

Origin Stories, “The Fall for All”, Genesis 3, 3/3/24

Beatrice Webb was a British socialist reformer at the turn of the 20th century. She believed, as many did in her time, that a societal utopia could be just around the corner if we could just harness the technology to educate people and change the social structures, we would heal our problems of poverty and violence...and then came World War I. I came across a quote from her diary from 1925 that struck me. Reflecting on a lifetime of work she said, “I had staked all on the essential goodness of human nature. But now, 35 years later, I realize how permanent are the evil impulses and instincts in us and how little they seem to change...and how mere social machinery, science or education will ever change that.”

That’s a remarkable admittance. She’s saying that there is something wrong with humanity that leads to selfishness and violence, corruption and war and it’s consistent across cultures and time. Science hasn’t fixed it, education hasn’t dealt with it, social machinery hasn’t healed it...how can we explain it?¹

[Title Slide] But it’s not just out there in society, she’s admitting it’s in us all. As much as we’d like to think otherwise- we know ourselves, not just our public actions, it’s in us, isn’t it? Have you been in a car that has the new GPS feature on it where every time you go over the speed limit this little voice comes on and says, “the speed limit is 55.” Some of us might be embarrassed to say how many times in a single trip that little self-righteous voice would come on and tell us we are speeding. But it makes me think, what if that little voice announced every time I judged someone by their appearance, or was a glutton and ate a second slice of pie? “One piece is plenty!” What if that little voice announced every time you looked at something you shouldn’t look at or lied, or gossiped about someone, or had pride in your heart? Anyone signing up for that AI device?²

Who can explain what’s wrong with the world and why no ancient or modern ‘ism’ or ‘ology’ can fix it? What can explain why you and I can never live up to our own standards let alone God’s standards? Why is there a gap between our ideals and reality? Welcome to Origin Stories, Genesis chapter 3.

Let’s recap where we’ve been already. Genesis 1&2 lays out God’s good intentions for His creation, and the crown of his creation is humanity, the only creatures made in His image. And everything is good for Adam and Eve- they have a loving relationship with God and each other, a glorious mission to bless the world and a beautiful environment to work in...the societal utopia! What could go wrong? Well, we turn the page to Genesis 3. The narrative in Genesis 3 is laid out in 4 movements. **The Fallacy (3:1-5), The Failure (3:6-8), The Fallout (3:9-19), the Future (3:20-24).** Today we are just going to look at these first two movements, next week we will examine the next two and see how that gets lived out in the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4.

¹ Tim Keller reference https://gospelinlife.com/sermons/?ep_filter_book-of-the-bible=genesis-3

² Idea borrowed from JD Greear <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=bde9fa65-fa18-47f6-bdfe-f32330c00c6b>

The Fallacy

Genesis 3:1-5 *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman,* Pause of a moment. We have lots of questions about this snake, who is this? How did this snake get here? And are we really going to just pass by the fact that a snake is talking to Eve like this is a Disney movie? Remember the Bible is not a bunch of disconnected stories patched together, the Bible is one cohesive story about who we are, what went wrong, and how God is going to restore everything. As the Bible continues its story, we find out the snake goes by many descriptors...the fallen angel Lucifer, the devil, the Satan, Beelzebub, the great deceiver, the father of lies just to name a few. And what a crafty lie he tells...*He said to the woman "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*² *The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,*

³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Notice the serpent's weapon of choice, not a knife...but a lie...that had some truth to it, just enough truth to make it plausible. And that's why the best lies are not on the nose like- "Sacrifice your children to curry favor with the gods." We would say, that's crazy! They are subtle lies that seem to have some truth like "If I'm going to achieve the good life and be successful, I need grind day and night at work, and my family will be OK with it and it won't affect my relationships." What is that? Same lie- sacrifice your children to the god of career to get ahead." Now here's what is particularly cunning about the kind of lie Satan told. Satan aimed his lie at the **Three most fundamental Questions of Life: Who is God? Who are we? What is the good life?**³ By the way, he still does as we will see.

Who is God? What Adam and Eve learned up to this point is that **God is our good Father whom we can trust.** Did you notice that his lie calls into question the character of God? He plants the lie that maybe **God isn't good and you can't trust him.** "Eve, He's holding out on you. He doesn't want your eyes to be opened and be wise like Him, He wants to keep you down! Maybe God isn't as good and generous and loving as he claims to be. You can't trust God has your best interests at heart. You are going to have to take the fruit and take control of your own life."

And isn't this lie behind all sin? We say, "I know I should be generous and give more of my money away." But then we stockpile it or spend it all on things we don't need. Or "I know I need to forgive this person." But then we continue to hold the grudge and seek revenge. Why? Because we doubt God's goodness, that he has our best interest in mind and so we take control of our lives. This is the sin underneath all sin.

³ Structure from John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies*

Who are we? We are creatures made in God's image to glorify him, but what is the lie that Satan tells? "You will be like God." You can bear your own image. You can seize your own wisdom, you can have autonomy apart from God. **The Lie: We can be our own God.** Don't let God limit you. Up until this point God had been the one who told them what was *good*. The whole creation story is, "God saw it," and "God declared it was good." Now, they take it upon themselves to decide what is good. "I know what's best for me." Don't we hear this lie repeated in our culture all the time? Be true to yourself! Only you know what's best for you. Follow your own heart. Be your own god.

