

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

11.30.2025 | The Serpent Crusher | Genesis 3:14-24 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor

Well, you can be seated because we are done with our series in the Apostles Creed. We won't be reciting that for the rest of the year. But as Pastor Ben mentioned, we do want to continue to root ourselves in the church historic, in the church global, and so we may return to those creeds at other times. But for now, as we kick off this Advent series, would you open your Bibles to Genesis chapter 3? And it may seem a little strange to go to Genesis 3, because if you're familiar with the biblical narrative at all, you know then Genesis 3 is where we get to the first point of darkness in Scripture with the fall in the garden, the sin of Adam and Eve. And so it may feel strange to start our Advent series on the fall in creation and sin, but I think it's necessary to first establish why we need a promised one before we even talk about who the promised one is.

And so looking at Genesis chapter 3, we're going to read the entirety of the curse, so to speak, that God presents or proclaims upon creation. Starting in verse 14, Genesis chapter 3, verse 14. The Lord said to the serpent, To the woman, He said, "I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desires shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam, He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it, cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the plants of the fields by the sweat of your face. You shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you are taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life." This is the word of the Lord.

You know, the Christmas season sometimes has this magic to it. It's why I think people start listening to Christmas music in July. I don't really understand it. But there's a magic to Christmas that we often look forward to. I'm kind of of the school of thought that Christmas should stay in its lane. And so therefore Thanksgiving deserves its own day. And so I don't do anything Christmasy until Black Friday. But Christmas, it has this magic because we see it as a season where we have all these ideas for opportunity and joy. We often talk about that, the joy of the season. We look forward to the lights of Christmas, holiday gatherings, being with family, presents, big feasts. There's so much opportunity for joy and things to go right in Christmas.

But I think that also means there's so much opportunity for things to go wrong during Christmas. If you think about it, there's more opportunity to be disappointed at family gatherings because you put a lot of hope in them. There's more opportunity to feel disappointed when things don't go the way you hoped or planned for holiday gatherings. There's disappointment when the turkey doesn't cook the way you wanted it to. There's disappointment when you don't get the presents you want. One of my favorite holiday movies is the Christmas classic, A Christmas Story, which a young boy, Ralphie, throughout the whole movie is begging basically every adult in his life for the one gift that he wants, an official Red Rider carbon action 200-shot range model I arrived from with a compass in the stock and this thing that tells time, if anyone remembers that movie.

And I was recently reminiscing about this longing or hope for presents with one of my friends. Growing up in the 90s, we always looked forward to those toy catalogs that would come in the mail. Now, that's not really a thing anymore. I used to get them in the mail and I'd look forward to, my dad would give it to me and he'd say, "Circle, whatever you want, that adds up to a certain amount of dollars and I'll pick from those gifts." And so every year I'd compile all my different catalogs from Target and Toys R Us and circle on the pages the toys I wanted. We tried that one year with our kids in the Amazon toy catalog and they basically circled every single toy in the whole catalog. And I always looked forward to especially going to my grandma's house because grandma spoiled her children with presents. Every year it'd be a competition between my cousins over who got more gifts.

And I remember one particular Christmas, I showed up to grandma's house looking forward to a gift and all I got that year was an envelope. And I thought, "This is amazing. It's probably a lot of cash because she didn't have time to go Christmas shopping so I'll just buy whatever the heck I want." Christmas morning came, I opened that envelope and to my dismay, instead of a lot of cash, it was a card that said, "A gift in the amount of \$200 has been given to provide a home for those who are in need this Christmas." Needless to say, that was probably the worst Christmas of my childhood. Now in hindsight, I can think my grandma had great intentions that giving is better than receiving, but that always sticks out to me as the greatest Christmas morning disappointment where I did not at all get what I wanted.

See, the Christmas season is this parable, so to speak, of both longing and fulfillment, but also disappointment and discouragement. It's why I think you either love Christmas or you hate Christmas. On the one hand, you may be someone that loves Christmas because of the season of joy and giving and all that comes with it. You might be like a Pastor David who always looks forward to Christmas. On the other hand, you may be someone that hates Christmas because everyone just seems to be happy and you don't know why or you don't even want any part of that fabricated joy. I won't say which staff member at our church is like that, but I'll just say that he always wears black and doesn't really wear Christmas clothes.

