

Genesis 3:1-24, Luke 24:13-35

There is a fair bit of Bible reading for this message. We read Genesis 3 earlier in the service, then Luke 24 just before the sermon.

Open Eyes

Two sad people head out into the world, barred from the garden where they had lived with God.

They had fallen for a lie. “You will be like God”, hissed the serpent. “**Your eyes will be opened.** You will know good and evil.”

The woman took the forbidden fruit and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it. “**Then the eyes of both of them were opened....**” but in a way they had never been opened before.

Their eyes were opened....

To a nakedness that for the first time ever felt vulnerable and shameful.

Their eyes were opened to issues with their bodies. They had never had those before. They have new instinctive reactions. To hide their bodies, even their selves from each other with fig leaves for shame.

Their eyes were opened to a different kind of fear of God. When they sense God coming close their new instinct is to hide from the one who created and loves them.

They look **at each other** with blame and resentment.

They look at the garden and at the earth with discouragement.

The Lord God calls to the man, “Where are you?”

I don't know how you imagine this conversation. Could it be that the entire conversation that follows takes place with the man and the woman hiding among the trees?

The Lord does not say, "Get out here!"

And when the man blames the woman, "The woman you put **here** with me..." Does 'here' refer to this new place of guilt and shame in the uncomfortable bushes?

The woman blames the serpent.

There are a lot of places in the Bible where I would love to hear the tone of God's voice, and the pacing and the pauses. Here is one of those places. Surely there would be a halting catch in the Lord's voice as he speaks these words. The Lord had gone looking for his people in the cool of the day, now this mess.

The Lord speaks judgment and grace, punishment and promise.

First to the serpent: "This is your lot. Below all other animals, you will be a dust eater. Your life will be filled with tension between your 'seed' and the seed of the woman".

This tension is called enmity. It means that evil and good will be locked in struggle, and though the seed of the serpent would do much damage, evil will never overcome good. And one day, the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent. This is the first hint in the Bible of a Saviour.

To the woman the Lord speaks of much more pain in childbearing. And of gender tension. "Your longing will be for your husband and he will rule over you."

There is no hint of this kind of tension between men and women before the fall. After the fall it is everywhere. Every boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, every marriage knows at least something of this tension.

To the man the Lord speaks of a curse on the ground, of painful, sweaty, frustrating work. Work will now be conflicted and hard. Overwork, laziness, work-aholism are all familiar to us. Adam rebelled against the Lord, the creation will rebel against him, until finally he returns to the dust.

Adam names his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living, the first to know the pain of childbirth.

What is God to do?

God gently clothes Eve and Adam with garments of skin and sends them out of the garden so that they will not eat of the tree of life and live forever. Death instead would put a limit on the evil humans can do. I have never noticed before how death is introduced here as a gracious limit on the potential for human evil.

The fall happened so long ago. But it is all so familiar. Our eyes too are opened to all of these things.

If this is all you know of the world, you cannot help but be cynical. You think life is predictable. Recently a member of our city wrote a letter to the local newspaper that has caused a firestorm in St. Albert and across the country. It seems to have been written by someone who can only see the evil side of human life. I wonder what his letter might be like if his eyes were opened.

As the couple leaves the garden the Bible tells our story. It is a long story that moves back and forth between God's new beginnings and wreckage and rebellion done by sinful people.

The prophets said that one day a Saviour would come to straighten everything out. Their voices put God's dream into words. Israel would be transformed. Through Israel the world would become a new place of hope, of love and faith.

Here is Isaiah: "The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins." (Isaiah 59:20)

800 years later, a lot of people had given up on the whole redeemer idea.

But not everyone.

Listen to these old people:

Zechariah, when his son John was born:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people...." (1:68) (see whole passage)

Listen to old Anna, the church lady. When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the temple, "she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were **looking forward** to the redemption of Jerusalem". (2:38)

Cleopas and his wife saw Jesus teach and heal. Jesus got them excited about the future. With Jesus leading the way, the lives of their children and grandchildren

would be different. Jesus involved women in his ministry **as disciples***. Who ever heard of such a thing?

He did not push children aside until they were 13 and 'adults'. He made time for babies.

He would touch anyone.

With Jesus leading the way, the world would start to change. People would care for each other, it would not matter how much money people made. And people would trust God again, and God would bless them to be free in their own country.

They had seen so much in Jesus.

Now all those hopes are gone. They walk along grieving their dead hope.

They do not notice the stranger who catches them up, listens to their intense words, then starts to ask questions.

They wonder, "what rock have you been hiding under?" and tell him about Jesus of Nazareth, who he was, what had happened. With tears in their eyes they tell of their hopes.

And of the trial and the crucifixion, and then of the strange reports of the women.

The stranger has some nerve. He takes over their conversation.

"How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe the prophets." And he shows them a way to read the Bible that they have never imagined before. And as he does, they start to see that the rejection and the suffering and the death of Jesus fit into the story the Bible has been telling all along.

Their hearts burned. The cold ashes of their dead hope started to glow just a bit.

You don't let someone like that walk away. So when they get to their village they insist that their new friend stay with them, the day is almost over.

At dinner time their guest takes over again and becomes the host. He takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it and begins to give it to them. And in that moment, as with another couple, long ago, eyes red with tears and regret, **the eyes of both of them are opened.**

And they recognized him and he disappeared from their sight.

The first, rebellious act of eating opened all human eyes to sadness and regret, fear of God. But God does not come to punish and condemn. Instead he comes along side, in Jesus as he came along side this couple.

And this gracious act of feeding opens their eyes to the knowledge that brings hope.

Jesus is alive. Death does not have the last word.

Jesus opens our eyes to see him and to see **all of life through him.**

I challenge you to open your eyes to Jesus, open your eyes to see all of life through him.

There are no lost causes. There are no dead ends in your life or in this world. There are no hopeless cases.

No addiction needs to be the final answer.

Habitat Housing can mean an opportunity for people and their families to have new lives.

What might it be like to look in the mirror and trust that we are loved by Jesus?

What can a marriage look like if husband and wife can see each other with new eyes of hope?

What can our work in creation be if we see it as service to Jesus?

What might life with God be like if we can stop seeing God as one who takes away our fun and dare to see that God has come to bring us real life?

God is at work in Jesus to make **all things new**. Let him open your eyes, to see and serve and follow.

May the Lord be gracious to you.

May the Lord be gracious to me.

And all God's people said, Amen.

Rob Bell has a video here <http://vimeo.com/10639312> that helps us imagine what the resurrection of Jesus means for our world.

*Notice that when the angels speak to the women in Luke 24, the women are encouraged to remember Jesus' teaching themselves. They were in on that teaching. I wonder if God's gracious act of involving and respecting and using women may be His response to the story of Eve being the one who first listened to the serpent's voice. It would be completely like God to respond back with greater grace.

