

## Unearthed Sermon 1 It Was Never Meant to Be This Way

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Welcome! I don't know if any other parents feel this way, but Keren and I are so happy spring is here because it means we can let our kids outside in the yard to play. They've basically lived outside the last two weeks, throwing balls, playing on the playset, picking dandelions. It's been so fun watching them not only play but play together. Most of the time, they are a great team, but on occasion, like siblings do, they fight a bit. Addie is the queen at taking something Hudson is playing with and then, when he takes it back, crying about the magnitude of the injustice. Hudson does a pretty good job sharing, but sometimes he leverages his maturity at Addie's expense. Not long ago we could tell we had some mice in our house. We put out the snapping traps, but these mice were too smart for that. Every morning we would check the trap, the food would be gone, and the trap would still be set. So, we decided to try glue traps, which we thought would be perfect for catching mice. Hudson, knowing exactly what he was doing, convinced Addie that the cheese in the middle of the trap was for her. It ended up plastered to her face. And that's how Addie ended up with her very first haircut. Sometimes, things in life go just as you planned and hoped; other times, they get a little messy.

What is it in the human heart that allows kids at one moment to be working together perfectly and the next moment to take something that doesn't belong to them? Or be really sweet and loving in one interaction, and then trick someone in the next moment, causing them to get hurt, simply for your own amusement? What is that? Sadly, when we get older, whatever that is doesn't magically go away, does it? It grows with us. Without God's grace, it gets deeper and darker, and the consequences get more and more severe. At the macro level you end up with things like the war in Ukraine and the shooting in a Nashville school. Corruption in politics in Washington and corruption in the politics where you work. Infidelity. Divorce. Family feuds. The prison system. Racism. Classism. And here is the thing: when we talk about these things we typically ask: "What's wrong with people? How did this happen?" The answer inevitably is that somehow, somehow, all this stuff comes from within us. In the early 1900's The Times of London, one of the most prominent newspapers in Europe asked their readers to write in and answer this question: "**What's the problem with the world today?**" GK Chesterton, one of the great theologians of that era, wrote in with two words: "**I am.**"

If we are quiet enough, look long enough, and are honest enough, every one of us will see it. We'll come face to face with it. We'll see dysfunction we inherited from the family we were born into, and then—even scarier—we'll be the source of the dysfunction our children are born into. We deal with lust and sexual sin, as well as the shame and cover-up that usually follows. At times we are profoundly selfish. Some of us let fear and anxiety control our lives. Some of us have an inferiority complex that serves as the underlying motivation behind almost everything we do. Some people are unbelievably successful, but they let pride take over and their success becomes part of their downfall.

We are kicking off a ten-week sermon series in which we hope to give attention to these sorts of things that often live in the dark of our life. We are calling this series "Unearthed," knowing that we might have to dig deep to expose the root of many of these things, but that if we do, if we bring them into the light, God can do a work of grace and restore us at a deep level. We can bring our whole, transformed selves not only to God as an expression of worship and praise, but into our relationships; we can be the best, most Christ-like version of ourselves possible. But this is going to take some work. When you go to a dentist, they take x-rays and do an exam, and if they find something that isn't quite right, if there is a cavity, what do they usually have to do? They have to drill. They have to get down to the root of the problem, remove the decay so that it doesn't spread and your oral health stays where it needs to be. I hate to tell you this, but some of the weeks in this series might feel like going to the dentist—parts of it will be invasive and there will be times when it feels like a nerve got struck, but it is important that we do this work so that healing can take place and wholeness can come about.

We are going to see that the things we wrestle with are not unique; people have been dealing with them for as long as history records. We'll look at ten case studies in the Old Testament that not only give us insight into these underlying issues, but also show us how God wants to meet us right where we are. This is going to be a great series. I have been looking forward to preaching this series for four years and the timing never seemed right. But now it is. Let's pray.

Each week in this series we'll look at a person or people from the Old Testament as a window into our theme. Today we'll focus on Adam and Eve and reflect on the biblical truth that "*it was never meant to be this way.*" The brokenness and pain we experience all around us and within us—that was not God's original plan! Let me tell you how this hit me like a ton of bricks this week. Almost everyone on our staff was here Friday, Saturday, and Sunday for Easter stuff, so we took Monday off. We came together Tuesday morning and celebrated all we saw God do last weekend. We had about 1,000 visitors—we were excited to see many new faces. If you came back, we are so glad you are here! We saw 57 people make the decision to be baptized. Life for so many people and eternity for so many people will be different because of decisions last week. We were elated. We thanked God, we commended people who worked really hard, then we said: what can we pray about? Six prayer requests came up: The spouse of a staff member whose dad likely only has a few months left to live. The spouse of a different staff member whose mom has been diagnosed with cancer; his dad is in the middle of a cancer battle right now, too. One of the guys on our staff was very close friends with all four people who died in the plane crash down in Florida last week. One of the most joy-filled people I've ever met, who was at this church for a long time, passed away last Saturday. Another long term member of our church had a heart-attack and died way too young. Another family we are all very close with experienced a miscarriage. In this meeting we went from the highest of highs—celebrating all the incredible ways God is at work and all the lives connected to Jesus—to lamenting the lowest of lows: loss of health, loss of a baby, loss of life. There was a deep unsettledness in my heart, as there should be for all of us: this deep knowing down in our bones that this isn't right. Life isn't supposed to be broken like this. The story of the Bible tells us that, too.