When we talk about this theme of the promised one in Advent, I think that gives us this opportunity to ask the question, "Well, what is part of that hope and joy and fulfillment we look forward to in Christmas?" Also, in the midst of disappointment and discouragement, where do we turn? Christmas, Advent, it's a season to remember we have a promised one in Scripture and it's also a season to remember what the promised one did. So we're just going to approach this in two questions. First, why do we need a promised one? And second, what did the promised one come to do? So first, why do we need a promised one? Well, Genesis 3 at the beginning of the story gives us this whole explanation of what sin did. When sin entered the garden through Adam and Eve, as we heard in our readings and Pastor Ben mentioned at the beginning, sin broke the created order that God established as good. That's the first reason why we need a promised one because sin breaks the created order. When sin entered the world, it affected the central roles of mankind when it came to the image of God. These central roles are marred by sin.

Now, typically when we read these curse statements or these verses of the curse, it's easy to see this as a division of labor between male and female. We'll often think that well because Eve is cursed in childbearing, Adam's cursed in work, then these are the two roles that men or women are supposed to carry on throughout all history. This is God's design. Women are to be homemakers. Men are to be breadwinners. But that's to miss the point of what the curse is functioning as here. God is not as interested in a division of labor in the curse. He's more interested in showing how curse affects the central roles that he gave humanity when he created them in the image of God. Those roles in Genesis chapter 1 were to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion. And God is not necessarily saying that only women are meant to multiply and fill the earth because it takes two to tango. Neither is he saying that only men are supposed to subdue and have dominion because remember in an agrarian society, a farming society, the whole family was involved in working the ground.

But rather God is interested in showing how sin affects the central roles that he gave to humanity in creation. And he says that now these roles of multiplying and filling and subduing and have dominion are marred and affected with pain. He says first that childbearing will come with pain. Where Adam and Eve were meant to multiply and fill the earth through childbearing, now God says he will multiply their pain in childbearing. And that word for childbearing, it's not just labor. It's actually the whole extent of pregnancy and childrearing. God is essentially saying the whole act of multiplying and filling will now bring pain with it. But he does focus on the woman because to the woman it was given this role of bearing children in pregnancy. That's why he says your pain will be multiplied in bearing children. Now as just someone that's observed pregnancy and labor twice, not experienced it, but observed.

I can definitely say it looks painful. I can't speak from experience, but it looks painful from what my wife went through. Any woman who's had kids can tell you it is painful from the moment of conception because God is saying that the entire process of pregnancy and childbearing is wrought with pain. I remember in the first trimester from essentially the first weeks that my wife was pregnant, she experienced this thing called morning sickness. It meant that she was nauseous, she was hungry, and she had to keep snacks by her bedside because she would wake up in the middle of the night nauseous and hungry. And so I'd often get woken up to her munching by my ear in bed because it was all she could do to

get over the pain of that morning sickness. But then after the morning sickness, there were other types of pains as her, the way she would describe it to me as her bones were moving to make room for the baby. I mean, that's not a pleasant sight to think about at all. Her hips were realigning, and then there was back pain. She couldn't sleep on her back for the entirety of the last trimester because of that back pain. And then once that was over, it came time for the actual labor, and my goodness, I've never, my wife is a very strong woman, but I remember being in that labor and delivery room, and at the height of her pregnancy or labor pains, she literally said, "Get a gun out and shoot me." Because it was so painful.

Now, I praise the Lord, I am not a woman because I don't think I could handle that. You've seen plenty of those like Instagram reels where just men's pain tolerance is so much lower. But the central role of multiplying and filling is wrought with pain. God also says that work is wrought with pain because of the curse of sin, that work will always have frustrations. There will always be pain in work. Now, we don't fully grasp the extent of this curse because Adam and Eve were called to work for their food, as to work from the grounds. Because we live in such a globalized, industrialized society, very few of us have to actually work for our food. But anyone who's tried to make a Thanksgiving turkey can tell you there's pain and frustration in working for our food.

