

## Sermon Transcript from February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016 Fall: The Kingdom Rebels Against the King Pastor John Mark Comer, Bridgetown Church

This morning I woke up and, as is my Sunday morning routine, I went for a run in Forest Park and it was so beautiful. Forest Park in the winter is kind of laid bare and the sun was breaking through for a very short time. And you come up over a rise and you see the city spread out and it was just such a god moment. I use felt at peace with God and with myself and even with the earth. It was beautiful until it started raining and I was sopping wet and freezing cold. But, that's another thing. But then, after my run, after a quick shower and such, I read the news and I was offline yesterday for my Sabbath and so I was kind of playing catch-up and I read a story about a gunman in Michigan killing six people, a father and a son, a teenage girl, innocent people, nothing to do with the man at all. Senseless violence.

I read about a terrorist bombing in Turkey. I read about political infighting here in the states. I read that bizarre story about the 97-year-old and the 100-year-old woman in the retirement home in Massachusetts and the 97-year-old woman murdered her roommate with a plastic bag over her head. It was just so gnarly. And then, to make it all really bad, I read about Kanye West and his new album and like, I'm upset. Like, I'm not like, "That guy's the anti-Christ," but I think maybe that guy is the anti-Christ, actually. I don't know.

So, I was just, after this beautiful morning, I was just wrecked by the ongoing dysfunction in the world. And we feel this tension, right? We live in the West and so we grow up with the propaganda, kind of with the narrative of Western progress that with science and technology and government we are marching forward to Utopia. So, that's like kind of the PR that we're sold from a very young age. But then we wake up and we read the news or we walk out the door or we deal with what our own mind, our own soul, our own body and we know, "Okay. That narrative does not match. It does not line up."

There is a tension. On one hand we have this sense that, in the language of last week's story, the world is very good. I mean, you're out on a run or whatever your thing is and you just have this sense with family, with friends that the world is very good. But then, on the other hand, we have this sense that something has gone horribly wrong. And so, we ask this question: why is the world so dang messed up? For all of our science, all of our technology, all of our government, all of our millions of years of evolution, thousands of years of human history and we're still with this? Like a soap opera at a global scale.

And why am I so messed up? The problem is not just out there, it's in here. Right? It's not just them, it's me. And why is your spouse or your fiancé or your boyfriend or your roommate or your missional community or your church or your pastor – Gerald, not me – so messed up? Right? We have this question. We all ask this question, follower of Jesus or not. The story I'm about to read explains, I think really well, how we got into this mess.

Now, before we read Genesis 3 – some of you read it a few weeks ago back in January – I want, really fast, to call out the elephant in the room. And listen to me. Way too many people, in particular if you did not grow up in the church, write this story off because it's weird – and it is odd. There's a talking snake in the opening line, just to warn you. And then, to make matters worse, Eve is speaking Parseltongue back like if you're a Harry Potter fan. And there's a magic tree and everybody is naked and it's just, if you did not grow up in the church, this is an odd story. You're like, "Really? What the heck is in the communion down here? This is odd."

Now, I just want to say that. Listen. However you read this story, if you read this story the same way that you read the Oregonian in the morning, if you read it as straight up journalism or history and you think there was a talking snake and one man and one woman and a magic tree or whatever, great. That's fine. Just a word of caution to you: remember that the Bible is Scripture but it's also literature and you're reading a story that is ancient. That predates, as far as we can tell, writing. It was around for millennia as an oral tradition way before it was ever put down on papyrus. And when that happened, it was by an ancient Hebrew out in the desert to a group of people coming out of slavery in Egypt with no knowledge of God or the Torah or any of that.

So, as you read it, just come with wisdom. You have to imagine what would this sound like if I was an ancient Hebrew slave out in the desert. Or if, on the other hand, you think, "No, I don't read it as history or as the newspaper or whatever. I read this as myth or I

read this as metaphor. Adam, in the story, is not a proper name. That's why we don't read about anymore Adams in the Old Testament or any more Eves. Adam and Eve are not proper names. Adam is a Hebrew word meaning 'humanity,' Eve is a Hebrew word meaning 'life.' And the snake, of course, was stock verbiage in the ancient world. It was a well known symbol for evil."