In Genesis 1 we see the account of God creating the world. After God creates different parts, we see the commentary, we see the reaction and response. Look:

Genesis 1:4 God saw that it (the light) was good.

Genesis 1:10 God saw that it (the land and the sea) was good.

Genesis 1:12 God saw that it (the trees and vegetation) was good.

Genesis 1:18 God saw that it (the sun, moon, and stars) was good.

Genesis 1:21 God saw that it (the sea animals and birds) was good.

Genesis 1:25 God saw that it (the land animals) was good.

Genesis 1:31 God saw that (everything he made, including humanity) was very good.

God made the world good. It was perfect, whole, complete, without any error or mistake. The word the Bible gives for this is "shalom." Shalom means peace, but it means so much more than simply peace. It means harmony, completeness, tranquility, equilibrium. As a visual, think of a lake in the mountains on a sunny, cloudless day. The lake is so calm and still that as you look at it, you can see a perfect mirror reflection of the snow-capped peak behind it. That's shalom; that's the sort of perfection God designed and intended when the world was created. But you know how the story of creation goes: before long, Adam and Eve chose to sin. Sin isn't like throwing a little pebble into the lake. It's not even like throwing a boulder into the lake. It's like a huge meteor crashing into the lake at 5,000 miles an hour. Sin disrupts everything. Let's read the account:

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?’” The woman said to the serpent, “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 serpent 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.”

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. 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. 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, 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 from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:1-13)

You read the rest of the chapter and you see that God begins by talking to the serpent and says, “Sin has brought about these specific consequences for you.” He looks at the woman and says, “Sin has brought about these specific consequences for you.” Then he looks at Adam and says, “Sin has brought about these specific consequences for you.” And the consequences are severe. A few weeks ago, I was here at church preparing to give a message and Keren sent me a text that said: “Hudson broke the toy treehouse we have in the basement. He lied about it and said Addie did it. After lying for 15 minutes, he finally confessed and told the truth. I told him I was going to have to spank him for lying and that I was going to spank him as hard as daddy. I then spanked him as hard as I could. He immediately turned around and said, ‘Mom, that was a really good try, but you just aren’t as strong as daddy. His spankings are *many* times harder.’” When I got home, I took him aside and said, “Son, let me give you a valuable piece of advice you need to keep with you for your entire life: whatever you do, don’t talk trash to your mother. It will not go well.” The reality is the consequences for sin are severe. It’s not that God is vindictive; it’s that these are the unavoidable ramifications of people rejecting God, violating a relationship, and choosing to do wrong. If you step off a cliff, gravity brings you down. You pay the price—it’s unavoidable. Because Adam and Eve sinned, spiritual gravity brings us down. It’s unavoidable; it breaks shalom.

It’s not that the moment they eat the fruit they die, that they just fall down dead. No; it means death has now entered the storyline and death is the ultimate trajectory of everything. The second law of thermodynamics is now at play, increasing entropy is at work, and everything will eventually fall apart. I don’t know if you saw this week, but social media was abuzz about Justin Timberlake. Everyone was asking what happened to him. Did he get stung by a hive of bees? Did he have a botched surgery? Why doesn’t he look like he used to? The unfortunate answer was he’s not 25 anymore. He’s in his 40s. Age happens to everyone. Muscle mass breaks down. Bone density decreases. Skin wrinkles. Memories fade. Decay is everywhere. It’s inescapable, and it’s so much more than just physiological. Sin brings brokenness in four major areas.

**Sin breaks our relationship with God.** This is the first domino to fall. After they sinned, the Bible says, God was coming to walk with Adam and Eve in the Garden, which is a symbolic way of saying to

connect with them, to engage in a relationship with them, to know them and be known by them. But because of sin, what did they do? They hid. They covered themselves up. They said, “I know I have done something wrong; I don’t want to be seen.” They felt guilty and unworthy, so they pulled back from God. As you keep reading, you see they ultimately are banished from the Garden; they have to live East of Eden, no longer in close union and intimate fellowship with God.

