

Theme: The great dilemma in the Christmas story surrounds the problem of sin, which produces our exile from God, His purposes, and His blessing.

I. Intro - The Importance of Conflict in Story

- A. All great stories require some type of conflict
- B. A story without conflict is literary cotton candy - all sweetness, utterly unfulfilling
- C. The Story of Scripture also contains great conflict
- D. This is not because Scripture is just another story - it is because all other stories are merely echoes of The Story found in Scripture
- E. Other stories follow this pattern and resonate because they are echoes of The True Story
- F. Today - the arrival of conflict and tragedy into The Story

II. The Story Turns

- A. Everything in Genesis 1-2 was wonderful
 - 1. Creation was supremely good - 7x; look, very good!
 - 2. Creation was supremely blessed - 3x; fruitful, increasing
 - 3. Humanity - image of God; ruling, developing creation
 - 4. We experienced true shalom
The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Genesis 2:25
 - a. Adam and Eve properly situated in Garden home
 - b. Everything is open - naked

c. No shame - all is shalom, true rest and blessing!

B. The story takes a tragic turn

The man and his wife were both **naked**, and they felt no shame. Now the serpent was more **crafty** than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Genesis 2:25-3:1

- 1. The serpent comes - this can't be good
- 2. The serpent is crafty - play on words with 'naked'
 - a. The Hebrew words are built on same root
 - b. Naked (עָרֹם) vs. Crafty/shrewd (עָרוּם)

C. The tragic act of rebellion - all is lost

When 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. ⁷ Then 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. Genesis 3:6-7

- 1. The couple listen to the serpent instead of God
- 2. As a result they do not become more shrewd - they just see they are naked! (Genesis 3:7,10)
- 3. They are so far from being shrewd that they think what they have done can be fixed with a few fig leaves!
- 4. But in The Story of which all other epic tales are merely echoes, the tragedy is the greatest one imaginable, and it will take far more than fig leaves to remedy our situation.

III. The Story - Paradise Lost

A. The result of sin is a reversal of all we saw last week

1. Before all was very good - but now evil has come

- a. Sevenfold good is replaced with relative good of "good & evil"
- b. The absolute goodness of creation is now marred

2. Before everything was blessed - but now there is a curse as a result of sin

- a. The threefold blessedness is replaced with a pronouncement of curse
- b. The word of blessed fruitfulness & increase is replaced with curse of futility and frustration

3. Before all was at peace, but now there is conflict and enmity

- a. The unity of two shall be one is replaced with blame-shifting and grabs for power
- b. The joyous submission of all creation is now open warfare

B. The result of sin: exile from our Garden Home & death

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:23–24

1. Because of their sin, Adam & Eve are driven from the Garden

- a. They are banished, driven out of the Garden

- b. God guards the way back - they can not re-enter

- c. This is another result of sin - exile from God's Presence, our True Home

2. We see this idea of exile over and over again

- a. Cain was exiled further away - a restless wanderer

Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴ Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."... ¹⁶ So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Genesis 4:13–14, 16

1. Cain was driven away - like Adam and Eve
2. Exile - driven from God's Presence (of favor)
3. The result of exile - a restless wanderer, never able to be at Home, to be in God's favorable Presence

- b. At the Tower of Babel, God is forced to scatter the people for their presumptuous sin (Genesis 11)

- c. Israel was given the Promised Land - a new Garden - but did not get to enter the land, remaining in exile in the wilderness because of their wickedness in not believing God's Word (see Numbers 14)

- d. The scapegoat carried sin into exile

When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹ He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert. Leviticus 16:20–22

1. Aaron had already sacrificed an animal for atonement
2. The scapegoat symbolized the carrying away of sin
3. These animals show the penalty for sin - death and exile

e. Israel was exiled from their Promised Land

Then **the Lord will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods**—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. ⁶⁵ **Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. ⁶⁶ You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.** Deuteronomy 28:64–66

1. They are driven out of their home in the Promised Land and scattered by YHWH
2. They are driven from Yahweh's Presence - and turn to idols
3. They become restless wanderers on the earth - no rest, no repose, filled with anxiety and despair, always unsure

C. Sin leads to exile - a removal from our true home of God's blessing Presence, into a life of restless wandering "east of Eden." Exile is itself a curse, and is also a pointer to the ultimate exile - death and final separation from God.

D. In place of good we now have sin and evil; in place of blessing there is curse, in place of fruitfulness we now experience futility, instead of increase there is unending frustration, instead of being settled in our Garden home, we have become exiles, restless wanderers on earth, far from God, His blessing, and our true home. This is the result of sin, and reversing this will consume the remainder of The Story.

IV. The Story: Rescue From Sin and It's Effects

A. We can not resolve the effects of sin on our own

1. We can not cover our nakedness - but we try!
Then 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. Genesis 3:7
2. We can not return from exile to the Garden
After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:24
 - a. We can not simply return from exile - though we try!
 - b. Remember Israel in Numbers 14 - we can't just go in now
 - c. Even when the longing is there, we do not have the skill or strength to end our own exile

B. God will have to undo sin and its effects for us

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."...²¹ The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. Genesis 3:15, 21

1. God promises a Seed will come to save
2. This is the protoevangelium - first Gospel!
3. God provides covering for them!
4. In His grace God does this in the midst of sin and curse!

V. The Story and Our Story

A. The Story calls us to see sin and its costly effects

1. The recovery from sin and its effects will be costly!
2. God clothed them - but it cost a life
3. Removing sin and its effects will cost more than we ever imagined
4. Eve thought Cain was the Promised Seed - but she could not have been more wrong. The effects of sin are always far more tragic, deep, and wide than we ever imagined.
5. She took ... and ate: so simple the act, so hard its undoing. God will taste poverty and death before 'take and eat' become verbs of salvation. (Derek Kidner)
6. The recovery from this tragic fall will take the rest of The Story to unfold. But make no mistake, though the promised delivery often seems far away, though it often seems to fail, in the end God comes through - the Promised Seed comes and ends sin and our exile!
7. Thus the Christmas Story is really about the Seed Who comes to accomplish this promised delivery from sin and exile.

B. The Story calls us to see only God can resolve sin and its effects

1. This problem is far too vast, deep, wide, and complex for us to resolve
2. If we are to be saved from sin, curse, exile, and death, it will have to be done by God

3. But thanks be to God - the Seed Who will do this was promised - and He has come!
4. The coming we celebrate is not just sweet baby Jesus - it is the coming of the Promised Seed, who lives for God, fights sin, crushes Satan, and offers to us freedom from sin and exile!
5. If you have never looked to God, do so today! Don't cover your nakedness with fig leaves, let God clothe you with the righteousness of Christ!

C. Prayer regarding our sin and exile

Sin and Exile

Genesis 3:23-24
December 6, 2015

Prayer

Psalm 79:9

Teaching keywords: Holy Spirit; false teaching and heresy

Help us, O God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake. Psalms 79:9

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:23–24