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“IT IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THIS WAY”

Genesis 3:1-24

You are walking along, enjoying life when “Bam!” someone pulls the rug out from under you:

You graduate from college with a 4.0 G.P.A. and outstanding recommendations, but the best job you can get is a part-time gig at McDonald’s; or, your house catches fire and everything you own goes up in smoke; or, your daughter announces that she’s dropping out of school and moving in with her abusive boyfriend.

The ground that seemed so firm is now quicksand underfoot. Safety is exchanged for peril, confidence for anxiety.

Accident, disease, trouble, grief, violence and death rattle the lives of the obtuse and the intelligent, the unwary and the prepared, the depraved and the blameless, the wicked and the righteous. No one is guaranteed absolute security in earthly matters.

It’s not supposed to be this way, is it? Not even when the sufferer is foolishly careless (like the 10-year-old boy who runs into the street and is plowed down). Not even when the victim collaborates in her demise (like the junkie who over-doses in a back alley).

There is something inherently wrong about every human calamity regardless of the circumstances. It is not supposed to be this way.

- Please turn to Genesis chapter 1.

- Genesis 1:1-2 {NRSV}: **“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void”** There is nothing but raw, undifferentiated matter which does not satisfy the most rudimentary conditions for biological security. It is totally lifeless.

- But starting in verse 3 the LORD Almighty organizes the **“formless void”** into a structure that is almost infinitely complex, yet elegantly simple. He speaks into existence {1:3} the light, {1:6} sky, {1:9} dry ground and water, {1:11} vegetation, {1:14-15} sun, moon and stars, {1:20} aquatic creatures and birds, and {1:24} terrestrial life forms – and with these things, all the rhythms and laws by which matter and energy operate.

- That is just the opening act! Having established everything we need for life and security, in verses 27-29 Great God creates humankind **“in his image,”** blesses them and gives them **“every plant yielding seed... and every tree with seed in its fruit... for food.”**

- Six times in this chapter we read that {1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25}: **“God saw that [it] was good.”** After the creation of humankind we are told that **“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”** (Genesis 1:31). **“Very good”** is precisely how it is supposed to be. And while this goodness encompasses much more than security, it certainly is not less than security.

- The Creation account in Genesis chapter 2 is presented in a different style, yet it also describes our beginning as a time of safety and confidence.

- In 2:8-9 the LORD puts Adam in a paradise filled with a fruitful trees: that is nutritional security.
- In 2:10-14 we learn that Eden is situated at the source of four rivers: these ensure water security.
- In 2:15 the Creator ordains Adam to tend Eden: that is job security squared: it is guaranteed work (who else is going to do it?) and vocational significance (maintaining, and maybe even expanding the well-ordered garden into the wilderness, serves the divine mission).
- In 2:16-17 Holy God commands Adam, **“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 of it you will surely die”**: this law provides moral security.
- In 2:19-20 the Creator commissions Adam to name the beasts and the birds, thereby ruling over them: that is physical security (the elephants won’t trample him and the big cats won’t try to eat him).
- In 2:21-25 the good LORD creates Eve, and a delighted Adam exclaims {NLT}: **“At last!”** and though they are both naked, **“they [feel] no shame”**: that is the trifold of relationship security, intimate security, and (dare I say?) body-image security.
- And they share unimpaired fellowship with God. He draws near in perceptible form. He speaks and listens to them. That is spiritual security.
- 📖 The world is a place of beautiful order, peaceful harmony, and positive potential. If objective security is safety and subjective security is confidence, then Adam and Eve experience it to a very high degree.

Still, there is some risk. Real safety and confidence depend on union with the Living God: keep fellowship with him, and we are secure; break that fellowship, and security slips away.

