

From the Beginning *Genesis 3:8-19*

INTRODUCTION

This news may shock you, but did you know that McDonalds does not guarantee that eating a "Happy Meal" will actually make you "happy?"

- According to several news sources, Ruben Caradehevo was having a bad day. In order to deal with the sadness he was feeling, he bought and ate a Happy Meal: 4 piece nuggets, small fry and drink and a special prize.
- However, once the meal was over Ruben still felt sad ... so he sued McDonalds for \$1.5 million dollars.
- Now, I suspect that news story is hoax – at least I hope it is – but it provides a wonderful opening for tonight's message.

Let's assume Ruben did indeed expect a cure for his sadness when he purchased that meal. What he expected was not what McDonalds delivered – nor what McDonalds intended to deliver. If we give him the benefit of the doubt, he had "Great Expectations" and McDonalds did not come through as he expected.

Great Expectations. That's our theme for this year's Advent season. As I shared on Sunday morning when we began this series of sermons, it has seemed to me that many of the Scriptures we have been reading this fall – along with many of the Scriptures we will read this month and in the months ahead – describe the faulty expectations of the Jewish people as they waited for the coming Messiah.

- What seems to you and me to be plainly obvious, somehow was misunderstood or completely missed by the people who first received the message.

The core reason why the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah was that He was not what they expected. They had a specific picture of what the Messiah would look like, and what He would do, and how He would act. Quite simply Jesus did not match the picture. He didn't meet their GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

But that also got me thinking about my own expectations about God and my relationship to Him. I asked myself: Where have my GREAT EXPECTATIONS caused me to be like the Jews of old? In other words ...

Where have my Great Expectations kept me from seeing what God is actually doing? What do I miss because I am expecting something else?

Tonight, my search for an answer to these questions takes me back to the beginning. To the very beginning. To the beginning as in ...

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Back in the beginning God created a world that was perfect. It was a world where He and His creation could live together in a beautiful relationship.

- One of my favorite images in all of Scripture is recorded in Genesis 3:18:

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 ... (Genesis 3:18)

I love the picture of God taking an evening stroll with Adam and Eve. In the original grand design, God and His creation got along very well. But into that peaceful picture, trouble came.

- Disguising himself as a serpent, Satan enticed Adam and Eve to make a major mistake.
- You might think their mistake was in eating an apple. But it goes much deeper than that.
- Adam and Eve specifically did something God told them not to do.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "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, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 3:15-17)

If God specifically tells us something – either to “do this” or “don’t do this” – and we choose to do the opposite, that is what the Bible calls sin. That’s the definition given to us by John Wesley:

Sin is a “willful violation of a known law of God.” (John Wesley)

And that’s what they did. Adam and Eve introduced sin into the perfect world God had created.

- And now they had a problem. A problem that could not be easily fixed.
- It wasn’t just a human problem. Sin had stained everything that God had created. Look at verse 17 in our first reading:

(God speaking to Adam): Cursed is the ground because of you ...
(Genesis 3:17)

We sing that in one of our favorite Advent/Christmas hymns, Joy to the World:

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,

How could they fix this mess? Here’s where the expectations start to come in ...

Think about big messes:

- Russia invades the Ukraine. Hamas attacks Israel. What do they do to fix this mess? They bomb each other back. They try diplomacy and ceasefire.

- Do you see a problem? Then call a press conference. Get a photo op and a good sound bite.
- When the grandkids were here last week, something happened in the bathroom to plug the toilet. What do you do? You call for “Papa!”

Big messes require big solutions.

Right? That's how we think, isn't it? So when sin entered paradise, surely we should expect God to respond in a dramatic way. He responded with a baby and bruise.

#1: THE BABY

Look at our text:

(God speaking to the serpent): And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your seed and her Seed**; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15)

I generally associate babies with making messes, not with cleaning them up. One of our six grandchildren is 15 months old. She is really cute, but she seldom uses a napkin or a tissue. And she never picked up her toys. Babies are not good at cleaning up messes.

Despite that, God stuck to His plan to send a baby.

- Isaiah prophesied:

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given ... (Isaiah 9:6)

and

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

- When the wise men followed the star to Jerusalem, the religious leaders identified the birth site of the baby Jesus based on the prophecy of Micah:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. (Micah 5:2)

But if big messes require big solutions, why would God send a tiny baby?

- It is this whole thing called the “incarnation” – God becomes flesh. Jesus becomes one of us so that He can lead us back to God.

#2: THE BRUISE

Look at our text again:

(God speaking to the serpent): And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; **He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.**" (Genesis 3:15)

The baby part is the most familiar part of the Christmas story, but the promise made back in the beginning is just as important. It tells why the baby came.

- More than three decades after baby Jesus was born, we are brought to the foot of the cross where Jesus has been crucified.
- There are nails piercing His wrists and one spike nailed through his feet.
- As a crucifixion victim, Christ would have literally bruised one of His heels. This is a natural result of crucifixion.
- As the crucifixion victim fights for air, he is forced to push himself upward so that he can take in a full breath. To do this, he must push his weight upward with his legs.
- However, because of the position in which the spike is driven through both feet, one of the victim's heels is pushed hard into the upright beam of the cross. As the victim repeatedly clamors for air, his heel is literally bruised against the cross.
- Satan quite literally bruised the heel of Jesus.

But the promise has two parts. Not only will Satan bruise the baby's heel, the baby will bruise the serpent's head.

The serpent's poison is lodged in its head; and a bruise on that part is always fatal. So by His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus stomped on the head of Satan and delivered a fatal blow.

Thus, as one commentator stated so well:

Fatal shall be the stroke which Satan shall receive from Christ.

Not only did the Jews not expect this, Satan himself probably missed it as well.

By the way, Paul seems to reference this line when he tells the Roman Christians that God will give them the power to crush Satan (Rom 16:20).

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. (Romans 16:20)

APPLICATION

You know, God did not have to fix this sin mess that we created and continue to create. Yet He chose to.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:14)

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:11-12)

It is so unexpected! But, oh, do we appreciate it!

Amen.