What is the good life? The good life according to God is living within God's moral vision and according to His glorious mission to bless the world. But notice Satan boldly claims God is lying to them. "You won't certainly die!" And he implies the very opposite will happen, your eyes will be opened to the good life that God is keeping from you. If you eat of this fruit, you are going to really be satisfied, fulfilled...then you will be happy. **The lie is define the good life for yourself.** Do limit yourself to God's moral vision, go get your own! And isn't this the same fallacy, the ancient lie being told today, just repackaged for a modern secular set of moral sensibilities? Don't limit yourself with the Bible's outdated morality and definition of the good life! The good life is found in power and control, security and comfort, fame and followers, entertainment and sexual conquest...take your pick.

The Fallacy: A counter-truth claim of who God is, who we are and how to define the good life. Every lie that Satan whispers through our cultural ideas, through influence of media, through our own flesh is aimed at one or more of these fundamental questions. And just like Adam and Eve- we are easily fooled into believing we can't trust God with our lives and we are better off doing things our own way.

If you have kids or work with kids you know the experience where you are trying to teach them how to do something like tie their shoes and they say, "No let me do it by myself!" And you are like, OK. And then lots of tears later they come to you with their shoes all knotted up, angry at you saying it's not working! This is Adam and Eve in the Garden, and this is us sometimes with God. God says "Let me teach you how to do relationship and use your sexuality in a way that is going to bring unity, love, beauty and blessing." And then we say, "No! Let me do it! I'm liberated and I can do it myself!" And many tears and hurts later we bring our knotted-up life to God, angry with Him and saying it's not working! So here's the question: **What fallacies about God, about us, or about the good life have your life knotted up today?**

That's the Fallacy. Now let's look at **The Failure.**

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." ¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The serpent didn't lie about everything. Their eyes were opened, just like he said. But to their shock and horror, instead of becoming like God, courageously taking control of their lives, exercising their own wisdom and making their own decisions, experiencing their own definition of the good life of power and pleasure and happiness...they became hiders. Covering themselves with leaves and hiding behind trees...tragic and sad. They became afraid of the gaze upon their nakedness- nakedness more than physical, it's a Hebrew idiom for vulnerability and shame. They knew something was wrong, something was broken in them now. First, they hid from self. They didn't want to face the gaze of their own nakedness- they didn't want to see themselves for who they truly were. Second, they hid from each other. The gaze of each other, they made fig leaves to cover themselves because they feared being judged or take advantage of. Third, they hid from God. They could not face the holy gaze of God looking upon their vulnerability and sin.

And this sums up the human condition. The Fall turned us all into hiders. And man, some of us could teach a master class in hiding. If you take this idea and go over your whole life with it, you will learn a lot about yourself.

We hide from ourselves- we don't want to really know ourselves deeply so we live on the outskirts of the deepest truths about ourselves or we pretend we are someone we are not, we numb and distract ourselves, or we work ourselves to the very limits of achievement whether in academics, sports, or career to validate ourselves, or seek to change even our very identities in order to hide from our own gaze.

We hide from each other because of our deep insecurities. We avoid meaningful relationships because we don't want to get hurt, we wear masks that we are cooler, more important, smarter, nicer than we really are. We are so desperate for people to accept us that we become whatever they want us to be or we pretend that people don't matter to us and that we don't care by being the opposite of what they want us to be.

And we hide from God because in the presence of God we see what we do not want to see. We see our sinfulness in the light of his utter perfection and holiness. And so we hide from God either in rebellion- running in the opposite direction, avoiding church, avoiding moral restraint, avoiding anything that sounds like religion...or ironically, we hid IN religion. One pastor said- Making fig leaves was the 1st man-made religion.⁴ "To make up for my guilt, to make myself good enough, I'll work to cover myself." That's man-made religion. Let me get God's gaze off of

⁴ JD Greear <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=bde9fa65-fa18-47f6-bdfe-f32330c00c6b>

me by working hard, doing enough good things, wearing enough fig leaves so that I'm acceptable.

So the Fallacy, the big lie that promises the good life ends in failure. It doesn't deliver what it promises. It brings guilt, shame and fear. We become hiders. This has been a lot of heavy, bad news today...But here's the good news. **While we hide, God seeks.** Did you notice that it was God who came walking through the trees in the garden to seek Adam and Eve. It's our nature to hide, it's God's nature to seek.⁵ We will look at the rest of the story next week, but God removes their sad attempt to cover themselves with fig leaves by making them garments of animal skin because they will now need them for protection from the elements.

This is the Bible subtly hinting at something massive. Where did God get the animal skins? The blood of something innocent had to be shed to cover Adam and Eve. God is pointing to the sacrificial system of the temple. Atoning sacrifices that ultimately point to Jesus himself. You need forgiveness from your sin, you need your sins covered. And you cannot cover it up by your own effort...those are just fig leaves. We need an ultimate atoning sacrifice, the ultimate innocent one to give his flesh, to shed his blood for us to ultimately be covered...not only covered but made new! This is what communion is all about- while we are hiding, Jesus came seeking us....

Works Consulted:

Tim Keller Sermon: https://gospelinlife.com/sermons/?ep_filter_book-of-the-bible=genesis-3

Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, New International Commentary on the OT.

Tim Keller Sermon: <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/paradise-lost-2/>

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Christopher Wright, *The Old Testament in 7 Sentences*

John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*

John Mark Comer, *Live No Lies*

⁵ Big thanks to Tim Keller for this phrasing.