

Sermon – The Fall
Sunday January 12, 2025

Imagine this: an adult elephant, the strongest animal in the world, standing in a field with only a small rope to tie it down. It could easily break free; it could easily run away. And yet, it doesn't. Instead it stands there dejected and defeated.

How did this happen? Did a strong enemy come along and overpower it? No. What happened was, many years ago, when it was a small baby, someone tied it to a stake in the ground. Back then, it wasn't strong enough to break free. So over time, even though the elephant is the strongest animal in the world, it grew up to believe that it was weak.

It could have broken free whenever it wanted to but it never tried. Why? Because even though it had everything it needed to live a flourishing life, it believed that that it was weak. It's life was bound by a rope.

What's the point of this story? The point is that this is your story and mine. Just like the elephant, you and I have been bound by a small piece of rope. This rope represents the lies you've believed. Lies that say:

- You're not good enough.
- No one loves you.
- You don't matter.

We're bound by a rope that keeps us prisoners. We feel defeated and discouraged. How do we experience freedom? How do we live out the story God has called us to live?

We're in a new series called The God Story. Because your story and mine— not to mention Cornerstone's story as a local church— make the most sense when we understand it in the context of the overarching story of the Bible. And the more we understand and live into this grand story, the more meaning, purpose and direction we will find for our lives.

This series is based on a book called [*The God Story: Encountering Unfailing Love in the Unfolding Narrative of Scripture*](#). We encourage you to order this book and follow along as each chapter lines up with the sermon for each week. You can get the book on Amazon in both print and Kindle format.

This is also a great resource to go through with your small group. You can download the [small group study guides](#) and discuss them with your group. Pastor Dave sent out an email with the link last week, but just in case, you can also download these guides using the QR code on the screen.

We'll leave these codes on the screen for the next few moments so you have a chance to capture them.

Last week, Pastor Steve kicked off this series by looking at The Origin of The God Story. We saw that before anything existed, God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—existed in perfect community, a divine family of love. Out of this love, God brought order out of chaos and created a beautiful world full of life, flourishing and purpose.

The crown of his creation was humankind. God created people in His image, not out of need, but out of a desire to share His love with them. So he invited them into a relationship and he entrusted them with the responsibility to care for and steward the world He created.

Today, as we begin this message, Have you ever noticed that every story has a villain?

- The Wizard of Oz has the Wicked Witch.
- Harry Potter has Voldemort.
- Star Wars has Darth Vader.

Author John Eldredge says:

Every story has a villain because yours does. Though most of you do not live like it. Most people do not live as though the Story has a Villain and that makes life very confusing...

Life is very confusing if you do not take into account that there is a Villain. That you, my friend, have an Enemy.

Turn to your neighbour and say: You have an Enemy.

From the beginning, we see that God created the heavens and the earth with a purpose. He has good intention to create a world of love, flourishing and harmony.

But we'll also see today that this Story has a Villain. There is an enemy who has evil intentions. He wants to hurt God by attacking his people and separating them from God. He wants to see a world of destruction, deception and division.

What I want to do today is look at the next chapter of The God Story and talk at what it means for us. We're going to look at:

- Who is the Enemy?
- What are the consequences of sin?
- Is there hope for God's people?

First, **Who is the Enemy?**

The tragic plot twist in The God Story begins with these six words: *Now the serpent was more crafty.*

In their book The God Story, authors Emerson and Cox say:

We have a lot of questions about the serpent that this passage doesn't answer. But while this passage doesn't tell us a lot about the serpent, it does tell us that evil has an identity. The Fall narrative sets the scene for the unfolding drama of resistance woven through the rest of The God Story and the devastation that is to follow. Battles lines have been drawn, war has been launched, from this point on everything will be contested.

Before moving on, we need to go back and look at the one prohibition God gave Adam and Eve.

And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:16-17)

What are the two important trees in the Garden?

There's the Tree of Life. This tree represents finding our significance and identity in God. Eating from this tree is an act of trust and dependence.

Then there's the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This tree represents finding our significance and identity apart from God. Eating from this tree is an act of rejecting God and living for ourselves.

And it's into this context that the serpent comes onto the scene.

He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:1-5)

Remember, how does the Bible describe the serpent? Crafty.

The word crafty comes from the Hebrew word *arum*. *Arum* describes:

- Someone who is clever and shrewd.
- Someone who can influence and manipulate without using force.
- Someone who can work against you so subtly you don't even notice it.

You see, if the Enemy tempted you in obvious ways, your defenses would go up. You would know something's wrong and you'd resist him.

