

This Is Us  
*Fallout*  
March 24, 2019

And with *that*, I think you can tell that we're about to get deep into the weeds in describing "why we are the way we are" ... which is the purpose of our current series *This Is Us*.

Would you pray with me?

Father in Heaven, I pray that you will help us understand why it feels like something is missing in this world; why it feels like there are things we don't know how to fix – like ourselves.

I pray that understanding would be

the beginning of our deliverance in  
and through Jesus, in whose name I  
pray.

Amen.

## Review

Hey, I'm really glad you're here today  
and I want to begin with a quick review  
of what we talked about last week in  
case you weren't able to be here or  
you're here for the first time.

We started by talking about the inborn  
drive that we humans have to explain  
not just our reality but *the reason* for  
our reality and, specifically, how this  
motivates us to develop meta-  
narratives.

A meta-narrative, for those unfamiliar with the term, is simply a *grand overarching story of the world and of human history* that provides answers to questions like ...

- Why are we here?
- Do our lives have purpose and meaning?
- Why are things the way they are – both good and bad?
- Why are we the way we are – both good and bad?

And there's no debate as to whether or not some meta-narrative is going to shape your life and mine. The only question is ... *which one will it be?*

And there are many to choose from ... including *the biblical narrative*; the overarching story of the world and human history which Christianity claims not only *explains* things but also provides hope of *fixing* things that are wrong in this world and in us.

So, last week we began at the beginning of that narrative with the story of Creation according to the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, Genesis chapter 1 and 2.

Bottom line: “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” and everything else in the natural world. Everything we see and comprehend in nature, according to the Bible, is a result of God’s involvement with and action in

our world.

Of course, that claim (as we saw last week) raises the question of how to understand and interpret Genesis 1 and 2 in the light of what geology and biology and astronomy tell us about our world ... with the answer being that the biblical account of Creation is not intended to be a scientific document.

Instead, the first two chapters of Genesis are intended to help us understand the truth of *why things are the way they are and why we are the way we are*.

Furthermore – and I’m going to point this out one more time at the risk of overly-repeating myself – the historical and scientific accuracy of the Creation

story has nothing to do with the legitimacy of the Christian faith. Christianity rises or falls on one thing and one thing only: *the literal historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth and His literal historical in-the-flesh resurrection from the dead.*

If neither of *those* are true, then Christianity is a farce and we should all leave right now. But if a literal six-day creation isn't historically or scientifically "true?"

So what? Not all truth falls into the domain of science or history.

Science can tell us truth about *how* God may have done things, which is really cool to understand – and also cool because you can only *do science* in a

rational orderly universe, which just so happens to be the kind of universe described in Genesis.

But understanding *the science* behind creation can't answer *the why* of creation. It can't tell us the truth of what Creation is *supposed* to be.

That has to come from somewhere else ... which takes us back to Genesis 1 and 2 ...

**... where we discovered three intentions God had for his Creation.**

- That “shalom” is the way the world is meant to be...the full-flourishing of nature and humanity in all aspects.
- That ALL humans are meant to be

kings and queens (which is what it means to be created in the image of God).

- That our purpose as divinely appointed rulers over creation is to use our power and authority to build and create in ways that increase “shalom.”

We spent a lot of time on those three intentions last week and how they apply in everyday life, so if you weren't here and you want to know more, I encourage you to go to the media section of our app and website or check out our podcast.

But we ended with a question.

“If God's intention was to create royal



images of Himself; men and women with the authority and power to live and move and have their being in a world of ever-expanding shalom ... then what happened? Why isn't that reality everywhere? Why isn't that who we are? Why are we so often so much less than that?"

That's what Genesis chapter 3 – which we saw and heard so creatively presented and whether it's literal or allegorical – is meant to explain to us.

So let's dive in and take a deeper look.

## **Understanding the Story**

As the story goes, God had given the man and the woman permission to enjoy the food from any plant or tree except

that which came from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

And that was not an unreasonable limitation. Being made in God's image, their power and authority had been *delegated* from Him, which means that they were rightfully under His authority.