And any time we work, work will always come with some sort of let down or disappointment. As much as we may find ourselves in jobs that we love or find fulfilling, there will always come moments where work fails us, where it fails to satisfy, where we will be disappointed. And in the curse, what God says is every moment that we have pain and child rearing and childbearing, and we experience pain and work, it's a reminder that sin has affected the entirety of the created order. And not only that, but the whole goal that God gave Adam and Eve, of their image of God in multiplying and filling and subduing and having dominion, that whole goal has also been distorted by sin.

You see, because in creation, Adam and Eve, when they were called to multiply and fill the earth and have dominion and subdue the earth, they were meant to do so as these vice regents or priest kings on behalf of God. They were to fill out and spread over the earth to represent God's good rule and order over the land. But now because of sin, Adam and Eve taking the fruits, determining good and evil for themselves, mankind has now established our own rule, authority, and glory on the earth and not God's. And so, the whole goal of our child rearing, multiplying and filling, and our work, subduing and having dominion has been distorted. And so rather than seeking the good of creation and the good of God's glory, we often spread out and fill the land and have dominion for our own sake and our own glory, even at the detriment of creation or others. See, rather than caring for creation, people, nations, rulers often destroy it for our own means.

Rather than receiving God's good design and purpose as a good thing over our lives, we often advance our own, seeking to throw off God's authority. Nations and governments see the world as a place to conquer and abuse for their own ends, not as something to steward and share and care for for others' ends. It's why there's always conflict in the world. The whole of the created order has been cursed because of sin. Even this word for curse that God declares over the earth and the ground, that word for curse, if it's the opposite of blessing, it literally means that God's blessing, his presence and his favor has been removed over the earth. So now that as Adam and Eve go about these roles in the image of God, they will labor in vain and they will labor for their own glory, not God's. All of it is affected by sin.

But also, the curse deeply affects mankind's relationship. See, central in the curse is also the brokenness of relationship between man and woman, male and female. There's a lot of debate in this verse. If you look at verse 16 again, God says to the woman, There's a lot of debate in question over what God means by this. You know, on the one hand, you could think like, oh, how sweet it is that Eve's desire is for her husband, but Adam is going to be a harsh ruler over her. Well, that would not seem so much like a curse against Eve, but a curse on Adam. Others have seen this as a view that Eve's desire is to maybe have her own dominion over Adam, and yet he will have dominion. So there's this power struggle. But I think that might make it seem a little bit like Eve is trying to throw off God's design of male headship, and male headship is part of that strife.

I think there's a lot more going on behind what God says in this curse. It's not entirely clear, but there is a close parallel that comes just after in Genesis chapter four, verse seven. When God is warning Cain, he says to him, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." It's the same word language here. Its desire is for you, but you must rule. And so what is clear here is that

sin desires to have or consume Cain, but Cain is meant to rule or have some sort of mastery over it. And so probably conveyed in the curse to Eve is at least some sort of distortion where once Adam and Eve were meant to be these co-laborers in God's, in bearing God's image together, fulfilling the filling and multiplying and subduing and having dominion over the earth, now there is some strife and conflict in the relationship. There's some strife or conflict that causes Adam or man to rule and master, where he was meant to be a co-labor who didn't rule or master Eve but ruled with Eve over creation. Some of you even said that maybe this is connected with Eve's curse over childbearing. Some commentators say that her desire was actually for Adam, for man, to bring some worth to Eve in her childbearing. We see this all throughout scriptures where women's sense of worth in society was often dictated by the children they bore. And so in her desire, it was to gain something from Adam or from man that would give her a sense of self-worth that he would rule over her. He holds her worth over her head. Where in creation, women's worth and identity was always meant to be found in God alone, not man or her husband.

But regardless of what the curse is over her, there's a distortion in their relationship that sin affects. Sin also affects, the curse of sin also affects all of mankind's relationship with one another as it invites evil and, well, God says enmity into human history. If you look at verse 15, the central verse that we're going to be looking at, God says, "I will put enmity between you, the serpent, and the woman, "and between your offspring and her offspring." This word for enmity is the ongoing hostility between enemies, has a sense of warring, strife throughout human history. And also when God says your offspring will have enmity. There's a lot of ways we could take this, but he's essentially saying that there will be the successive generations that will have enmity with one another. And while it could mean that there will be some offspring of the serpent versus offspring of the woman that will war and fight, probably this more refers to the fruit of the serpent. And that fruit being a disobedience of God's long commands and an evil and enmity that now is bearing fruit in history because of sin.

