

Genesis 4-5 (selected verses)

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man." ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." ⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ²⁵ Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, "God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him." ²⁶ Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD. This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man." ³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. ⁴ After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁵ Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

Remember the "why" of Christmas.

- 1. God had made a promise of a Savior to sinners.**
- 2. The LORD keeps his promises.**

It can be a 2-year old's favorite word. "Why?" As small children learn about their world and what it is all about; and as they are trying to understand why it is that all these big people do what they do and say what they say, it would make sense that this a question that is on top of their list. "Why?"

But it is certainly a word that we want to be in our vocabulary especially during these days leading up to Christmas. Last week we spoke, in part, about the importance of knowing why we carry out certain Christmas traditions. It is not only interesting but important to remember God's gift of everlasting life through Jesus when we put up the evergreen Christmas tree or hang the evergreen Christmas wreath. But why Christmas at all? Why was it necessary? Why did it happen?

These are all questions that, no matter how old we are, ought to be considered especially at this time of the year. Why did we need Christmas? Why did God need to come to this world in such a way? Even though it happened a long time ago in a land far away the words before us today are of lasting importance for us today and for every generation to come.

This is the account of Adam. This is our history as human beings and these words also shed light on the why we are the way that we are and the reason why we needed a Savior, why we needed a Christmas. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. We are told in these words from Genesis, *When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. God*

created them male and female and blessed them. Adam and Eve were created perfect and were able to live perfectly righteous lives. But man and woman would lose that ability after they fell into sin. They listened to the lies of the devil and disobeyed God. They fell into sin and the image of God was lost. They became sinful and that sin would be passed down to all human beings. Flesh would give birth to flesh. Two sinful people would produce generations of sinners, and that sin was certainly seen in the lives of their first children.

Eve's first born was Cain, and his life was filled with the obvious evidence that the image of God had been lost. Cain was angry and sad and sinful man. And even though God warned Cain to watch out for the forces of evil in his life, even though God warned Cain of the power of sin and its ability to master him and take over his life, Cain gave into those dark impulses. He didn't believe in the promises of God like Abel did and so when God was pleased with Abel's offering and not his, Cain became jealous and angry, and he killed his brother. Sin gave birth to death.

Consider this from Eve's perspective for a moment. Imagine Eve's joy when her sons were born. Perhaps she had anticipated that her firstborn was the very Savior that was promised who was to come and crush and defeat the devil. Remember how she exclaimed at the birth of Cain. ***"With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man."*** Imagine her joy and hope at the birth of her son, but then imagine her horror and her sadness when that child turned out to be so obviously evil. Had Satan and evil won? Was God's promise snuffed out by darkness and evil, sin and death?

No, God would not let his promise die with Abel, instead God would send Adam and Eve another son, and his name would be Seth. Seth also had a son, and it was through Seth and his son, Enosh, that the Savior would come. God would keep his promise and through this son of Eve, the eventual Savior would come. (The gospel of Luke lists Enosh in the genealogy of Jesus the Christ.) The promised seed, the promised son would come from the offspring of Eve and that Savior would crush the serpent's head, that is, defeat the devil. The Savior would come as promised. He would come through the line of Seth.

Seth, therefore, is quite an important figure, as is his son Enosh. However, we are told relatively little about these two; but that little bit that we do hear speaks volumes. For one, we are reminded of the sad reality of sin that now existed and would be passed down from generation to generation when God's Word tells us, ***³ When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.*** Adam had been created in the likeness of God, created in the image of the Holy God, but these words speak to that sad change, and the ongoing reality of sin. Seth and everyone else that would follow - except for the Promised One to come - would be born in the sinful image of fallen man. Seth was not born in the likeness of a holy God, but in the image of a sinful Adam. And this would continue down through all the generations to come.

Seth was imperfect and sinful, Enosh would be imperfect and sinful, and that would be passed down to all; including you and me, our sons and daughters, our neighbors and friends. We are all born in need of a Savior. We are sinful from birth sinful from the time that we were conceived. And this is why the Savior had to come. This is why God's promise was made, and that is why God's promise of a Savior had to be fulfilled. We are all sinners, who fail to meet our God's standards and who consequently deserve nothing but death and hell. And so this should have been the pattern, the natural cycle: born into sin, we would live imperfect and sinful lives, and then we would die in this sinful state and be eternally condemned. That

would have been the endless pattern, the horrible cycle, if it were not for God's wonderful promise of salvation through the coming Savior. That is why Christmas had to happen. To save us from ourselves. To save us from our sin. To save us from the power of the devil and the damning cycle of sin and death.

And that promised Messiah would come. For sinners like Seth and Enosh and all those who would come after them, they were not without hope, and we are not without hope, either. For the LORD had given his precious children a promise - and when the LORD makes a promise he keeps it. Because of his great love for us God would see to it that not only was the promise kept and the line of the Savior preserved, but he would see to that this message of promise would also be preserved. While sin was naturally passed down from generation as a result of the fall, faith in the promises of God would be passed down as a product of God's grace. The message of salvation would be shared by those who God had granted the gift of faith. We are reminded of this by these words from Genesis 4. ***26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.*** At that time of Enosh and Seth men began to call on the name of the LORD. The people began to pray to God and worship him together, as well as, proclaim the name of the LORD.

