

Our Love Story

Sermon 31

09/01/2024

Let's look at the meaning and story concerning the Bride of Christ, where it began and what it means to us today.

We see in the creation story the account of Adam and Eve as having originated from one body called man. God didn't create them initially as two separate beings but as one. They were equal beneficiaries of the breath of God; therefore, Eve was never inferior to Adam in any way, always equal to him. God formed them with His own fingers from the dust of the earth then placed them into the garden He had planted eastward in Eden. The garden is both a literal and spiritual metaphor for the inner man, the heart and mind that carries God's image and likeness. That place God called Eden, an existence of pleasure and delicate delight. Many today believe this to be a place no longer in existence because they can't physically see it, but I disagree. We must simply turn our eyes inward to observe it. They believe so because of their perception of the rift between God and man in the garden. It was not, however, between God and man but man and God. Man separated because of his false perception about God. Man ran from God not God from man. God's love, however, could never let him go. To the contrary, He promised them that He would remove any obstacle between them in order to restore their relationship. Nothing could or would ever separate them from His love. He never demonstrated anger toward the naive couple, only compassion and patience. In the conversation with them in the garden, because God stated the curse and its repercussions to Eve concerning childbearing and Adam in toil, it is commonly taught that He was punishing them. The proof was that He cursed the ground. I understand for I long thought first of all what did the ground ever do to God. Secondly, I could see how it would affect growing crops but I never understood how it could cause pain in childbearing. The reason is He didn't curse the ground, He cursed the *adamah*, which means ground. It's from the ground that Adam's name was taken. What God is referring to is the fallen Adam life having returned to the dust from which he had been formed. The word *curse* means to execrate, to declare loathsome, hateful or abhorrent. In other words, it describes the false identity of fallen Adam. The lie concerning the false self persists even to this day. This accursed or false identity manifests in our hearts every time we believe we are depraved sinners. It has always been God who has commanded the light to shine out of our darkness to reveal the truth of who we are. It was simply a statement of truth to reveal who you are not. Man's identity is made in the image and likeness of God, not a twisted, distorted one manifested by sin and death. It's the reason Christ took the curse, the fallen mindset with its false identity, into Himself on the cross and destroyed it forever.

A garden is always symbolic of the human. To encounter a garden is to know that man was there. No other creature than man embodies a garden for it is God given. It is the enclosed space of intimacy and beauty wherein lies man's ability to reason and recognize the self of his being. It is our identity in self-awareness and is to be kept and protected. The Mirror puts it this way:

Psalm 23:

2 "by the waters of reflection my soul remembers who I am

3 For He restores my soul."

This is what is crucial to relationship with God or anyone else and is what was lost to Adam and Eve.

We see the great promise of God in

Psalm 22:

27 "The ends of the earth shall remember and return to the Lord."

I read from the writings of Christ of the Celts:

One of the greatest teachers in the Celtic world, John Scotus Eriugena in ninth-century Ireland, also taught that Christ is our memory. We suffer from the "soul's forgetfulness," he says. Christ comes to reawaken us to our true nature. He is our epiphany. He comes to show us the face of God. He comes to show us also our face, the true face of the human soul. This leads the Celtic tradition to celebrate the relationship between nature and grace. Instead of grace being viewed as opposed to our essential nature or as somehow saving us from ourselves, nature and grace are viewed as flowing together from God. They are both sacred gifts. The gift of nature, says Eriugena, is the gift of "being"; the gift of Grace on the other hand, is the gift of "well-being"! Grace is given to reconnect us to our true nature. At the heart of our being is the image of God, and thus the wisdom of God, the creativity of God, the passions of God, the longings of God. Grace is opposed not to what is deepest in us but to what is false in us. It is given to restore us to the core of our being and to free us from the unnaturalness of what we are doing to one another and to the earth.

-from Christ of the Celts

Just as Adam was kissed into life in the Creator's arms, so have we in the resurrection. We awaken from the sleep of death in mid-step of the Great Dance as we are swept across the floor in His embrace. The first thing our eyes behold is the face of love holding us in His arms.