Sin breaks our relationship with God and **sin breaks our relationship with ourselves**. Sin brings psychological dislocation. It’s personal and internal. We are no longer comfortable with who we are. There are days we deal too much with self-love and other days we deal with self-loathing. Sometimes pride drives us, other times insecurity drives us. We lie to others to appear better in their eyes. We lie to ourselves to appear better in our own narrative. We distract ourselves to not have to look inside ourselves. We need medication to keep our sanity. We have addictions. Anxiety robs us from sleep at night. That’s not how it’s supposed to be.

Sin breaks our relationship with ourselves, and **sin breaks our relationship with others**. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, what happened next? They covered themselves up. It was just the two of them, but now they no longer wanted to be seen and known by one another; they wanted to hide from one another, keep each other at a distance. Self-preservation and power dynamics came into play immediately. Then when God asked Adam what happened, what was the very first thing he said? “I’ll own up to it. I did the wrong thing and I’ll take responsibility.” No! “The woman you gave me! It was her. She caused this.” When God asked Eve, what did she say? “Being more mature than Adam, I’ll own up to it: I did the wrong thing and I’ll take responsibility.” No! She blamed the serpent. Sin causes us to play the victim and blame everyone else for our situation rather than ourselves. If we have it good, it’s because of all the work we did. If we have it bad, it’s because we are a victim of unjust treatment from others. The consequences of sin damage our relationships with others. Eve was told that her desire would be for her husband, that sin was somehow going to cause her to seek meaning, validation, and worth from her husband, but that her husband would rule over her. Even the closest, safest, most intimate relationship is damaged by sin.

And finally, **sin breaks our relationship with our environment**. God tells Adam in Genesis 3:17-19, “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.” Before sin, Adam and Eve lived in Paradise, in a garden where the fruit of limitless trees was available without effort. Adam and Eve had an enjoyable, restful relationship with their environment, but sin broke that relationship and brought about thorns and thistles and painful toil. The physical environment now includes poison ivy and honeysuckle, earthquakes and tornadoes. Our relationship with our environment is broken.

*Things don’t feel right, they shouldn’t. They aren’t. The lake has been disrupted by a meteor!*

Sin is a failure to love rightly, to honor our relationships, to put God first, to reflect God’s image. Sin breaks everything. If you are looking around, or looking up, or looking within, and you find yourself thinking, “This isn’t right,” the Bible not only agrees with that and gives words to that, but the Bible also explains the cause and source of it. And more than simply explaining it, the Bible says God has a plan for it. As soon as sin entered the world, yes God spoke to Adam and Eve, but he also spoke to Satan, the one who tempted them, and said, “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” (Genesis 3:15). This is what theologians refer to as the first gospel. God is talking about the woman’s **offspring**, saying that God will eventually become a human, and that through the incarnation, Satan’s **head will be crushed**. God will deal a final blow to Satan and sin, but it will come through Satan **striking his heel**—a reference to the cross. God said yes, the world is messed up now because of sin. People are separated from me, people have

animosity toward one another, people don't have peace within themselves. There's unrest in their environment, there's brokenness everywhere, but I won't let it stay that way forever. I will enter into the mess, I will take the sin of humanity, the sin of the world, upon myself. I will experience brokenness, complete and absolute pain and misery. I'll take it all; I'll be crushed under the weight of it. Then the power of my love will overcome it and a new day for humanity will begin. The Bible says Jesus is like a new Adam, the beginning of a new kind of life.

Romans 5:18-19 talks about Jesus in this way:

Consequently, just as one trespass (from Adam) resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act (from Jesus) resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of (Adam) the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of (Jesus) the many will be made righteous.

My little girl is obsessed with princesses right now. Every day, after breakfast she runs upstairs to her room, brings down a dress and says, "Daddy, I'm going to be your princess today." Before I come into church, we dance to Sleeping Beauty. Every day. It's such a joy. A couple weeks ago she was wearing her dress and went into the garage for some reason. She fell down and got a dirt stain all over her sleeve. She came in devastated, big crocodile tears streaming down her cheeks, pointing to the stain, and said, "Daddy, I'm not your princess anymore." I saw the stain; it was unmistakable and it didn't look good. But I went right over to her, scooped her up and said, "Darling, you'll always be my princess. I can get that stain right out." That's what God does for every one of us. We have all fallen down. We are all stained. We are all just a shadow of what we were intended to be. That's reality, but we need not despair, because we have a father who runs to us, picks us up, and says, "You'll always be mine. I can get that stain right out."