And so, if you read this story as a myth or a metaphor about humanity and life and evil – and, by the way, when I say "myth," just to make sure you're listening to me here, I don't mean – do you all know there's two different definitions of the word "myth?" You all know that? Okay. So, just in case you don't, there's the popular level word "myth" where we say, "Oh, that's a myth," and what we mean by that is what? That's not true or it's a lie. So, it has all sorts of negative connotations.

That's not what the word means in academia or in scholarship. In academia, the word "myth" is not a bad thing at all. It means a premodern, prescientific story of origins that asks and answers the questions of life. Who are we? Where do we come from? What's gone right? What's gone wrong? So on and so forth.

So, if you read Genesis 3 this way, as a myth or, if you're more comfortable with the word metaphor, as this kind of symbolic story, if that's how you read it, great. All I would say to you is just remember that what you are reading, what's open in front of you, is literature, but it's also Scripture. This is inspired by God; whatever genre it is. So, as we come to this story, whether or not there was a talking snake and a magic tree, there are actual events behind it. Whether or not this actually happened in the kind of Oregonian, page 1 kind of way, this is a real, true story. Just like Jesus would tell a parable. Was this parable true or false? It was true. That doesn't mean it actually happened that way, but it was a true story. That's exactly I think what's going on here.

So, my point is that however you read the story, and there is ample room in our community for a wide range of readings. I don't really care all that much. What I want to say is that, however you read this story, I would argue this is the most deep, profound and intelligent story ever written, in my opinion, on the problem of evil. Its level of insight into the human condition is stunning. And that's just the bits and pieces of it that I actually know. I know there's a whole bunch in here I'm still missing. It's absolutely stunning.

So, wherever you are at in that spectrum, I just want you to suspend judgment for a few minutes and let the story speak for itself. Okay? Yeah? Here we go.

Genesis 3:1, **"Now the snake was more crafty..."** – and that word "crafty" there means "intelligent" or "adroit," but also kind of devious. Alright? – **"...more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made."**

Notice, before we move forward, the story does not tell you and me where the snake comes from. There's all sorts of backstory here that we just don't get. Last week, Josh used a fantastic analogy of Star Wars, and I just was not here last week and I feel like I need to re-say it because it was so good.

So, think of Star Wars. This is the opening frame to the first ever – yep, you know it. Jesus is in this moment. The first ever Star Wars movie, Episode IV, A New Hope. So, imagine it's 1977, I was negative three, you're whatever age, and this is the first time. So, imagine you don't know anything about the Star Wars universe. You don't know who Luke Skywalker is. I mean you know diddly-squat, okay?

Here's the first frame: A New Hope. It is a period of civil war. Rebel spaceships striking from a hidden base have won their first victory against the evil Galactic Empire. During the battle, rebel spies managed to steal secret plans to the Empire's ultimate weapon, the Death Star.

And it goes on. Now, imagine this is your first time ever seeing it. The monstrosity that is episode 1, 2 and 3 does not yet exist. Okay? You have all sorts of questions. Who's the Galactic – yeah. Who is that? Mike, my man. You have all sorts of questions. Who is the Galactic Empire and why are they evil and why is there a civil war and who are the rebels and are the rebels good or bad? There's all sorts of stuff you don't know. You just step into an ongoing story and you get sucked in to Luke Skywalker and Obi Wan Kenobi and the Millennium – it's just so good. Okay?

So, my point is that Genesis is kind of like that. A lot of people think that Genesis 1:1 this is like the beginning of the beginning of the beginning. It's not. There's all sorts of stuff here and backstory we just don't know about. So, who is the snake, where did the snake come from, where did evil come from and why is the snake in the Garden of Eden? It

does not say. I grew up hearing that the Garden of Eden was perfect, but Gerry Breshears, who's a theologian across the river, was the first to point out to me, "No, it never says it was perfect. It says it was very good. It's not perfect. There's a snake right in the middle of it."