But remember, the Enemy is crafty. Instead, he'll ask you a question, Did God really say that? Why does he do that? He wants to raise doubts about God's good intentions. He wants to plant seeds of mistrust. By taking a subtle approach, he makes the temptation seem harmless and he lures you into thinking that you're simply making a logical decision for your own good.

How does he do that? He uses two tactics.

TACTIC #1: Distorting our view of God

A.W. Tozer once said, "What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you."

The Enemy knows this. That's why he attacks us by attacking our identity. Did God really say you must not eat from the tree? What's he doing here?

- He's suggesting that God doesn't have their best interests at heart.
- He's suggesting that God is holding back on them.
- He's suggesting that if God really loved them, he would let them do whatever they want to do.

This paints God in a very different light. Instead of seeing God as good and generous, they begin to think maybe God actually stingy and unfair. If God really loved us, he would want us to experience everything.

Boom! The enemy has now planted a seed of doubt. And they're beginning to think, Maybe we'd be better off if we took matters into our own hands.

That's how the Enemy works. How crafty is that?! But do you realize, that the Enemy uses this same tactic on us all the time. He whispers things like:

- Everyone's doing it, God wants you to be happy so why not do it this one time?
- If God really loved you, he wouldn't want you to suffer.
- Why does God bless all these other people but not you? What's the point of following him?

How does the Enemy attack us? By distorting our view of God.

TACTIC #2: Distorting our view of ourselves.

Human beings are created in God's image. They are the apple of his eye.

So when the serpent says, Did God really say... he's planting the idea that they are *not enough*. You see, we know that they're created in God's image. We know that God has given them everything they need. But Adam and Eve have forgotten that. Instead of remember their identity as God's beloved children, they now feel like they're lacking; they're incomplete. They feel like in order to feel fulfilled and significant, they need to achieve, perform and prove themselves.

We do the same thing all the time. We:

- Accumulate wealth
- Pursue pleasure
- Chase success
- Seek validation
- Get more likes and followers all in an attempt to feel significant.

But here's the irony: We look everywhere to find significance when all along, God has given it to us already in his love.

How do we break free from the lies? How do we live into our true identity?

In February, we're running our Identity Workshop. In this workshop, we'll look at how the Enemy tries to steal our identity and we'll tell you how we can reclaim and live into the identity that God has already given you.

For more information or to sign-up, you can scan the QR code on the screen.

<https://cornerstonechurch.ca/identity-in-christ/>

Emerson and Cox write:

The Fall marks a pivotal moment in God's grand story, where the narrative He began—of creation in harmony, relationship, and peace—takes a devastating turn.—it's a rupture in the story God had been

telling... What was once a perfect story of God's provision, love, and peace, has now become a tale of brokenness, shame, and separation.

So **What are the consequences of sin?**

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." (Genesis 3:7-10)

Something happens immediately after they eat the fruit. They realize something has changed. They've lost their innocence. Their relationship with God has been broken. They now experience two psychological realities they've never experienced before.

The first one is **Shame**.

Remember, before the Fall, the Bible says, **Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:25)**

But what happens right after they eat the fruit?

the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis 3:7)

What's different now? They now know shame. What is shame? Shame is the feeling that you're not enough. It's a deep sense that you're unworthy and inadequate.

Shame is different from guilt. Guilt is feeling that you've done something bad, but shame is feeling that you are bad. Guilt is feeling that you've done something wrong, but shame is feeling that there's something wrong with you.

With shame, Emerson and Cox write: They begin to experience that inward-looking glare of condemnation, failure and self-criticism many of us have become all too familiar with.

Shame leads them to experience a second psychological reality - **Fear**.

Remember, before the Fall, Adam and Eve walked freely with God in the garden.

But what happens after they eat the fruit? They're afraid to face God. Why? Because sin separates us from God. They once enjoyed God's love, care and presence. But now because of their sin, they're afraid to be in God's presence.

Emerson and Cox write: Fear becomes their new way of understanding reality... Fear exists in the absence of God's securing love. Distant from the Love that always wants the best for us, an anxious panicked belief that we must control the uncontrollable sets in...."

Adam and Eve are now plagued by shame and fear; and it's too much to bear. So what do they do? They do what you and I do. They find ways to cope.

The first thing they do is **Hide**.

They sew fig leaves together. They hide when God calls to them. Hiding is now our natural response. Why do we do it? We do it to protect ourselves from being judged and rejected. We do it to protect ourselves from the emotional pain. And we do it all the time.

