



Sermon Growth Guide

August 27, 2023

Un-Homed

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Lead Me Home - Un-Homed

Genesis 3:14-24

Key Verse: Genesis 3:24

“After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Big Idea: We feel lost in the universe because we have hungers we cannot satisfy.



Foundations

This passage describes the results of humanity's sin and rebellion. It is not a pretty picture as we learn that our relationships with God, creation, others, and our self-understanding have been damaged by our self-centeredness. We even see the reason why we (and Indiana Jones) hate snakes.

Previously we learned how the Lord created a beautiful home for us. He gave us purposeful work to do. In fact, we can imagine that if things had gone differently, God would have said to us (in one of those evening walks), “I like what you've done with the place.”

But what we've done is to corrupt the original Creation order in which God is God and we are not. That corruption has spread throughout all of creation, as we see in the curses—back-breaking work, painful childbirth, embattled relationships. Even the physical world is damaged by our self-focused attitudes.

God knew that if we stayed in the Garden, we would persist in our disobedient state. If we were to eat of the Tree of Life, we would live in corruption forever. It is God's mercy that drives us out of Eden. While this passage sounds disconsolate, it speaks of the unconditional grace of God. A Savior is promised (verse 15) who will rescue us and defeat the Tempter's power over us. And the expulsion to live east of Eden is a merciful move that should remind us that

we are creature, not Creator, motivating us to desire reconciliation with God. (verses 22-24).

Understanding God's Word

Read Genesis 3:14-19. As you read the curses in this passage, in what ways do you think these curses account for the difficulties of human life that we observe and experience?

Read Genesis 3:20-21. What does it mean to you that God replaced the fig leaves that Adam and Eve had sewn together with garments of animal skin?

Applying God's Word

This text tells us of God's promise and protection in the midst of our sinful messiness. In what areas of your life do you think you need to believe in God's promises and trust in His protection?

Witnessing God's Word

This is a powerful story about our personal brokenness and the brokenness of the world. Under the Lordship of Jesus, it should generate a sense of humility in us. That humility should develop our own posture of grace as we deal with others. We can recognize their shattered lives, the destruction that brings, and then offer the hope that we find in the Savior who comes to us even when our lives are broken... especially when our lives are broken.

Today in our series **Lead Me Home** we have the unenviable task of understanding the effects of the Fall, the implications of original sin, and just how bad, how awful, how horrible it all is. Welcome to First Pres where we want you to feel good about life! There is something wrong. This world God made, this home where we live, it doesn't feel right. Sometimes it feels just plain wrong. Abigail and I were with our son Peter at a volleyball camp in Phoenix a few weeks ago. It was 118 degrees outside. I was googling the average temperature for a sauna. We were getting close! It was uninhabitable! I'm sure it's nice the rest of the year, but the first weekend of August is not the best. That's a silly example. Something happened to our home. We have been de-homed, ex-homed, **Un-Homed**. None of those are words, but they explain an experience we all have. We know there is something wrong.

How do you talk about that outside of church? Each week I want to give you a GNI, a Good News Initiative, as a way to start a spiritual conversation with a non-believer (or, better, a "not-yet" believer) on the common ground of shared experience. "The Creator sure made things beautiful." "I wish I didn't do what I know I shouldn't do." Today's is probably the easiest of all: "There is something wrong in the world." You will want to jump to sin. Don't go there too fast. Just talk for a while. Everybody feels it. Marx called it alienation, Camus called it existential angst, Freud *das Unheimliche*, the feeling of not-at-homeness. There is something wrong with the world and we don't feel at home. Now we are nomads, wanderers, looking again for home and scratching up any little taste of it we can find in the hardened soil. We are homeless and hungry. I don't say that to dismiss the homeless and hungry in our city. We care about them and do a lot to help. But you and I, all of us, we are all spiritually homeless and hungry, aching for something to be resolved, and that makes us vulnerable. Have you ever gone shopping hungry? To Costco? You wind up at home with a five-pound box of smores flavored Oreos. If you know you are hungry, be careful.