His famous line is that Eden is created in a war zone and that there's this cosmic battle raging behind the scenes. My point is just this. Listen. There is a mystery around evil that even the Bible does not attempt to solve. So, when we think about evil and talk about evil and stand up on stage and teach about evil, I think we need to do so with an open mind and a whole lot of humility.

Now, keep reading. This snake, literal or symbolic, however you read it, said to the woman, **"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"**

**"The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 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.'"**

**"'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"**

Look at what the snake does. Look at his M.O. First, this is the temptation. First, he questions God's Word or God's command. "Did God really say that? Are you sure? Is that the right interpretation? I don't know if that's the right way to parse the Greek word for that."

Then he questions God's love. Right there is that line. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God. He's not a loving Father. He's petty, He's insecure, He's jealous. Don't trust that guy."

And then, finally, he questions the nature of good and evil himself. He claims, "Okay, God said that will kill you? That will bring death? No, that's not true at all. That will bring life."

He questions the very nature of good and evil itself. Do you see that? God says, "I'm good. The tree is bad. Trust me."

The snake says, "God is bad. The tree is good. Trust me instead."

So, the temptation for Eve is to decide for herself what is good and what is evil, to play the role of God, to set herself up as judge and jury and, instead of trust God, to trust the snake and/or to trust herself, what she's thinking, what she's feeling, her opinion, her judgment, her background rather than God. And we face this temptation every single day. Right?

A great example, to flesh it out for you, one of many I think right now that we're all very aware of, is the ongoing temptation – and I don't shy away from that word – in the Church to recast sexuality and marriage to line up with society at large. So, for millennia, I mean literally from millennia before the time of Christ, the people of God, based on the Scriptures and then later based on the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, have always said that sexuality is a good thing that was created by God but that it's so good and it's so powerful that what happens when a man and woman make love? Two souls are fused into one. "Echad" is the Hebrew word. Two people become one entity.

It's so good, it's so powerful that the one and only container that is strong enough to handle that kind of a nuclear force is marriage, a covenant relationship between a man and a woman for life. And that any expression of sexuality outside of that, heterosexual or homosexual, none of it is what God, in the beginning, had in mind. So, this is the ancient vision of sexuality and marriage.

Now, we all know kind of the story in the 1960s was the whole "free love" thing here in the U.S. Which, prior to that, kind of sort of had an ancient vision of sexuality and marriage. You have the 1960s, you have Woodstock, Make Love, Not War and everybody starts like having sex with everybody. Then, as a result, in the 70s and 80s, the divorce thing just goes like wildfire through our culture. Then in the 90s and the 2000s, the LGBTQ movement had its day in court and won, both in the court of law and in the court of public opinion. What's fascinating is if you now still stand with kind of the ancient vision, if you stand with Jesus and the writers of the Bible and the Church down through history when it comes to sexuality and marriage,

what's interesting – this is so interesting to me – is we now have the moral low ground in the eyes of society as a whole.

Does that make sense to you? So, if you think, "No," and you're nice and you're kind and you're gracious but you think that sexuality is for a man and woman and marriage for life, you are now thought of as a bigot – not if you're cruel or mean or a jerk on Facebook, which hopefully you're not. But just if you think that, you're a bigot, you're a homophobic, you're close minded, you're behind the times. It's not just that you're unpopular, it's that you have the moral low ground. But, if you acquiesce to where our culture is at and you say, "Oh, no. I'm all about love and tolerance and Jesus, God, is all about love and that's kind of my heart," then you, at that point, have the moral high ground.

So, everything is now upside down and so the temptation is exactly the same. "Did God really say? Does the Bible really teach that? I mean, really? What about the Greek and there are other interpretations?"

Yeah. There were like 5,000 years without any other interpretations and now there's like 1 the last decade. I don't think that really counts. But, that's all you have to say for some people. "There are other interpretations. There are other ways to read the Greek or the Hebrew. Jesus never really said anything about it. Come on, let's move on. Is God really a loving Father? No. He's not after your good."

Or the reverse lingo, which I hear all the time, "God is love. He wants me to be happy. He would never want me to deny myself."

