

# “Banishment”

Genesis 3:1-24

Throughout this Lenten Season, we have been turning our attention to the curses of Genesis chapter 3. Every difficulty, every sorrow, every loss can be directly traced to Adam. A couple weeks ago, I spoke to you about shame and nakedness, but struggle and toil in our daily work, the pain of childbirth, the list goes on and on – it all comes from Adam. On Ash Wednesday, we began with the worst of all the curses – the curse of death. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

God is merciful. God’s love for Adam did not diminish when sin became the reality. God made Adam to be perfect, and Adam chose evil. And God’s response is that His love for His human children would become even more evident. The promise of a Savior is immediate. However, justice demands that there is punishment for sin. The wages of sin is death. That does not change, even with the promise of Christ.

And all the curses we have heard up to this point have been reversed by Christ, but we will not experience the full reality of that reversal until we experience the resurrection. Thorns and

thistles still grow and we will be attending the funerals of the ones we love until Christ returns.

But the final curse upon Adam, “Banishment,” this one is a little different. Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden. Not only could they not eat of the Tree of Life and live forever, but they would be separated from God. No longer would Adam walk with God and speak to Him face to face. No sinful man may look upon the Lord and live. This is why Isaiah in the Temple and Elijah in the cave have the experiences they do when seeing God becomes an issue. Isaiah thinks he is going to die for seeing the Lord, and Elijah, wanting to see the face of God instead hears the “still, small voice.”

It is often asked of me, “Why doesn’t God just present Himself to this world and prove to everyone that He is real?” Part of the reason is that miracles, God’s continued presence in the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, and even the voice of God from the mountain did not change hearts. And part of the reason is that separation from God is a part of the curse of sin.

Just like thorns and thistles will grow until the last day, we cannot see the fullness of God until this life is ended. And, ironically, this should give us confidence. Last Sunday, as we do each time we use the Divine Service, Setting Four, the Prayer of Thanksgiving was spoken. It is said, “In Your righteous judgment

You condemned the sin of Adam and Eve, who ate the forbidden fruit, and You justly barred them and all their children from the tree of life.” You may ask, “This is a prayer of thanksgiving?”

The prayer continues, “Yet, in Your great mercy, You promised salvation by a second Adam, Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, and made His cross a life-giving tree for all who trust in Him.”

We are thankful for both sides of this equation. As I said before, God following through on His curses, ironically, should give us confidence. If thorns and thistles disappeared and God started showing up and doing interviews on Fox News or CNN, we would have to call into question the consistency and the unchangeable nature of God and His will.

God following through on the curses of sin should give us confidence that He will follow through on the promises He made also. Satan is a defeated and broken enemy whose head is firmly under the heel Christ our Lord. The fact that death is in this world is a reminder that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

God is faithful in how He has said He will judge the world. He told Adam, “If you eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, you will surely die.” Adam surely died, but God was merciful and allowed him to live more than 900 years.

God is merciful. Therefore, we should be all the more confident that God will follow through on His promises. The second Adam has come and He continues to come. “And whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” We want an unchangeable, consistent God that follows through on what He says – even if what He says brings punishment.

I said before that the reversal of the curse of banishment was a little different. All the others only see fulfillment after this life is over. Now, don't get me wrong, we don't get to see God face to face here on earth as we will in eternity. However, Christ coming in the flesh has changed the whole dynamic of separation from God.

He doesn't just come in the “still, small voice” of His Word. He comes in the flesh. He offers His presence that we prepare to receive this evening. As the Prayer of Thanksgiving concludes: “We give You thanks for the redemption You have prepared for us through Jesus Christ. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may faithfully eat and drink of the fruits of His cross and receive the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that come to us in His body and blood. Amen.