And so this seed of the serpent is the warring enmity and strife that now happens between humanity because of sin's effects. In fact, the very next story we get in the Bible in Genesis 4 is a story about enmity between two human beings. It's a story between two brothers, Cain and Abel, which I heard that our children learned about this morning. You children, do you remember what happened with Cain and Abel? What did Cain do to his brother Abel? Carrie, can you help me? Any other kids? He killed him. Thank you. Someone's listening in children. It's awesome. See, this enmity that happened between brothers resulted in death. And in the curse what God is saying is that now there is a fruit of the serpent's work at work pervading in creation. So the world is not the way it was supposed to be. Nations and people and rulers will constantly be at war with one another. Relationships are broken. You can see that even in just our nation where people on both left and right point fingers across the aisle saying the other side is evil and therefore we're at war with one another, even in our own country.

Psalms 2 even poses this question, why do nations rage and peoples plot in vain? The answer the psalmist gives is because there is no fear of the Lord because at the end of the day, nations and people war with one another because egos are big. People are advancing their own glory, not God's. All of the created order is marred by sin. And so the result of that is there is brokenness in all of creation because of evil that sin brought. As much as it's easy to think about that evil is out there, it's with evil rulers and evil nations that bring havoc on displaced peoples and vulnerable populations. Really what the curse is showing us is that evil is in here just as much as it is out there. We can look at any broken relationship in our lives as a sign of that, that there is still enmity in the world because of the problem of sin in humanity. But most important, sin breaks the created order, but most importantly, it bars us from God's presence.

I think that's the second most important reason we need a promised one. Because at the heart of sin is not simply a loss of creation in Eden, it's not simply a breaking of the order of creation, it's not simply a breaking of the order within humanity, it's most fundamentally a breaking and barring from God's presence. Where once Adam and Eve enjoyed the dwelling presence of God in the garden, as we're told earlier in chapter 3, now sin prevents them from enjoying that blessing of God's presence. If you look again at verse 22 of chapter 3, "The Lord God said, behold the man has become like one of us, in knowing good and evil. Now lest he reach out his hand and take also the tree of life and eat and live forever, therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken."

See, he's now sent out from Eden, the garden that was meant to reveal or be the most holy place of God's dwelling presence on earth. Mankind is now barred from. There's a famous poem by John Milton called Paradise Lost that talks

about this fall or this loss of paradise that happened with the fall in And Milton throughout this long poem, he talks about how humanity lost their relationship with one another, how their relationship together is broken. They talk of how they lose paradise and all that they enjoyed, all the fruits that God gave them, all the pleasures in Eden and now they had to leave and work the ground and it was going to be a difficult life for them. But the most important thing that was lost in the fall was not paradise, it was not even a relationship with one another. I like to think that Eden was an amazing place because in Eden, God said you can eat of all the fruit and trees of land except that one of the knowledge of good and evil. And there was no death, so that means there was no meat in Eden, which makes me a little sad to think about. But I have to believe that there were some fruits or plants in Eden that tasted so amazing they didn't need to kill meat to have a satisfying meal. Now if you're a vegetarian or vegan, you can try to convince the rest of us, but I just don't think, I think sin has made plants and fruit not quite as fulfilling or sustainable as they once were.

Eden was an amazing place, it was paradise. But what Genesis is emphasizing is not that in sin Adam and Eve lost paradise, but that they lost the person and presence in paradise, namely God himself. Biblical commentator John Walton, he says this, he says the overwhelming loss was not paradise, it was God. Throughout all the rest of the Old Testament, one never hears talk of regaining the comfort of Eden, but regaining access to God's presence was paramount. The whole focus was that they lost the presence of God, and so whenever we experience these pains of childbearing, of relational strife, of enmity, pains of work, whenever we experience pains on earth, as much as we should long for a new paradise, it should cause us to realize that there's a loss of God's presence more than anything.