What happened? This passage is called "The Curse," but it's more of a pronouncement, an explanation. God says, "Because you chose this, these are the implications, these are the outcomes, this is now the state of affairs, now that our relationship has fallen apart." It's not an angry God delivering punishment, but a loving Father explaining the consequences of our actions. Now, I need to explain something that might not be apparent. Human beings are the pinnacle and so the federal representatives of creation. Because we were given the cultural mandate to have dominion over all the earth, all the earth responds to our leadership. When our relationship with God broke, the shock waves of that fracture crashed into all creation. Adam and Eve had peace with God, peace with themselves, peace with one another and peace in the world. No more.

"So the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.'" (Genesis 3:14) Creation falls. The snake takes a hit, but all creation groans and aches. "Cursed is the ground because of you," God later says to Adam. The natural order, the created order, is twisted from its original purpose, like a car wrecked and twisted on the side of the highway. You can only just make out what it was supposed to be like, but it isn't like that anymore. When we see Hawaii on fire and people jumping into the sea to escape the heat, California flooded, earthquakes and storms and disasters, we know, this world is not as it was meant to be. Jeremiah said, "How long will the land lie parched and the grass in every field be withered? Because those who live in it are wicked, the animals and birds have perished." (Jeremiah 12:4) Or from Romans 8: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." (Romans 8:22)

And speaking of childbirth, "To the woman he said, 'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your

desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” (Genesis 3:16) This is not just about the act of giving birth, but the promulgation of the human race has come into threat. “Be fruitful and multiply” is now “only through pain will your bear.” A woman’s desire to bear children will produce anxiety, the process will be fraught with dangers, and the woman’s deep need to become a mother will force dependence on her husband who in his own sinfulness will be tempted to dominate and rule over her. There are those in our church right now in deep pain and struggle, waiting for a successful pregnancy, grieving the loss of an unborn child, or praying hard for miracles. The whole process is full of perils, not just pregnancy and birth but rearing and parenting too. “I thought the serpent promised freedom.” This isn’t freedom.

“To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ ‘Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.’” (Genesis 3:17-19) “You are free to eat,” is now, “by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.” Work becomes toil. Even in this post-agrarian society we struggle to make something of this world and of ourselves in it. It’s painful and it can break you down, even to the point of despair. There were more deaths by suicide last year in the U.S. than ever before. Colorado saw the most since 1941, and El Paso County topped the state. Three out of four are middle-aged men. If you are hurting, please reach out. We make a commitment at this church: No one hurts alone. I’m not saying you won’t hurt, but you were never meant to hurt alone. “I thought the serpent said I’d be like a god.” This doesn’t feel divine. Now, these repercussions are shared between Adam and Eve. Women know the toil of work; men know the pain of childrearing. There is something wrong with our world.

How could one act have such repercussions? Have you ever heard of what physicists call the “butterfly effect”? The flapping wings of a butterfly one place impacts weather conditions to cause a tornado to erupt somewhere else. It’s all connected. Stephen King wrote a horror novel called *Needful Things* where the devil came to a small town pretending to be a shopkeeper who sold a boy a Sandy Koufax baseball card for 85 cents. He said, “I just need you to do one thing. Throw some mud on those sheets hanging on the line, would you?” “Sure, mister.” But the boy didn’t know the neighbors were in a dispute. The person with the ruined sheets assumed it was retaliation and escalated the conflict. Things get worse and worse until, you guessed it, murder! It is a Stephen King book. Little things can have grave consequences. A little leaven, said Jesus.

So here we are. The relationship is broken. Now the garden is closed. East of Eden we go and an unbreachable separation cuts us off from easy communion with God. God asked, “Where are you?” Where are we? We are homeless and hungry, nomads with nowhere to go, pilgrims without a destination, wanderers searching for home. We are refugees and aliens in a world that has gone desperately wrong. Seeking autonomy and freedom, Adam and Eve found themselves utterly dependent, desperately in need, locked in a trap.

