsewhere.

15 'Whoever kills Cain vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold, (the number of perfect justice). I shall place My mark upon you to protect you.'

It doesn't mean that God will kill whoever attempts to kill Cain but that one day, He who is perfect justice, will make all things right once more, including Cain. His mark for Cain is the Aleph Tav, the cross of Christ to which we've all been attached. No matter what we may have done He has placed us upon it for we are all His children.

Amen.