We hide from ourselves. We ignore our true feelings and deny that we have a problem. We numb the pain to escape reality. We binge watch Netflix and spend hours scrolling social media. We overwork and overeat. We busy ourselves with distractions.

We hide from others. We put up walls, we settle for shallow relationships, we tell people we're okay when we're not. We manage our image through perfectionism and performance. We hide behind busyness and work. We try to be the funny one, the successful one, the caring one.

We hide from God. We avoid spending time with him through prayer and Bible reading. We avoid participating in small groups and Sunday worship. Or we focus so much on external religious activities that we become more legalistic instead of more loving.

To deal with our pain, we hide from ourselves, from others and from God.

The second thing Adam and Eve do is **Blame**.

When God asks them questions, what do they do?

- Adam blames Eve for giving him the fruit.
- Adam blames God for putting Eve in the garden.
- Eve blames the serpent for deceiving her.

The shame over their mistakes is too much to bear, so they avoid responsibility by putting the blame on others instead.

Have you noticed how natural this is to do? When someone arrives late for a meeting, what do they say? Do they say, Sorry, I slept in or Sorry, I didn't plan enough time to make it. Or do they say, I was stuck in traffic.

Blame is how we deflect feeling bad about our mistakes and project it on to others. We do it all the time. We say things like:

- If you didn't do that, I wouldn't have reacted that way.
- I'm only angry because you made me angry.
- I'm the way I am because of what my parents did.

The Fall now introduces sin into the world God created. And as we can see, sin is much more than doing bad things.

- Sin is rebellion against God.
- Sin is rejecting his authority.
- Sin is wanting to decide for ourselves what's right and what's wrong.

Sin distorts our view of God and of ourselves. As a result, we experience deep shame and fear. And we cope with these feelings by hiding and blaming others.

As The God Story unfolds, we'll see the profound devastation that sin unleashes. It will spread like a virus - corrupting the human heart, destroying families and building civilizations that prioritize pride and personal gain over serving others and taking care of God's creation.

Sin has corrupted God's creation. Humanity has messed up. Big time.

So Is there any hope for God's people?

Despite his broken heart, God still desires a relationship with his people. How do we know? Right after Adam and Eve reject him, what does God do? Does he lash out and punish them? Does he storm off and walk away?

No. He seeks them out. He pursues them. He asks Where are you?

Why does he ask this? Does God not know what just happened? Is God geographically challenged? Of course not. This question is inviting his people to return to him. Because despite all the damage they've done, despite all the hurt they've caused, God still says, I will not abandon you to your sin. I'll show you mercy and grace. I will pursue you because you are mine.

So what does he do?

He makes garments of animal skin, then he tenderly dresses them. You see, even though his children have broken his heart, God still loves them and provides for them. He wants them to know that it will be okay, that he has a plan.

How do we know?

**And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring^[a] and hers;
he will crush^[b] your head,
and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)**

This verse gives us the first glimpse of God's promise that one day the offspring of the woman will ultimately triumph over the enemy. It points us to His Son, who will one day conquer sin and death once and for all.

Although the opening chapters of God's story reveal the devastating consequences of sin, God promises a Savior who will one day come and restore all that was broken. Then the broken parts of God's story will be redeemed, all things will be made new and God's creation will once again be all it was meant to be.

That is our hope. That is where The God's Story is going. That is what we hold on to even as we continue to experience the effects of the Fall.

Let's pray.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We come before you now, acknowledging our deep need for you. We confess that, like our first parents, our view of you has been distorted. Our view of ourselves has been distorted. And as a result, we do not see clearly.

We have believed that you are not good, we have believed that we are not enough, we have believed that we must hide from you in shame. But all these are lies!

Lord, we confess our brokenness. We confess the ways we have tried to cover up, we confess the ways we hide from ourselves, from others and most of all from you.

We come to you now, bringing to you the shameful parts of our hearts and trusting that you see us completely and yet you love us unconditionally. So we open our hearts to your healing presence. Meet us in the very places where we feel not good enough, where we feel unlovable, where we feel like we don't matter, where we feel like there's no hope.

Fill our hearts with your love. Remind us that we are your beloved children. In Christ, we are enough. Thank you Jesus that because of the cross, you have forgiven our sins and your love now calls us out of hiding, into your loving arms.

We run now to you. We surrender to your love. Lead us into the freedom and joy and purpose that is ours in Christ.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Benediction

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; but Jesus has come that you may have life, and have it to the full.

So remember church, It is for freedom that Christ has set you free. Stand firm this week in the truth that you are pursued, redeemed and dearly, dearly loved by your Heavenly Father.