But an evil being – in the form of a talking serpent – entered into the picture and put doubt in the woman's mind about God.

- He's holding out on you.
- He's selfish – He wants all the power for Himself.
- You will not die.
- You will become like God.
- And the fruit is really tasty, too.

And she believed the serpent and ate.  
And she gave some to the man and he ate, too.

And then, just as God had warned, things changed. In fact, everything changed and for the worse.

- Their relationship with God which had been open and honest was now characterized by fear and shame.
- Their relationship as husband and wife going forward would be marked by tension and a struggle for power and control. “Your husband will rule over you” God said to the woman.
- The process of childbearing would

become painful for the woman.

- Work would become difficult and frustrating for the man.
- The natural world which had been created for them to enjoy would become dangerous and uncooperative.
- And their life would now include death because, in the final act of this part of the story, God removes them from the Garden in which the Tree of Life is planted.

Now, at this point in the story, the loss of the initial shalom that God intended in creation is limited to just these two.

But it soon becomes clear that their

decision to distrust and disobey God has released a new power into the world. As more and more humans come onto the scene, even though they are made in God's image and have great authority and power to shape the world, they are not creatures characterized by shalom.

**In fact, the best word to describe them is "bent."**

*"Everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood."*

*Genesis 8:21 (NLT)*

... which is actually what God says years later as He looks at the early development of the human race.

From the day humans are born, God observes, there is an inclination to do things that are evil instead of good. He

sees that there is a downward gravitational pull – a fall from the heights of glory He intended when He created humanity.

But, according to the Christian meta-narrative – the grand story of the world and human history – this inclination isn't localized or limited in scope to these first few generations of humanity.

**Almost four thousand years later, the Apostle Paul writes:**

*I want to do what is good,  
but I don't. I don't want to  
do what is wrong, but I do  
it anyway. Romans 7:19  
(NLT)*

“Something is messed up,” Paul says. “I know what kind of person I am meant to be but there is some larger force behind

the scenes working against me.”

And in explaining what that force is, Paul points back to Genesis chapter three. What happened there, Paul says, wasn’t just a localized event. What happened there had global implications.

*When Adam sinned, sin  
entered the world ...  
Because one person  
disobeyed God, many  
became sin-ners. Romans  
5:12,19 (NLT)*

What Adam did, what Eve did, fundamentally changed human nature for all of us. When they fell from glory that condition of “fallenness” got passed down to the rest of us.

**.. which is why Paul says ...**

*All have sinned and fall  
short of the glory of God.  
Romans 3:23 (NIV)*

**Furthermore, Paul writes ...**

*Against its will, all  
creation was subjected to  
God's curse ... all creation  
has been groaning as in the  
pains of childbirth right up  
to the present time.*

*Romans 8:20,22  
(NLT)*

In other words, it's not just people that are messed up. Creation is messed up, too. God's plan for this world and for us has been subverted. Everything and everyone suffers from the fallout of the *original sin* of Adam and Eve.

And "fallout" is a really good metaphor to use in thinking about this. As I was



preparing for this message, I came across a short video of what the very first nuclear fallout was like.

Check it out.

**Video Clip – Hiroshima Fallout (1.7 mins)**

(Begin) Voice: “On August the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945 ...”

(End) Voice: “Buildings vaporized. So did the clothes on people’s backs.

Furthermore, for years after this event, thousands of people struggled with radiation poisoning and the pain of horrible injuries and disfigurement. It was so bad that many of those folks chose to be sterilized out of fear that the effects of the fallout might be passed down to future generations.

All from one bomb hitting a spot about 10 feet long by three feet wide.

Here's the point: as stunning and heart-wrenching and even sickening as that is to us, considered in the light of God's original intentions for our world, the fallout from sin is even more so.

## **Two Big Questions**

I'll say more about that in just a bit but first I want to take a short timeout to ask a couple of questions that I'm sure some of you are asking yourself.