So when we experience the pain of sin in childbearing and our work, when we're endeavoring to work well for the good of others, yet we're frustrated, when we endeavor to raise children in the name of the Lord, and yet we soften our frustrations because of our own sin or theirs, those are all a reminder that we will always fall short because we are marred by sin, but most importantly because we've lost that full presence of God as our perfect Father, who teaches and shows us what a good Father looks like. It means we've lost the full presence of God as the perfect creator and doer of good in the world. See, we've lost that presence of God, so therefore all of our endeavors are now marred by sin. When we experience the brokenness of sin relationally, or especially in marriage, it's a reminder that we've lost the most important and fundamental relationship with God that brings about reconciliation.

All the pain we experience in the world is a reminder of why we need a promised one. And it's a reminder as long as we are in this world, we will always experience the pains of sin and the deceit and enmity of the serpent. So therefore we need this promised one. So therefore, what did he come to do? That's our second question. What did the promised one come to The first thing that we get a glimpse of in this passage is that Jesus is the promised one who crushed the serpent. That's the next point, if we can get that on the screen. Jesus is the promised one who crushed the serpent. In Genesis 3.15, we get this foreshadowing of Jesus as the promised one who would do this. "He shall bruise your head, you shall bruise his heel." There's also a lot of debate over this verse of what this actually means. Many have questioned should we read this messianically, as if this is a fulfillment that Jesus should come to bring. Because of the nature of the enmity and the conflict between the serpent and the offspring of the woman. Some believe that this word offspring is meant to be more plural, not singular, and so therefore God is not giving any sort of singular promise. But rather that throughout human history that there will be this ongoing war between evil and enmity, as we talked about, and mankind against it. There's also debate over the nature of these bruising or blows. The same words, and it's why the ESV renders them as bruise. "Bruise your head, bruise your heel." Probably a better word is strike or blow. "He will strike your head, you will strike his heel." And some commentators believe that's well, this is simply just the nature of what happens when a human is at war with a snake. It's natural for a human being to crush or strike the head of a snake, and it's natural for a snake to strike the heel of a human being. It's simply just a comment on the location of things.

But I think to read it like that is to misread the allegory in the garden, in the intention, in the curse even. This verse has been read by church fathers throughout human history to be messianic. Tertullian, one of the old church fathers of North Africa, as early as 200 AD, said that this was pointing to the birth of an offspring by the woman Mary, who would bring about a child that would crush the serpent's head. And there's a lot of reasons that we should read this messianically. One of them is this location of the blow or the strike between the head and the heel. See, a blow to the head of a serpent would be fatal. A blow or a strike to the heel of a human being by a snake would be fatal in their times as well. They would have assumed all snakes were poisonous. But in the biblical text in ancient Near Eastern literature, a serpent was not automatically assumed to be a snake. When we read this, we often think that there's just some mythological

origins here, that this is how snakes came to be. Maybe they were lizards before that had feet, and now because of the fall, they crawl in their bellies. There was actually a more specific word used of snakes to strike people, and that was the word for bite. It's the word that shows up in numbers when Israel is in the wilderness, and God sends these serpents to bite Israel so that they would die for not obeying God. All throughout the Old Testament, there's a specific word for bite, and yet here there's a more specific word for strike or blow that related to this enmity or war. And so there is this battle between the two, but I do think the blow to the head was meant to be fatal, whereas the blow to the heel was not.

See, the serpent in ancient Near Eastern literature was reminiscent of a chaos creature, a creature that would come to bring disordering chaos and destruction in the order that was once good. That's exactly what's happening in the garden. It was used of the Leviathan in Job and Isaiah to talk about this creature that represented the chaos that God brings order to, over the sea. And so when God even tells the serpent that he will crawl in his belly and eat dust to the ground, that's actually a curse, not just some mythological explanation for how the snake came to be. There's a similar verse that we get that combines these two ideas of eating dust and crawling on one's bellies in Micah chapter 7. And in Micah chapter 7, it's meant to show that the nations that are against God will live in humiliation and weakness before the God who is powerful and exalted. Micah chapter 7, verses 16 and 17,

See, in Micah, crawling on the dust and eat it, crawling on the ground and eating of the dust was a sign of these nations being humiliated and put in a position of weakness before God's might and power. And so when God declares this curse over the serpent, what he's actually saying is that no more will Satan be allowed to cause the same chaos and destruction he didn't eat in. Well, yes, this enmity will go on throughout the world. God will put the serpent in his place. God will relegate Satan and the serpent, will limit his ability, his power and bring him down and lowly and weak. But there's also a messianic promise embedded in this, that one day that serpent will be completely made impotent and powerless. One day that serpent will be completely humiliated when that promise seed eventually does crush or strike his head.