□ That brings us to Genesis 3. Let’s review the narrative through the lens of security and insecurity:

- In verse 1 the serpent proposes that the Divine Provider is withholding good things from the humans.
 - {Ge 2:15} Holy God deputized Adam to protect the garden. He should cast the serpent out of Eden the second he hears its slippery insinuations; but in verses 2-3, he stands silently by as Eve argues with it.
 - In v.v. 4-5 the serpent accuses Holy God of lying, and claims that the fruit will endow the humans with divine knowledge (and, by implication, god-like security).
 - In verse 6 the woman **“[takes] some and [eats] it. She also [gives] some to her husband, who [is] with her, and he [eats] it.”**
- The serpent is partly right. Adam and Eve do not instantly die, and they do gain a certain kind of knowledge – but the outcome is not what they expected.
- ★ 1st, God is still God, and they are still not God. Sin does not secure equality with God for them.
 - ★ 2nd, Not only so, the man and woman are less like God than before. Sin starts to blur the image of God within them. They are diminished.
 - ★ 3rd, Adam and Eve learn about insecurity. Sin puts them at risk and robs them of confidence.

○ In verses 7-10 they realize that they are naked and sew fig leaves together as crude garments. **“Then [they hear] the sound of the LORD God”** and try to hide from him. **“But the LORD God [calls out]... ‘Where are you?’”** Adam answers, **“I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”**

⊖ The couple’s previously relaxed nakedness was a sign of innocent security; but now they are guilty, ashamed, and insecure: *Does Adam still love me? Will Eve respect me?* That is relationship insecurity.

⊖ They are terrified of what the LORD might do, and when he seeks them out they try to hide. Eden was a place of joyful fellowship; now it is a place of dread and concealment. That is spiritual insecurity.

○ Verses 14-19 hint at the scope and severity of their new insecurity:

⊖ To Eve, Holy God says {3:16}: **“I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing”** (that is obstetric and maternal insecurity). **“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”** (that is gender and marital insecurity).

⊖ To Adam, Holy God says {3:17-19}: **“Cursed is the ground ... It will produce thorns and thistles for you”** (that is environmental insecurity), **“By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food”** (that is nutritional insecurity) **“until you return to the ground... for dust you are and to dust you will return”** (that is survival insecurity).

It is as though someone has pulled the rug out from under them. Now they are contending with doubt, anxiety, fear, and danger. It is not supposed to be this way!

That brings us to the present, and our situation. We, too, are subject to insecurity, for two reasons.

✦ 1st, We are Adam’s and Eve’s heirs. They have bequeathed to us the image of God – and a sin-infected nature. They have willed to us the abundant riches of the Earth – along with all the problems of the world.

Because of them {Ro 8:20-21} **“The creation itself was subjected to frustration”** and sold **“into bondage to decay.”** The corrosion of the ideal order, with the ensuing incursion of natural disasters, intrusion of violence and predation, and general instability, is the result of their sin.

They presumed that their sin was like a small pebble that would cause only the tiniest ripple in the pond of life. But it triggered a cosmic tsunami that flooded the planet world with struggle and grief and pain, a wave of destruction that has yet to subside.

But that isn’t all. Point a finger at the first humans, and you will find the rest point back at you.

✦ 2nd, Figuratively speaking we are Adam and Eve. Like them, we collaborate in our own demise.

Time and again God invites us into fellowship; time and again we reject him. We reach for some forbidden fruit – and in so doing we pull the rug out from under our own feet.

{Jas 1:15-15, NRSV} **“One is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; ...when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.”**

Don't be fooled by the fact that you are still breathing: death does not usually strike all at once, but in increments. And it generally destroys the soul long before it seizes the body.

Is there any hope for us? Indeed there is!

✎ The Garden of Eden is the epicenter of insecurity; but the Garden of Gethsemane is the focal point of security.

In Eden, we sinned and then suffered insecurity for the first time. In Gethsemane Jesus suffered insecurity for the first time, yet he did not sin.

In Eden, we put creation in danger by our disobedience to God. In Gethsemane, Jesus began to rescue creation by putting himself in danger in obedience to God.

In Eden, we covered and concealed ourselves, attempting to hide from God. In Gethsemane Jesus laid bare his soul, saying to his disciples: {Mt 26:38} **“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death”** and crying out to God three times: {Mt 26:39, 42, 44} **“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”**

✎ The problem begins in the Garden of Eden. The solution begins in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We will explore this at length in several weeks. In the meantime, if you think that it is not supposed to be this way, you are right.

Genesis 3 is the Word of the Lord.