The first is *“why should I believe this explanation of ‘why things are the way they are’?”*

“So God creates the world to be a place

of unending peace, love, harmony, fulfillment, productivity; the full-flourishing of everything and everyone.

“And, then, one man and one woman by eating some unknown fruit from some weirdly-named tree screw up the whole project for everyone else all over the world and throughout history.

“And that, supposedly, is why there are thoroughly evil people like Hitler and Stalin and mass-murderers and why even good people like everyone in this room do bad things.

“Honestly, it sounds a little crazy.”

I’ll grant you that. As a literal explanation this is really challenging to accept.

But let's play a little "what if" game for a minute.

Let's suppose that the original sin really did happen the way we just heard. And let's suppose that the bent towards evil and sin got passed down to the rest of the human race like the Bible says so that, now, all of us are infected with the disease. Let's suppose there's some force behind the scenes called "original sin" working against us.

If that were true, wouldn't we expect that all of us would choose to sin for the same reasons Adam and Eve did? That before each of us sits not a literal Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil but what that tree represents: *the desire to define good and evil for ourselves instead*

*of listening to what God says?*

See, that's what was really going on in the Garden – whether it was literal or allegorical. The basic issue in this part of the Christian metanarrative is not the innocuous act of eating a piece of fruit, but the violation of God's sovereign authority. What happened in the Garden was an act of revolt against God, a usurping of God's exclusive right as *Creator* to define what is good and what is not good.<sup>i</sup>

And isn't that what we all do when we sin?

- We decide that doing a wrong thing – big or little – really isn't that bad or that it's justifiable “in our situation.”

- Or we think that we know better than God.
- Or we think that God is holding out on us – keeping us from enjoying something that we deserve.

We take the exact same path for the exact same reasons that Adam and Eve did which is evidence that we are their spiritual descendants if not their physical ones.

It's also a why an allegorical reading of their story is reasonable: *THEY represent US*. In a very real sense *they ARE us* ... which is why this explanation of “why we are the way we are” is believable.

The second question that some of us are probably asking (I did when I was working on this message) is *“Why is this metanarrative – this grand story of the world and human history – better than any other?”*

So, let's compare a few.

And let's start with the one that says that people are born into this world basically good but they do bad things because of their environment. For example, people steal because they're hungry or because they're economically disadvantaged in some way. So, we just need to make sure that everyone has enough ... that there is economic justice and income equality.

Economic justice is a good idea. And the

fact that some people make ridiculous amounts of money for ridiculous things is ridiculous.

But if that's the answer – or at least part of the answer – to the human condition, then why do super-wealthy people cheat the system to get their kids in to the best colleges and universities?

When you look at the list of those involved in that scandal, it's hard to imagine people with a better environment. But they're just as crooked as the crackhead who breaks into your house and robs you so he can pay for his next fix. Something is wrong with them, there's a propensity to do evil that supersedes their environment.

That something is what the Bible calls



*sin.*

How about the metanarrative – the overarching story – that says that the reason there is so much strife in the world is because people are abused by those in power? For example, the greedy capitalists take advantage of the poor. The white majority systematically dominates and mistreats non-whites.

And if you could just get rid of those in power, if the oppressors could be replaced by those they oppress, then there would be “shalom.” Sometimes that happens.

But more often than not, history shows that when the oppressed get power, they become the oppressors. For instance, following the socialist

rebellion that overthrew the totalitarian czars of Russia, somewhere between 700K and 1.2M Russian citizens were killed in Joseph Stalin's Great Purge from 1936 to 1938.<sup>ii</sup>

Along the same lines, as horrible as it was for white Southerners to believe it was OK to buy and sell African men and women like cattle, the practice of buying and selling African men and women actually began in Africa when chiefs from warring tribes would sell their captives to English traders who would then sell them to white Southerners.

Point being ... slavery has long been a blight on the record of humanity irrespective of race or ethnic origin or current position of power. People

everywhere have done it and continue to do it.

And the Bible has a word for that: *sin*.

And we could go on and on with this if we had time.