See, in Jesus' first advent, Jesus came as that promise seed that we read about, the seed of the woman, born of the woman in Galatians chapter 4, who had come to defeat sin and death. When he came as a baby and then went to the cross, he began this work of crushing Satan, of putting him in his place, of rendering him powerless and humiliated in the world. He subdued him under his feet, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, and began this work of eradicating Satan's power and effects in the world. Now we will still experience evil, enmity and the Satan's craftiness in the world. Brokenness still occurs in relationship. Brokenness still occurs in the world nationally and globally. But in Christ's birth and crucifixion and resurrection, that was the beginning of his subduing and binding Satan. And we get a foreshadowing of a glimpse of this work that God would do in covering over the sin and evil in humanity. Because in Genesis chapter 3 verse 20, there's a couple foreshadowing of these promises being fulfilled. Verse 20, "The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living." It's fascinating that Eve is not named until right here after the fall.

We often just assume it's her name's Eve all throughout because we know that to be true after the fact. But Adam is the only one named at this point. Eve is not named until after the curse of sin. Showing that while God gave her this promise, your offspring will crush the serpent's head. There's a promise here that Eve is her name. She will be the mother of all living things that from her seed will descend one who will crush Satan's head. But also right after that we're told that the Lord God in verse 21, "made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them." Because just before when they're in their garden they eat of the fruits, they cover their nakedness and their shame with small coverings. Leafy coverings, that's if you see any old paintings barely cover things up in those paintings, make them kind of racy for kids to see. But now here God gives them full coverings of animal skins, robes, which by the way implies that there was probably a sacrifice that happened in the garden to offer up an animal in their place to cover them in their nakedness and shame. See, even in the garden God was proclaiming a grace he would have upon them that one day there would be a promised one who would come, who would cover their nakedness and their shame, and who would one day bring about the total undoing of Satan's work in evil in the world. And when Jesus came to initiate in his birth, he will also come again to fulfill as he restores creation.

Our final point, Jesus is the promised one who will come again to restore creation. If sin broke creation and undid all good things, Jesus will come back to redo all good things, to renew creation back to the way it was meant to be. See, in

Jesus' first coming, even in his birth, it was restoring of God's presence with humanity. If that's what was most lost in sin, the presence of God, then in Jesus' coming there was this beginning fulfillment of the promise that God would one day be with his people. It's why we call Jesus Emmanuel, God with us. In the incarnation in Jesus' birth he came to dwell once again with mankind. But he would also make the way to once again dwell with God fully and finally when he restored creation. And that's something that Jesus did in his first coming. He showed a glimpse of that promise when on the cross we're told that the temple or the curtain of the temple was torn into. Then that's significant because the temple separated the most holy place of the temple from the other courts, The most holy place was where the presence of God dwelt with one man, the high priest, only once a year in the Ark of the Covenant.

But what's also fascinating is how this curtain was meant to be fabricated. In the book of Exodus and later on even in Chronicles, we're told of how the temple was to be crafted, how this curtain and these doors were to separate the most holy place. In Exodus chapter 26, we get a description that upon the curtain there were meant to be cherubim woven into them. Exodus 26 verse 31, "You shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twine linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. And you shall hang the veil from the class and bring the Ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the holy place from the most holy place." So when Jesus died on the cross and the curtain was torn in two, he was allowing entrance back into God's presence, but he was also undoing what Adam had done back in the garden. We're in chapter 3 verse 24, we're told that God drove out the man and at the east of the Garden of Eden, he placed a cherubim with a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the tree of life. See what Adam was originally meant to work and keep or guard, he was now guarded from. But in Christ's coming,

he undid that guarding so that mankind can once again be in God's presence. And so the promise won, the promise of Advent is that one day Jesus will return to fully restore us back to God's presence and fully in creation. There's a promise of this in Revelation where we will one day dwell with God, there will be no temple because the Lord is the temple. The new heavens and the new earth will be this new city where mankind will dwell with God forever.