Like, have you read Jesus? He does want you to deny yourself. Lots of yourself, actually. It's kind of like the beginning point to discipleship to Jesus. I know lots of people. "God wants me to be happy, therefore this can't be sin."

And then, of course, he questions the very nature of good and evil. "I know what Jesus said. I know what the writers of the Bible said. I know what God has said through the prophets and about sexuality and about this, but that's behind the times. That's not right. This is actually good. This isn't sin. This is good. This is life."

That's the voice. Wherever it comes from, the back of your own head, the radio, wherever it comes from, it's the exact same voice. Now, my point is that's one example. We could talk about examples from the right. We could talk about greed. We could talk about militarism. We could talk about all sorts of stuff. But, we face this temptation every single day.

And watch what happens. Look at Genesis 3:6, **"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,"** – so, wow. There's more to this fruit. – **"she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked;"** – that was a moment – **"so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."**

**"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,"** – for intimacy, for relationship – **"and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'"**

**"He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'"**

**"And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat?'"**

**"The man said,"** – smart guy – **"The woman that [by the way] you put here with me, God."**

Like, she's Yours. I was asleep and I woke up and there she was, God. Your thing.

**"She gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."**

**"Then the Lord God said to the woman,"** – so, notice that God doesn't argue with the man. I just want to say that, you know? – **"What is this that you have done?"**

**"The woman said, 'The snake deceived me, and I ate.'"**

And this is like the first sitcom ever right here. The story is called "The Fall" in theology because it's the story of the fall of humanity from grace. It's where we get the idea of "original sin" or "the first time ever sinned."

And it raises the question, "What exactly is sin?" The theologian Cornelius Plantinga defines sin as "the culpable disturbance of shalom." It's a bit heady, but it's so good. It's when we take God's garden-like world, we take all that is good and beautiful and true and, out of our own free will and our own volition, we screw it up.

Anybody read Francis Spufford yet? The British writer? Anybody. So good. This British follower of Jesus with a potty mouth. You'd do really well in Portland, but that's a whole other teaching. He has this great book called "Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense."

This quote is just kind of offensive. So, I apologize. Please don't email me. But, I just feel like it's really good. Okay? He writes this:

"What I and most other believers understand by the word 'sin' has got very little to do with yummy transgression. For us, it refers to something much more like the human tendency, the human propensity, to 'F' up. Or, let's add one more word. The human propensity to 'F' things up. Because, what we're talking about here is not just our tendency to lurch and stumble and screw up by accident, our passive role as agents of entropy. It's our active inclination to break stuff. 'Stuff' here including moods, promises, relationships we care about and our own well being and other people's. As well as material objects, whose high gloss positively seems to invite a big fat scratch. Now, I hope we're on common ground. In the end, almost everyone recognizes this as one of the truths about themselves."

I love that definition of sin. The human propensity to "F" things up. That is it. And it's exactly what we see right here in the story. Sin has consequences. If you keep reading, look at 14.

"So the Lord God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this,' – here's the fallout.

"Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring..." – or that word there is "seed." The idea is "descendant." – "...and hers;" – her offspring, her seed, her descendent.

"He..." – this is an interesting line – "...will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

"To the woman he said,

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful toil you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

"To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it.'

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

In theology, this story right here is usually called "The Curse." And the snake is cursed first and then the ground. But listen, contrary to popular opinion, Adam and Eve are not cursed by God. Not at all. Adam is not cursed; Eve is not cursed. You are not cursed; I'm not cursed by God. Satan is or the snake is and the ground is. Our relationship with the earth is. But, that said, there is fallout from humanity's sin and, in broad strokes for Eve, or for the woman, it's here relationship to marriage and family. So, child-bearing is now painful. What was once pure joy is now a mixed bag, right moms? It's okay. This is a safe place. Feel free to nod. Or scream or bludge or whatever. You already do that, so whatever.

And, in the story, it's not just children. Her desire, we read, will be for her husband. We think the right interpretation of that is that Eve, the woman, will always want something from her husband and from her marriage that she cannot get. Love will never be enough, sisters. Romance will never be enough no matter what a hunk of Don Juan awesomeness he is. He will never be enough. Romance will never be enough. The honeymoon will never be enough. Marriage will never be enough. You will always want something out of your marriage, out of every single relationship, out of your family, out of your children, that you just can't get satisfaction for.