- Why do you have to teach a little boy to be nice and not whack his sister over the head when she grabs his toy truck? The Bible says it's because that cute little boy and girl are not-so-cute sinners just like their mommy and daddy.
- Why, if evolution is advancing the species, do such self-destructive behaviors still exist? Why are we so drawn to them knowing – knowing that they are not good for us? The

Bible says it's the curse of sin.

I don't know about you but, for my money, when it comes to describing what's wrong with people – what's wrong with *me* – there is no better story than the one Christianity tells:

We were created to live in a world of shalom. Made in the image of God to rule as kings and queens over His creation in ways that lead everyone and everything around us to prosper and to flourish in every possible way, we fail time and time again because of the human condition: *we are sinners* – with the inborn propensity to define good and evil on our own terms and to do what God calls evil instead of good ... just like our spiritual ancestors.

Or, as one biblical scholar puts it:

Each of us carries around an alarming ability to harm each other in a seemingly non-stop variety of new and inventive ways.

Add to that the endless capacity we have to find ways to be miserable and harm ourselves. Few are truly at peace with themselves. The biochemical and environmental contributors to the common list of emotional struggles we face betray a deep sense of disquiet in our own hearts. We are all “sinners”—we all bear witness that things are not as they could be and we bear that burden daily.

Whatever words we want to use to describe it, this self-evident reality of repeated, relentless sin remains a consistent fact of human existence.”<sup>iii</sup>

## **Getting Personal**

Now, to this point I’ve been talking about human beings in general, the human condition in general, sin in general.

But let’s make it personal.

Specifically, how does this idea of original sin – the idea that we are corrupted by sin from the day we’re born – play out in our lives? How does it

affect us in day to day life?

I think there are at least three ways. And as I go through these, see if and how each one applies to you. (This is some of the fallout I was talking about earlier).

### **1. We are blinded to our sinfulness.**

In other words, sin blinds us to sin. It leads us to resist the very idea that we might be sinful. Instead, it justifies, rationalizes, minimizes and blames wherever possible.

When God confronted Adam, what did Adam do?

He blamed Eve ... and God. “That woman ... you gave me.”

When God confronted Eve, what did she do?

She blamed the serpent. “He tricked me.”

So, question ... do you ever justify, rationalize, minimize or blame when you’ve done something wrong? When you’ve done something that breaks shalom?

That’s the poison of original sin working out it’s curse in your life. You do those things because you’re a sinner. You’re blind to your sin because you’re a sinner. And you’re a sinner because you’re blind.

Another way the corruption of sin works itself out in everyday life is that ...



## 2. Nothing we think or do is totally pure – ever.

Theologians call this the doctrine of “total depravity” ... which sounds really, really bad as if it is saying we’re all monsters – we’re all as bad as we could possibly be – and there’s not one good thing about us.

But that’s not what it means.

Instead, what total depravity means is that there isn’t any aspect of us which isn’t tainted in some way by sin.

It’s like a drop of black ink in a glass of water. As it is diffused throughout the glass, it totally affects *all* of the water. There’s not one part that isn’t colored at some level by the ink.

But the water doesn't turn as black as it could possibly be.<sup>iv</sup> It's still translucent. You can still see through it even though it's darkened.

And because you're a sinner by nature, everything you think or do has sin mixed in at some level. It's never totally pure.

For instance, when I stand up here and preach, I really, really want you to understand who Jesus is and to follow Him. But I also want you to like me. I want you to think I'm the best preacher you ever heard.

In fact, if you don't feel that or think that, I'll probably get more frustrated over that than the fact that you still

don't know Jesus very well and you're not following Him.

That's how sin mixes in even when we're doing whatever it is God told us to do.

For instance, when I serve my family in some way, I do that because I want to be a good son and a good husband and a good brother. But I also want to pat myself on the back. I want everybody to *know* what I did so they will look at me and say, "what a great guy he is."

See the mixed motives in that? Every good thing I do is like that.