This is how a lot of people feel. Some call it the postmodern nomad: “The postmodern nomad has no sense of place: he merely roams from one place to another. Or, more precisely, he wanders from no place to no place, since no particular place matters more than any other. Seeking personal freedom and professional success, he finds himself in an iron cage. Thinking he is well-connected, he discovers that he has few significant relationships; feeling well oriented, he learns that he is actually adrift, a homeless postmodern nomad.” (Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness*) In *On the Road with Saint Augustine*, James K. A. Smith says “We’re

always on the move, restless, vaguely chasing something rather than oriented to a destination....The road is the endless exhaustion of continuing to try to locate home, the frantic search for rest. That is the angst of the prodigal still in exile.” See, of all the books, of all the movies and songs and poems and philosophies that have tried to explain this feeling, Genesis has made it clear. We are all exiles, this says. We are all aliens. We are all refugees longing to once again find that place where we truly belong, where we fit. Lead me home. Who will lead me home?

We will walk the whole story of salvation in this series. The story runs Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation (or Reconciliation and Restoration). The first two of the four great movements of God’s story of salvation are Creation and Fall. We have to understand those first. Why are we here? What has gone wrong? So we spent three weeks in Genesis. Next week we jump to Ruth. But even in these first chapters, in this passage, we see the rest of the story starting to emerge. God intends to do something. A battle is coming. A hero is on the way. Verse 15 says the offspring or “seed” of Eve is coming. By the way, did you know the ovum was not discovered until 1837? Nobody thought the woman contributed anything materially to the child until then, but the Holy Spirit that inspires the Scriptures knew better. The seed of Eve. The offspring. He will crush the head of the serpent but the serpent will strike his heel. There will be a struggle, a mortal combat. The seed will be struck with the poison—poison in the heel is still poison—but the one who takes the mortal wound will emerge victorious.

The real poison of the serpent is the lie. Sure, there was temptation. “Take what you want. Take it now.” That’s the same thing Satan tried on Jesus in Luke 4. “Aren’t you supposed to be King of Kings? Take your rule now!” But the deeper poison is the lie that God can’t be trusted. That poison still runs through our veins. God cannot be trusted. God doesn’t want what is best for me. God is, as Jesus portrayed in one of his parables, “I knew you to be a hard man,” God is a hard, ungenerous, withholding God. Once we

believe that, we dip into one of two tracks in our attempt to break back into Eden. We drop into legalism—“I’ll do whatever it takes to pry my blessing out of God’s tight, cruel, unwilling fingers. I’ll work my way back into Eden.” Or we drop into antinomianism, meaning a world without laws, a world without rules, when we walk away from God’s demands and dismiss them. “They are all equally ridiculous, all equally unfit for me. I give up.” Neither gets you home.

Can you trust that the Lord is good? Can you trust that His way is life, that His law is blessing? As soon as the brokenness sets in, God sets about healing and repairing. Through pain the human species carries on from generation to generation. Through pain we are sustained by the fruit of toilsome labor. Through pain salvation comes, the seed, the child, the one born of Eve is finally the one born of Mary. Through pain Jesus brings the cure to the curse, proving that God’s love is always for us. Jesus takes the pain. God says we have to carry on through laborsome toil, but it’s Jesus who comes and does the only work that could possibly bring life. God says we carry on now through the pain of childbirth and childrearing, but there was no pain like the pain Jesus took on Himself so we could be born again. He even described His death and resurrection as like a mother giving birth in John 16. God sacrificed animals to make skins of protection for Adam and Eve in His great mercy, but the ultimate sacrifice will be the blood shed by Jesus on the cross. This whole thing is already pointing us to our one hope, our one way home, our one Savior. You can’t work your way back into home, and you can’t, you just can’t pretend it doesn’t matter and walk away. You know you need to get home again. Jesus is the way home. Cast all your hope on Him.