Generations would come and go and each generation would be reminded of this promise. The word of promise would be passed down. Very likely one of the reasons that God allowed Adam and other members of those early generations to live such a long life was to proclaim the name of the of the LORD. They would be able to personally share the oral history of creation and the promise of salvation. Adam would be able to tell the next generation and the next generation about why things were the way that they were. He could speak to his children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and so on, about the garden, the fall into sin, and the promise of a Savior who would defeat the devil and give peace and eternal victory to mankind. Generation after generation of sinners would have hope in the one who would come as promised. He would come and restore what was lost. Again these few words about Seth and Enosh were of vital importance. ***At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.*** The line of Seth would pass down God's promise of salvation.

Adam and Eve, Seth, and his family were all sinners, they had lost the image of God and that would be the sad inheritance that they would pass down from generation to generation, but they were not without hope for their faithful LORD had made a promise. And so as we approach Christmas the question is a valid and appropriate one. Why did this happen? Why was there Christmas in the first place? Why was it necessary. Because God in his great love had made a promise to sinful man to send a Savior for them.

It is important to recognize this "why" of Christmas, because we fool ourselves if we claim to be good enough on our own, and yet that is what many do. And in so doing many people really nullify this "why" of Christmas? Leaving the Christ out of Christmas is an obvious offense in our world today. The over commercialism, the omission of images and thoughts of the real reason for the season is something that many people are sensitive to - perhaps even too sensitive to. But isn't forgetting or omitting the real reason why Jesus had to come just as bad if not worse? And yet that is what sinful people do when they claim that human beings are innocent from birth and basically good. "Sure, there are a few real rotten apples," people say, "but humanity is something that you can put your faith in, that we are all basically good." This is what the world promotes. This is what might seem good and right to us as well, and therefore this the thinking into which we can easily fall. After all we might know, or hear of, a

few “Cain-like people” but that’s the exception. People are basically good, we might think. But, if this is the case, then why would we need a Savior at all?

Remember why God made this promise to send a Savior! Why was Christmas necessary? Why is the message of Christ’s birth one that we must pass down to our children? We are all sinners. We have lost the image of God. No matter how good or bad a person might appear we all fall short of the glory of God. By nature, rather than truth and love, we are naturally filled with sin and hate. We cannot master sin completely and therefore sin masters us. A careful look at my life and a careful look at yours reveals the same thing: sinful in thought, word, and action. We don’t live and think and act in the likeness of God, more often we think and act in the likeness of sinful man. We are sinners who were all doomed to slavery to sin and Satan, death and hell. The sad reality is before us so strikingly in these words before us today. Adam’s sons and daughters were born in his sinful likeness, and the cycle of sin and death was unavoidable. If you would continue reading in Genesis chapter 5 you would soon learn that the final words of our text are part of a haunting refrain. ***Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.*** The pattern goes on and on, “and then he died” ... “and then he died”. Each one of us comes into this world as sinner, we commit countless sins, and then we die.

Christ Jesus came to break that cycle. He came to live perfectly in my place and restore to us the image of God. He came to pay for the sins of all, from Adam’s sins all the way down to ours. He came to defeat the devil, rescue us from eternal punishment and give us life instead of death. And our God in his grace made sure that this promise of a Savior would be kept, and our God in his grace made sure that this promise would be shared from generation to generation.

Think of the joy that Mary and Elizabeth had as the Savior that had been promised for centuries was now coming into this world. Think of the joy that filled Mary’s heart as this humble servant realized that she was such a vital part of God’s promised salvation. This child that she would bear would be her LORD and her Savior. And yet this message was not just for her, but all generations, past, present, and future, would be blessed by this child. The message of salvation was passed down to her and it would be passed down through faithful believers like her. Sinners who needed a Savior, rejoiced in the good news that they had a Savior, and were led by God to share that message with others. Mary and Elizabeth proclaimed the name of the LORD.

By God’s grace we too can think of how that message was passed down through the ages. Parents or grandparents, pastors and teachers, spouses and friends, shared the message of salvation, the good news of forgiveness through Jesus the Savior, with us. Generation after generation of believers passed the promised onto you and me. And so now that message is in our hands, and it is our joy and our privilege that we can turn to the next generation and tell them the good news of Christmas, and the reason why God would come down to this earth. With joy in our hearts you can turn to your 2-year-old son or daughter, niece or nephew and tell them *why* we have Christmas. With joy in our hearts we can tell the next generation about God’s great love for undeserving sinners, we can tell them of the promise that he made to Adam and Eve and fulfilled in Christ. You and I can turn to your friend, or neighbor, your son or daughter no matter how old they are, and share with them the good news that this promised was fulfilled. This is the “why” of Christmas: in his great love Jesus came to save sinners who needed a Savior. Amen.