And so in our Advent, it's a time to remember the work that God began in Christ at his birth and crucifixion, but it's also a time to look forward to what God will finish at his return when he comes And I think as long as we're in this world, whenever we experience disappointment in Christmas, pain in life, those are maybe good reminders that sin and evil are still at work. So over the next few weeks, as you gather with family, as you celebrate the holidays, kids, as you get your gifts and maybe are disappointed by them, as painful as those things are, those are good reminders that we need. To remember that no amount of Christmas magic or joy can make heaven on earth here. No amount of perfect Christmas can actually be attained as long as we're on this side of heaven. Sin and evil will still be at work.

It's really easy to get wrapped up in the holidays for me personally, and I'm sure for all of us, to really hope and long for everything to be kind of perfect, to want everything to go according You know, every year our family looks forward to setting up a tree on the day after Thanksgiving. But I was just thinking, I think every year the tree is a point of contention in our home. Because we have different ideas of what the tree should look like. We have different ideas of how big the tree should be. We have different ideas of whether it's straight or not, or which side should show, how to decorate it. Even my kids have been constantly asking me, "When are we going to decorate the tree? When are we going to decorate the tree? Why have we decorated the tree?" And I keep telling them, "Because daddy's got to work on this sermon, so you've got to wait until it's done." And you know, this year, I found out that Costco was selling trees, and people who know me know I love Costco, and I love deals. So I thought, "We're going to get the tree from Costco." They were selling this amazing deal, these noble furs, not the lowly Douglas furs, good quality noble furs. For \$75 for 7 to 8 feet. The problem was, we couldn't see the trees. We had to just get it bundled up. And when we took the tree home and we're unwrapping it, I measured the thing and realized Costco is such a deal that they didn't give us a 7 foot tree. They didn't give us an 8 foot tree. They gave us a 9 foot tree. We have a small home in San Francisco that has 8 foot ceilings. And so instead of setting up the tree, putting on Christmas music, decorating it, enjoying it with the family, putting on a Christmas movie, I was whacking away at that tree for an hour, cutting off chunks to make it fit in our home.

See, Christmas can't be perfect as much as we want it to be, but I think I'm learning that's a good Because if Christmas could be perfect, we'd lose that sense of longing for the perfect to come. In the pains and imperfections of Christmas, in the moments of disappointment and discouragement, in the moments where everything we hope to be true about Christmas that fail us, that don't become true, those are moments to remember that there's a future longing that this

world simply can't satisfy us on. It simply can't make good on its promise. Only the promised one can. You know, I often wonder why do we love all these Christmas stories at Christmas? There's so many hallmark movies and stories of happy and hopefulness and feel good movies. I think it's because at Christmas we want to hope that the world can be right again. We want to hope that in all these stories, this longing that we have can be expressed in some way. So that as much as we don't experience it in the world, there's this inkling, this longing for it to be true.

And something that Tim Keller says in his devotional hidden Christmas, he says, "In light of Jesus' birth and his coming at Christmas, all of those stories that we hope to be true, all the longings that we hope to be satisfied and fulfilled, Jesus gives us the hope that one day they will indeed come true, that the truth of Christ will one day fulfill all of our hearts' He writes this, he says, "Even though the fairy tales aren't factually true, the truth of Jesus means all the stories we love are not escapism at all. In a sense, they, or the supernatural realities to which they point, will come true in him." So when we experience these moments of evil in the world, pain and suffering in Christmas, when we're reminded that sin mars all of the created order, that the fundamental roles of human existence in multiplying and filling the earth and working to subdue it are wrought with pain and disappointment, all of those moments are moments to remind us that God began something in Christ when he was born and crucified. And Jesus will again return as the promised one to fulfill all of our hope and longings and they one day will again be true.