And, to make matters worse in the story, the woman is looking to marriage for satisfaction. But, where's the man looking for satisfaction? Not to marriage, to work. To the field. So, for Adam, for the man, his relationship to the ground is now marked by "painful toil." We know this very well. There are thorns and thistles in the ground now. It's symbolic for frustration and work. It's the exact same thing. What was once pure joy. "Here's the Garden of Eden. Rule over it. Make a garden-like city. Yes."

Now it's a mixed bag. There's still a lot of good in there. We love to work. We were made to work. We have a calling from God to make culture, to shape this city and this world. It's so good. But, no matter how much you love your job, if you are in your dream job and you make a ton of money and it's right in line with your identity and calling and it's like picture perfect, still all of us have days when we wake up and we just think, "No. I just want to go back to bed, sleep in and then read sci-fi."

I guess that's just me. Whatever your thing is, okay? We all feel that. Office politics, elbow throwing, success is just like money. No matter how successful you are, how wealthy you are, it's never enough. Never enough work, never enough success, never enough numbers after your name or letters after your name, enough reputation, enough fame. It's just never enough. This is the fallout of our sin. Now, listen. The key to wrapping your head around this story is that something in this story has gone wrong at a primal, gut level in humanity.

So, we are now crooked. That's the language that my grandparents use. We are now warped out of shape. We are bent in the wrong direction away from what is good and towards what is evil. No matter how educated you are or how successful you are or how old and wise you are, you still feel this push, this pull, this desire to do what you know is bad for your body, for your soul, for the people you love, for the earth. And, to make matters worse, you feel a desire to not do what you know is good for your soul and your body and the people around you and the earth itself.

Now, some people just give in to this bent nature and let it run wild. We read about them on the news. And then a lot of people fight it tooth and nail over a lifetime and cultivate what we call "virtue." But we all, wherever you are in that spectrum, feel it in our blood. Which is why, as the story goes on, the human condition gets worse or better? Worse. Like, it actually spirals out of control. Unfortunately, we don't have time. I ran out of time tonight to walk you through every single story in Genesis 3-11. Some of you are thinking, "Praise God."

Here's a quick overview, okay? In Genesis 4, we read about Adam and Eve's two sons, Cain and Abel and what happens? Yeah. Cain kills his brother Abel. So, that's really important if you want to wrap your head around Genesis and the human condition. The first after effect of sin is violence. That's the first thing that happens out of it. And, in Genesis, that's a theme. This violence spreads.

At the end of Genesis 4, we read about this dude, Lamech, and he takes not one but two wives. So, this is the origination of polygamy. Violence against women is born. And then he writes a poem. You're thinking, "Oh, great. Make culture. This is poetry. The first ever."

And it's this revenge killing. It's like Deadpool in the ancient Near East or whatever. It's this violent, gnarly, nasty poem about revenge killing and violence. "I killed a man for wounding me."

Then, in Genesis 6, we read about how the sons of God – that's an odd Hebrew phrase. We're not exactly sure what it means. It could mean "wicked, evil men" or it could mean "demonic beings." But, in the story, the sons of God have sex with the women from the line of Seth, which is kind of the good line. It's like there's a good and evil line of humanity. And the idea behind the story is that now all of humanity – it's like sin's a disease and now it's spread. All of humanity is now bent out of shape.

So, as you read through Genesis, there's this escalation from Adam and Eve to Cain and Abel to Lamech to the sons of God. It gets worse and worse and worse. So next, in Genesis 6, comes the flood. It's like God wipes the slate clean to start over. But then, in Genesis 9, the first story out of that is about Noah and he's in a garden and you're thinking, "Yes. Great. Okay, this is like a do-over. It's like a mulligan for humanity. Alright. We're back in a garden. One dude, his wife, family. Everybody's alive. Great."

Then Moses plants a vineyard. You're thinking, "Fantastic. The human call is to make culture. What would life be like without red wine?" You're thinking, "Great."

