

Paradise Lost

Thank God we can gather this morning, and we thank Him that He has given us this opportunity. The Lord is coming soon. Even in my lifetime I sense that He may come back because He has promised that He will return to receive us unto Himself. He promised this in the first century. Those who loved the Lord in the first century expected Him to return in their lifetime. They were not wrong because the Lord could have returned in their lifetime if the church had been ready. However, twenty centuries have passed and the Lord has not returned. It is not because He does not want to return, but it is because His people have not been ready. Now we are living at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and all the prophecies that have preceded His return have been fulfilled. So we do believe that our Lord may return at any moment. How good it will be if the Lord will return while we are gathered here this morning! Oh, how we will welcome His return! Hopefully there will be none left behind if by the grace of God we are all ready for Him.

Lucifer Wanted the Place of God's Son

When Lucifer sinned against God, he wanted to take the place of God's beloved Son. For that reason, he was discharged from heaven. All who were under his domain and followed him went into ruin. This is why we find in Genesis 1 that the earth was empty and void. There was no meaning to the earth because it was under judgment. It was covered with water, and historically we call it the ice age. We do not know how long this age continued, but thank God, the Spirit of God began to move upon the face of the deep, and the love of God returned to this ruined earth. In six days God restored the earth to be habitable, and on the sixth day He created man.

Man is Created for God's Purpose

When He created man, it was different from His original creation because He created man according to His image and in His likeness. Think of that! Man was created in the image of God according to His likeness. Image speaks of the inward reality. That is to say when God created man, He created him according to Himself because He wanted man to represent Him in destroying His enemy. For God to destroy His enemy would be easy. His very breath could have destroyed Satan, but that would not have brought glory to God. It would be like a grown-up person beating a little child. Therefore, for God's glory He created man a little lower than the angels. Why did God create man? Why did He create you and me? He had a definite purpose which was to defeat Satan, His enemy. It is for God's glory that man, who is a little lower than the angels, defeat God's enemy. This is the reason for our creation.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are not created for ourselves; we are created for God's purpose. We do not live upon this earth for ourselves. We live here for the purpose of God. What a privilege that is! What an honor that God wants to use us to defeat His enemy! For that reason the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep. In six days, God restored the earth to be habitable, and on the sixth day He created man in His image, according to His likeness. Image speaks of the inward reality which means that inwardly we are created to be like God and to be

used of God. We are not created for ourselves; man does not live for himself. Man lives for God and for the purpose of God. This is what we should always remember.

Man's Responsibility for the Garden of Eden

Then God put man in the garden of Eden. It was a beautiful garden, full of fruit trees which was man's food because at that time man had not eaten meat. God made every provision for man when he put him in the garden. Then God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helpmate for him." So God created Eve out of Adam, and joined them together into one. He put them in the garden of Eden to do two things—to till and to guard. What God had created He wanted man to improve upon for His glory. At the same time, He told man to guard the garden. What does that mean? We know that the garden of Eden was without a wall, and the enemy of God was outside; therefore, God wanted man to guard the garden. Man was to be the wall of the garden to keep the enemy of God out. So that is the work that God had ordained for man—to till in order to improve what God had provided, and to guard against the enemy. Man is not created for himself; he is created for God's purpose. What is that purpose? He wants to use man to defeat His enemy. It is for the glory of God and is the meaning of man.

Do we remember what God created us for? He created us not for ourselves but for His glory. And when we defeat His enemy, that is for God's glory.

In the beginning of the Bible we find that in six days God restored this ruined earth. On the sixth day, He created man and put him in the garden. He gave Eve to Adam that together they might serve God's purpose. This is the will of God. In the garden, Adam and Eve were to do two things. One was to till. It is not God's will for man to be lazy, to do nothing because if that is the case, evil will very soon begin to rise up in him. God wants man to work, to till, to improve upon what God has provided for the glory of God. But this is only one side of the work. There is the other side which is to guard the garden that is without a wall. God's purpose was for man to be the wall of the garden and keep the enemy outside of the garden. God wanted man to keep the garden, to be the wall of the garden and keep God's enemy from entering in.

Man Failed in His Responsibility

Unfortunately, man failed. Adam and Eve should have been together to do the work God gave them to do. But Eve began to wander away from Adam, leaving Adam to work by himself, and he was not able to fulfill God's purpose. He failed to guard the garden. It was a critical mistake and the enemy slipped in. Eve had left Adam and the work and was wandering around by herself. Adam was left alone and was not able to guard the garden, and the enemy slipped in.

The Bible tells us that Eve wandered around to the center of the garden. You will remember that God planted the tree of life in the center of the garden, and beside that tree, God planted another tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's command to Adam was you could eat of every fruit in the garden, but not of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why did God give such a command? Was it because God did not want man to be knowledgeable? Not at all! He planted the tree of life in the midst of the garden so that man could have God's life. In His life, there is the right knowledge. Without the life of God, knowledge is very dangerous because it leads us away from God. It makes us look into ourselves, and that is the fall of man.