As the Fathers of the early church, beginning with Athanasius, sought to comprehend God's response to man's condition, the question became, "What was a good God to do?" Would He allow man to pass into nonexistence or would His love reveal His goodness?

This was the same discussion Moses had with God in

Exo 33:

18 “Then Moses said, “I pray You, show me Your glory!”

19 And He said, “I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you.”

Notice that God defines His glory as His goodness. But what is it He’s actually saying?

Let’s read further,

21 “Then Yahweh said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock;

22 and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by.

23 Then I will remove My hand, and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen.”

The place beside Him means abiding place. To stand is to arise upon the rock from which you were hewn. To be placed in the cleft of the rock, as we know, is the side of Jesus. Hebrews 10:19-20 tells us that we have all now been restored into God by a new and living way, the veil of His flesh through the wound in His side. You may see my back, Moses, but not my face. This doesn’t make a lot of sense until we understand the meaning of back or backside. It means the hinder or latter part. That which comes afterward. It’s described as that which is westward. I spoke recently on the word eastward in Genesis 2 concerning the garden planted beforehand or that which existed in the Alpha, the beginning. It’s the word used in

Job 19:

25 “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the “last” He will rise up over the dust of this world.”

The last, or the Omega, is Christ the Redeemer who will cause that which has been formed from the dust of this world to arise once more.

The second loving kiss of God is to His Bride at the crucifixion where He has joined us fully. We read in the Passion Translation in

John 20:

30 "It is finished, My Bride."

The Hebrew word for finished *kalal* (H3634) means to complete or perfect in beauty. God described humanity as very good which also means very beautiful. He's never seen us in any other way.

God offered everything within His creation to Adam to rule over and/or partake of with one exception, The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why? What's different about this one tree when the garden is filled with them.

To the Hebrew the term tree was frequently used symbolically of man. For example, in the story of the blind man in Bethsaida (Bayth sahee dah) we read in

Mark 8:

23 "Taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"

24 And he looked up and was saying, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around."

25 Then again, He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly." (Completely radiant fashion)

It's very interesting that the man, not yet able to see, would perceive men through a blurred image as walking trees. In verse 25 after Jesus again laid His hands on his eyes it says he could see clearly. The word clearly in Greek is two words. The first is *telos*, meaning complete. It is the root of the word Christ used on the Cross, "It is finished". The second is *auge'* meaning the radiance or light of dawn. It is most often used in the context of receiving discernment. The meaning of the story is that the blind man represented Adam in the garden. Apparently, this man had at one time had sight because he knew what trees looked like. The presence of Christ offered not only physical healing but the radiant light of discernment. Unlike Adam who remained blind, he was able to both see and choose the Tree of Life. The reason Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes the second time was symbolic of having given man sight at creation yet it had been lost. Now the Christ had come as one of us to restore His dawning light of truth. Man, who had been blinded, now beheld reality once again in Christ Jesus.

We read further in

Matt 7:

17 “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither [can] a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Adam was given the choice of the type of man he desired to be. I believe this verse, like that in Mark 8, is a cryptic message concerning this truth. The tree that arises is governed by its root. Does a man believe that his source of life is in Christ or in himself. To believe himself independent and separate from God is the corrupt tree. Man is a derived creature meaning we do not have life in ourselves but receive it from another. The lie says that we are our own source. It also tells us that we are able to not only meet but surpass God through works and behavior. Man chose the tree of good and evil for this very reason. He desires to be God therefore eliminating the need for God.