And then what happens? He gets drunk and then something really kinky happens with his son in the bedroom and it's weird. And the point of this story is, "Okay. We still have a problem and the problem is not out there, it's in here."

Notice how profound that is. We still, today, want to think that the problem is out there. Like, we just need the right education, we just need the right program, we just need the right system of government, we just need the right whatever. The right urban planning, the right socioeconomic makeup for the neighborhood. That's all great stuff. But the problem is out there because, first and foremost, the problem is in here.

So, humanity still has this disease and it all builds up to chapter 11 which is the well known story about the Tower of Babel where humanity comes up with a brand new technology, the brick. And once again you're thinking, "Yes. Humanity is supposed to make culture, supposed to make a garden into a city, supposed to advent poetry and wine-making and the brick and technology and all of this great stuff."

But, once again, it's warped. The first thing that humanity does is stop spreading, which is what God's called. He's spread out. And instead say, "No. We're staying right here in one city."

And humanity starts to build a tower, we think it's an ancient ziggurat, to heaven. Long story short, we think that's essentially humanity's way of saying, "God, we're okay. We'll take it from here. Thank you very much."

It's the Adam and Eve story now at a humanity-wide level. And as you get to the end of Genesis 11, you the reader, are left thinking, "How in the world is God going to fix this problem? How is God going to get humanity out of this fiasco? And we'll talk about that next week and the week after and the week after. Long version? Read the rest of the Bible. Short version? Jesus.

But, for tonight, that piece is done. For tonight, I just want to take a step back now and I kind of want to sit in this part of the story. The Fall. Genesis 3-11. I just want to sit in this for a while. Here's a few thoughts, if you're taking notes.

First thought: sin is not trusting God and His vision of human flourishing. There's all sorts of debate about what the original sin was. Was it pride or was it the desire to be like a god? I don't know. But, look at the temptation. The temptation was for Eve to decide for herself what is good and what is evil and, out of that, who to trust and who to obey and who not to. So, sin, at a kind of visceral, core level is not trusting God. And it is not trusting His vision of human flourishing or what we today call "the good life."

Sin, instead, is trusting the snake, that voice in your head, or it's trusting your own opinion or bias or judgment or thinking or feeling. And sin leads to death, not to life. We need to recapture the idea that sin isn't bad because it's forbidden, it's forbidden because it's bad. Does that make sense for you?

Here's what I mean by that. A lot of people think of sin as breaking an arbitrary rule. Kind of like sin is breaking the speed limit. Okay? So, I got a ticket recently. I know you think I'm perfect. You all think that. I know. But, I was driving home late. I was speaking for this event at the University of Oregon. It was great, but it was late and it was two in the morning. I'm not a late night person. So, I'm driving back to Portland and I'm on that stretch, that downhill stretch, of I-5 right before Terwilliger, you know? There's nobody – somebody just went "wool!" Do you have a motorcycle or something?

There was nobody on the road at all. It's two in the morning and I just want to get home and go to sleep. So, I thought it was a 65, it's actually a 55. And so, I was going 77. I was under 80. I was proud of myself, actually. I'm like, "Under 80. I'm a pastor."

Okay. Whatever. So, cop is there, the whole thing. I get a ticket for \$360. Who's cheering? Stop cheering. \$360. So, I get my ticket and, as I'm driving off, I'm mad. Not that I got a ticket. Sure. But, I'm thinking to myself like, "I want to become mayor and say no ticket should be over \$100."

What do poor people do when they get a ticket like that? This is injustice. So I'm thinking, "\$360?" And I'm mad. Why? Because, in my mind, I kind of think of the speed limit as kind of sort of good advice, but who really cares? And I think that's how a lot of people think about the commands of God and the teachings of Jesus. As this kind of arbitrary rule kind of like the speed limit.

Like, "What's the big deal? So, I have sex with my girlfriend. We like each other a lot. What's the big deal?"

But, in reality, sin is more – I don't have a great analogy – like when I tell my son Jude, who I have a great relationship with, "Jude, do you want to go outside and ride your bike? Great. Hey, we live in the city. Make sure that you have your helmet on and your eyes open."