So, question ... when you're at your best in word or deed, are you ever aware of "the dark side" – your shadow mission

we sometimes call it around here?

That's the corruption of sin working itself out in your life. You do that because you're a sinner. And you're a sinner because you do that.

The final way that we demonstrate our sinful nature is that ...

**3. Our natural human desires are, in some way, disordered.**

Not necessarily all of them but some.

For example:

- The natural desire for food which is necessary for our life becomes gluttony.
- The natural desire for security

becomes greed.

- The natural desire for affirmation becomes pretense and performance.
- The natural desire for belonging becomes manipulation and compromise.

What's incredible is that this distortion is actually tied to God's anger over sin and how it has destroyed shalom.

**Paul writes:**

*Because they wouldn't worship Him as God or even give Him thanks ... God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired.*

*Romans 1:20,23 (NLT)*

In fact, Paul actually says that *three* times. “God abandoned them” which, by the way, doesn’t mean He no longer cares.

Instead, it means that there is a point where God becomes so frustrated with a culture that He allows its collective sin to play itself out and run its full course. And when it does, it distorts and disorders natural desires.

As the early church father and Catholic Saint Augustine once put it: “the human heart, ignoring God, turns in on itself, tries to lift itself, wants to please itself, and ends up debasing itself.”<sup>v</sup>

**For instance, Paul writes:**

*As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies ... Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other.*

*And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Romans 1:25-27 (NLT)*

And I know that in our current culture, that passage is highly controversial and will eventually be considered “hate speech.”

But Paul has no particular axe to grind with the LGBTQ community and neither do I. Disordered desire affects everyone.

It's just part of the human condition which is why Paul *continues* describing what sin does when it is given free reign and allowed to play out.

*Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.*

*They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents.*

*They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy.*

*They know God's justice*



*requires that those who do  
these things deserve to die,  
yet they do them anyway.*

*Worse yet, they encourage  
others to do them, too.*

*Romans 1:29-32 (NLT)*

Desire is part of what it means to be human but because of original sin, some of our desires have become disordered in big ways and small. They've become misaligned with how God designed us which means that desire alone – “I feel like I should do this ... I feel like I should love that person ... I feel like...”

Desire alone is not a good indicator of who we are or how we should live. It can't be trusted.<sup>vi</sup>

So, question ... as you consider your life

do you see good and pure and even holy desires being bent and twisted in ways that are not good and pure and holy?

That's the corruption of sin working itself out as disordered desire. You pursue those desires because you're a sinner. And you're a sinner because you pursue them.

## **Closing**

Now, I have to tell you that I realize this is not one of the most inspirational messages I've ever given. And people like inspirational messages.

So I worried when I put this message together that some of you might not come back after today which not only makes me sad, it also tempts me to jump

to the solution side as we bring this to a close.

After all, even in the middle of this terrible fallout of sin the Imago Dei is still visible within us. Our deepest longings for things like justice, love, freedom, and redemption all still point to what we were meant to be.

And God promised in the Garden that He is not done with the human project. For, to the serpent He said:

*I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3:15 (NLT)*

And we'll get to that in upcoming messages.

But for today ...

- I feel like we're supposed to let the heaviness of this idea rest on us.
- I think we're supposed to feel weighed down by our sin and what it does to us and to God; how it has marred us and God's creation.
- I think we're supposed to be concerned that Paul says that because of the sin of humanity, God's wrath is being revealed from Heaven.
- And I think we're supposed to feel a bit of sadness at what's been lost,

even though God's goodness and glory is still visible in our world ...  
Because, friends, like it or not THIS IS US.

So that's what we're going to do in these closing moments.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://preachingsource.com/journal/original-sin-and-the-fall-of-man/>

<sup>ii</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Purge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Purge)

<sup>iii</sup> <https://peteenns.com/5-old-testament-reasons-original-sin-doesnt-work/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-2/s2-doctrine-of-man/doctrine-of-man-part-15>

<sup>v</sup> From Cornelius Plantinga Jr., SIN: NOT THE WAY IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE (Paper)