The Tree of Knowledge Chosen Over the Tree of Life

So the Bible tells us that while Eve was wandering around, she came to the center of the garden. Instead of looking at the tree of life, she was more interested in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It must have been a beautiful tree, a very attractive tree. So she was wandering around that tree. But had she wandered about the tree of life, how good that would have been! God's purpose for man would be fulfilled. Instead she was interested in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She looked at the tree and wondered what would happen if she ate the fruit. She had heard the command that God had given Adam, but the enemy came in and persuaded her by saying, "God did not allow you to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because He does not love you. He is keeping you from the best." Satan put that thought into the heart of Eve. The more she looked at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the more she admired it. Eventually she succumbed to the temptation of Satan: "God does not allow you to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because He does not want you to be like Him." So Eve was tempted. She looked at the tree and saw that the fruit was good, and she took it and ate it, and the Bible says that she gave it to Adam.

Now Adam knew the Word of God; he knew that this was the fruit of the forbidden tree. If he should eat that tree, he would be separated from God, but he loved Eve more than God. He would rather have Eve than God. So he also ate.

When Man Sinned the Glory Departed

What happened? They discovered they were naked. When God created the animals, He gave skins to cover them. However, when He created man, do you think He would not give man a covering? I do not think so. I believe when God created man, He clothed them with glory. Glory was their clothing; therefore, they were not naked. They had the glory of God upon them. But as soon as they sinned, glory left them. We understand this because we have experienced it. We were naked in the sight of God because our forefathers had sinned; therefore we all were born in sin and transgressions and could not face God. So Adam and Eve discovered they were naked. In other words, glory left them.

So they tried to use the fig leaves as a covering over their nakedness which is the work of man. Of course, when the wind blows, such clothing would not cover them. Even though they had covered themselves with fig leaves, they hid themselves when God appeared in the garden. Why? Before God, they sensed that they were naked. God said, "Adam, where are you? Have you eaten from the forbidden tree?" Then we read what happened. Instead of loving his wife, Adam blamed his wife and said, "The woman gave me the forbidden fruit to eat." Did Adam acknowledge his sin? No, he did not, and he placed the blame on the woman. Then the woman would not take the blame for herself but put it on the serpent. She said, "The serpent enticed me." That is the result of sin.

The Curse Upon Satan

God cursed the serpent, who was a representation of Satan, that he would crawl upon the earth and eat dirt as his food. God put enmity between the woman and the serpent. Thank God for that! Instead of making the woman and the serpent allies, He put an enmity between them. The promise of God is that the seed of the woman would destroy the head of the serpent, but the serpent will hurt His heel. Of course, we know that this is the promise of the coming of Christ to this world to destroy the enemy. However, the enemy hurt His heel, and He had to go to the cross to suffer for our sins. This is the love of God. God promised Adam and Eve the coming of the Messiah.

God Clothed Adam and Eve with the Skin of an Animal

God killed an animal and clothed them with its skin. But they were not allowed to remain in the garden of Eden lest they eat the fruit of the tree of life and live forever in sin and nakedness before God. The tragedy of man would be eternal. But in His mercy God killed an animal and clothed them with the skin. It is a type of the coming of Christ and how He would die for us that we may be clothed in His righteousness and cover our nakedness before God. Adam and Eve were unfit to stay in the garden of Eden lest they eat from the tree of life. So God in His mercy clothed them with a skin. Where did the skin come from? Evidently an animal had to be killed which is a type of the coming of the Messiah and how He would die in our stead that we may be clothed with Him and not remain naked before God. But Adam and Eve were unfit to live in the garden of Eden, and they were driven out.

God set an angel with a flaming sword to guard the garden. This was paradise lost, and what a loss that has been! Therefore, when we were born into this world, we have all been born outside of the garden of Eden because we have sin in us. Our lives are under the dominion of sin and death. So far as human beings are concerned, we had no hope in ourselves. But thank God, He sent His beloved Son into this world to die on the cross in our stead. "Whosoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (see John 3:16b).

Look Up, Your Redemption Draws Nigh

Dear brothers and sisters, I trust that all of you have believed in the Lord Jesus. If you have not, this is the time for you to repent and come to Christ Jesus because He is coming soon. I firmly believe that the Lord may come back in our lifetime. Twenty centuries have passed, and we are now living at the beginning of the twenty-first century. All the prophecies preceding the coming of the Lord have been fulfilled, and the next prophecy to be fulfilled is the coming of the Lord. So do not think that there will be more time for you to wander around and continue in sin and transgressions. There is no more time. The Lord may come at any moment. How good it will be if the Lord should come now! And the best thing is that this auditorium would be empty; none will be left behind. If any should be left behind, they will be cast into outer darkness and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In other words, there will be repentance. So repent now instead of spending a thousand years repenting. If we would repent now, we will welcome the return of the Lord because we will go into the kingdom and reign with Him for a thousand years. A thousand year is a long time. The short period of time we will live on this earth enjoying ourselves and then spending a thousand years in outer darkness cannot be compared to a

thousand years reigning with Christ. It is not worth it! The Lord is coming! Trust Him! That is the prayer of my heart.

Let's pray:

Dear Lord, when we think of Thy imminent return, our hearts leap for joy. How we praise and thank Thee that what Thou hast promised will be fulfilled, and we shall be with Thee in Thy kingdom ruling and reigning for Thy glory. Oh dear Lord, we thank Thee for Thy precious promise. Our prayer is that by Thy grace we will all be ready. If there is anyone who is not yet ready, would You ready him or her at this moment that when Thou dost come back, we will all be raptured and be with Thee forever. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.

West Coast Christian Conference