And he says, "Yes, Dad. Got it."

And then, two minutes later, I look out the window and he's riding his bike with no helmet on. Like, when he does that, first off, he sins against me. He's a smart kid. He's not stupid. That's a direct affront to me. So, there's a breach of relationship. There's a tension now. "Jude, what the heck? I just said." There's a tension now in our relationship.

And it's a sin, not only against me, but it's a sin against the good life. Like, dude. You live in the city. There are cars. It's crazy. You're right in the street. Like, that's not the way to life. I know that's an imperfect analogy, but that's more what sin is like. When we sin, we sin against God first and foremost. There is a breach in relationship with God. A tension. It's a direct affront, offense, to God your Father who loves you to pieces. And we sin against the good life.

My point here is that the teachings of Jesus and the commands of God aren't just the right way to live, they are the best way to live. You need to get that or you will never conquer sin in your life. As a disciple of Jesus, all of Jesus' teachings, sex, marriage, love, divorce, fidelity, non-violence, anxiety, money, possessions, Jesus' teachings on everything are not just right, but are the best way to be human in the world.

Jesus is the best living example of a thriving, flourishing human being. His teachings are the map to what He called the life that is truly life. If you don't believe that, the odds are you will never win the fight over sin in your life. See, my point here is that we want to make sin about self-control. Like, "Ah, don't do that."

And there's a place for that. Self-control is a great thing. But, at the end of the day it's about faith. Who do you believe? The snake or your Father? Who do you trust? Who do you obey?

Second thought is this: sin has devastating and far reaching consequences. In Genesis 3-11 we see what happens when human beings take freedom in the wrong direction. There's a breach in relationship with God, something is now off in the human heart, it spreads at a society-wide level. And what you see in the story is that sin is its own punishment. That's the first thing that you have to understand about sin. God rarely does have to do anything to punish your sin. All you have to do is sin. It's usually its own punishment and obedience is its own reward.

Sin has consequences. It leads to death. I think of the famous line in the New Testament. "The wages of sin is death." That's not necessarily saying that if you sin God is going to kill you. It's saying that sin kills. It kills relationship with God, it kills joy and peace and life. It kills the earth. It kills relationship. That's what sin does. It has consequences that spill out at a society-wide level. We are so hyper individualistic in the US and in particular in the Pacific Northwest. We are one of, if not the most hyper individualistic cultures. And by "we" I mean here in Portland. In all of the world and in all of human history.

We want to think that what goes on in our own life has little or no affect in our community and our world, and it's just ridiculous. This is our moral kind of recasting in the secular age of, "Hey, what's good for you is good for you as long as it doesn't hurt anybody."

As if there is not a ripple effect from our life to our friends, our community, our city and



our world. You are the kids of divorce or adultery or whatever. You know this better than anybody living in the fallout of somebody else's sin. Sin has consequences that go so far. If you're a parent, you feel this weight. I feel this weight as a dad. My kids are just now a little older, 6, 7 and 10. When they were younger, it was like so much more exhausting, but it was easier. Like, feed it. It's an "it" at that point. Clothe it. Clean up the poop. Love it. Discipline it a little. It's exhausting. But, it's pretty straightforward.

Now, as my kids get older, it's way less exhausting, it's more fun. But man, is it way harder. It's like, "I don't know what to say. Why can't you watch Deadpool? Because it's bad? Why is it bad? I don't know. I haven't seen it. Because it's..."

It's just way harder. It's just way way way harder. In a beautiful way. The hardest part is that, as a dad, I see my sins now live on in my children. And I have great kids. But, I see my sin of anger, which is something I'm wrestling with, I see it in my firstborn. I see my perfectionism, the way I'm hyper critical, I see it in my second born who said – what did he say to you the other day Tammy?

He's like, "Mom, you're like a one on the beauty scale. You're like the most beautiful ever."

And then who was a two? "Shania Twain is like a number two."

And he started rating women and I'm like, "Oh my gosh. You get that from your mom, not from your dad. That's all I want to say."