The irony is we already possess the life of God. The flesh of man, however, is absolutely religious at its core and refuses to acknowledge life with anyone else, especially God. To seek after religion is to pursue good works and to abstain from evil ones in order to prove self-worth and identity. The word *corrupt* means unwell or sickly. This is the condition of mankind in a lost and perishing state. *Yeshua* is salvation which means to make whole or to heal. The meaning of evil as in “evil fruit” is the word *poneros* in Greek. Once again, in The Mirror Bible, it is translated as a mindset marked by labor, hardship and annoyance. It’s the word most often translated evil or wicked in scripture beginning with The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It describes a religious mindset and reflects man’s choice in the garden concerning his existence, that being to search for life in the fruit of a tree that was sick and could only yield the fruit of sickness and death. In other words, to seek life in an illusion, in a false reflection of oneself apart from God. Given freedom to choose, man chose death rather than the abundance of life by eating of the Tree of Life. This is the meaning of Jesus’ words in

John 15:

5 “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

The dead branches, along with its fruit, are burned away in Christ’s refining fire of love in both this life and the next.

1 Cor 3:

“If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

God is a consuming fire destructive only to anything not of love’s kind. Man is saved through the ages of ages by God’s loving presence within that is always healing. The early church father Gregory of Nanzianzus put it this way,

“He saves that which He becomes, He heals that which He assumes.”

He has become us in order to heal us. This is unconditional love, to give oneself wholly and completely to another. This is the God Man who would not be denied His mate.

The creation account is about the romance of the ages. It describes the creation of the Bride of Christ. Contrary to the idea that God Father doesn’t like us much, many would be surprised to know that it was Him who sought out a suitable mate for His Son. It was in the love of the Father that a bride was selected. We read the account in Genesis 24 concerning Abraham’s search for a bride for His son Isaac. It is a beautiful example of an event that took place in history but at the same time is an allegory for spiritual reality. It is a type and shadow in the Old Testament of our New Covenant reality.

Gen 24:

1 “Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and Yahweh had blessed Abraham in every way.

2 And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who ruled over all that he owned, please swear to me.”

It starts out describing Abraham as very old, in other words the ancient of days. He speaks to his oldest and most trusted servant who ruled over all that he owned, which is everything. This trusted servant is a picture of the uncreated and eternal Holy Spirit.

3 “and I will make you swear by Yahweh, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live,

4 but you will go to my land and to my kin, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

The Father is emphatic that the Spirit will not seek out a wife from just anywhere, especially not the women of the day, the daughters of Canaan. This is an aspersion to mankind in its condition of the time. Canaan was the son of Ham and it meant those brought low and humiliated. Man had been subdued and brought low in bondage to sin. Only someone of their kind would be of suitable lineage for Isaac the Son.

Isaac is a type of Jesus Christ, the child of promise. The person selected was Rebekah, a kinsman. She was of His kind as demonstrated by her heart for others in the story. Not only was her heart beautiful, so was she.

16 “Now the young woman was very beautiful in appearance, a virgin, and no man had known her...”

She became the selection of the Holy Spirit for we read that the Son readily received her into marriage and loved her.

What made her so special wasn't just her beauty or her love for others, she was a new creation. She represented the resurrected body of Christ. She was the New Jerusalem, the new race of mankind.

Rev 21:

2 “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”

God the Father, Son and Spirit were all participants in the selection of the Bride of Christ. God isn't simply our Father-in-law, He is our loving Father. The Spirit, or *Ruach*, which is feminine is a portrayal of our mother and the Son our Bridegroom and husband.

We are an essential part of the family of God.

Eph 3:

14 “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father,

15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,”

The word name not only specifies family relationship, it speaks to one's essential DNA, our very being. We were created by God in love.

1 Cor 15: Mirror

49 “As we once bore the image of the man of dust let us now bear the image of the Heavenly Man.”

For two have become one. This is the “kind” that the Father was so particular to match with His Beloved Son. You are that exquisitely special kind. Never let anyone, including your own thoughts tell you

otherwise. You're not a depraved and filthy sinner. You are the Bride adorned in her beautiful raiment fit for the King of Kings. You are a sacred priesthood made royalty in your own right.

His desire for you is revealed in the rivers of living water pouring forth from the new heart He has given us, His heart. It is almost beyond our ability to conceive but simply keep your imagination stayed on Him. If it seems like a fairytale to you, then it is, so different from what we've been told.

Song of Songs

6:3 "I AM my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine..."

7:10 "I AM my Beloved's and His desire is for me..."

Remember...

Amen