So, it's cute and we laugh, but it's not cute. Like, fast forward that. "You're like a one, she's like a two." Fast forward that to 18, 20, 25. Like, that's not cute. So, I see my sin live on. I said to my wife the other day, here's my parenting goal – I keep lowering the bar. "I just don't want my kids to have to be in therapy for very long."

That's my new parenting goal. My point is that sin has consequences that ripple. And if this feels heavy to you, I'm sorry, I'm just about done. But, it is. That's the point of the story. As we step into it, as we feel the weight of it as, as we're shaped by it.

So, my third thought, and here's the hope, is that Jesus is our only hope to overcome sin and its consequences. He is. He is our one and only hope. Everybody knows we have a problem. Less and less people think that Jesus is the answer, but He is. And we see this so clearly right now in an election year. And I'm kind of apolitical. I don't even have a political statement to make. But, what I think is fascinating is that both the right and the left, I think, work off of a false assumption that is with the right form of government, we can create our own little Garden of Eden. So, the left thinks it's more government and education and programs and the right thinks, "No, it's less government. Free market capitalism."

Whatever. That's a legitimate debate. But, what neither side wants to talk about is the problem of sin in the human heart. To the left, listen, no education, no program is going to deal with that. The best you can do is alleviate the symptoms of sin. And I'm all for that. We're all about that here at Bridgetown. But, you can't deal with the root issue. The staggering apologetic against the left is ISIS where you have educated, Western, wealthy men and women killing Christians, raping women, living Hell.

The greatest apologetic against the right is the great recession, which was caused not by a terrorist attack, not by a natural disaster, but by greed and corruption on Wall Street and in America as a whole because of lack of government regulation. Take that.

Now, that's not a political statement. My point is just listen: government's great. We'll figure out the right way to do it going forward, but it's not the heaven on earth. Jesus is the one. The best it can do is deal with symptoms. And that's a legitimate thing, but Jesus is the one and only power who can deal with the root, with sin.

That's what we see right here in this story. If you look back down at your Bible. Genesis 3:15. I don't know, did you see that? There's a prophesy from God.

**"I will put enmity between you and the woman, in between the snake and humanity, between your offspring and hers;"**

And then here's the prophesy. This is fascinating prophesy. And this is prophesy about a descendent of Eve, a human being.

**"He will crush your head,"** – he will stamp out evil once and for all in the future – **"and you [the snake] will strike his heel."**

So, this victory comes at a high price. He will experience the poison and the pain. This is an absolutely beautiful moment right here. Right after the fall, the first thing that God does is curse the snake and promise Jesus. This is a beautiful glimpse forward of Jesus who will come and defeat evil and will somehow absorb that evil from my own heart into His own being to take it away, wipe it away forever.

In theology, this prophesy right here is called the "Protoevangelium" or "the Proto Gospel." The first glimpse ever, in all of the Bible, of Jesus and how one day He will come to put the world to rights. And, in the meantime, look at what God does. If you look down, we'll end here at verse 21.

Genesis 3:21, **"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."**

He made garments of skin and He clothed them. This is deep. In the ancient Near East, if you were to sin against the master of the house, if he were to take away your clothing, that was a way to disinherit you, to kick you out of the family. If he were to give you clothing, that was a way to say, "Listen, no matter what you've done, you're still my son, you're still my daughter, you're still in my family."

God clothes Adam and Eve. And, to end, notice in this story we read about hiding, but who's hiding in this story from whom? Did you see that? Adam and Eve are hiding from God. We read about seeking, but who's seeking whom? God is seeking Adam and Eve. "Hey, where are you? Adam, where are you?"

So often, we have it backwards. We think that when we sin, because of our sin, God is hiding from us. And there is legitimate breach of relationship when we sin, a loss of intimacy with God, which is the greatest pleasure known to man. But, that's upside down. God is not the one hiding, we are. And we are not the ones seeking, God is. So, the beauty is that yeah, sin is this heavy thing that has horrific consequences, but God comes and He seeks you and He goes after me and He meets us right in the thick of our dysfunction and our sin and He says, "Hey, you're naked. Here's some clothes."

That's what God is like. Let's stand and pray.