

Genesis 3:15

“I will put enmity between you and woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel,”

Dear children of Adam,

As you looked out your windows on the way over to Church today, I'm sure the last thing on your mind was the planting of your garden. How can we talk about a garden and the things that grow in a garden, when we can't even break the freezing mark on the thermometer? But this Lent and Easter season, we are going to use this picture of the garden to see how the gospel promises of God are like a garden that starts with a small seed and grows into something large and wonderful.

So this Lenten season, I would like all of us to think through what this Garden is and what is growing in this garden. And as we begin to see this garden grow week by week, we will see that something wonderful is sitting right in front of our eyes. Tonight as we look at the first of the sermons for this Lenten season on the series, “Garden to Glory”, we will zero in on the theme:

Theme: Garden of Promise

- 1. The seeds of salvation were planted in the Garden of Eden**
- 2. This Seed would cause great changes**

It all began in a garden, the Garden of Eden. God the Almighty broke into our world and announced the very first gospel promise. Without this promise there would be no Lent and no Easter. There would only be death and damnation for us. But the seeds of our salvation were first planted in this Garden of Promise.

The promise completely reversed what had just taken place. Satan had planted the seed of unbelief by tempting Adam and Eve to sin. They no longer believed God's words. They ate the forbidden fruit. That single seed of unbelief immediately sprang to life and, reaching out like some horrible death-plant, wrapped its leaves around this man and woman to squeeze the life out of them.

They felt the squeeze of God's decree: **“The day you eat of it, you will surely die!”** They didn't turn to God for mercy. They didn't look to him for a second chance. They ran for cover and tried to hide from God.

The death-plant produced a foul fruit: enmity or hatred. They felt nothing but enmity—in other words, the opposite of peace. They shook their fists at God. They shook their fists at each other. They shook their fists at Satan. They were quick to blame God for their circumstances. They were willing to throw each other under the bus if it would save their own skin. What had seemed like such an inviting friendliness from Satan was now unmasked as a malicious trick to destroy them. In great irony they had become unwitting allies of this serpent who hated them and wanted them doomed like himself. Inside and out, they now felt the permeating, damning hatred that a holy God has for what they had become. It was sheer terror.

But God announced a reversal of that enmity. Speaking to the devil, God said, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman.”** God would change things! The woman wouldn't be an ally to the devil anymore. God would create enmity between her and the devil. God would put her at odds with Satan.

That means she and God would have to be reconciled and be at peace with each other and be friends again. For to be an enemy of Satan is to be a friend of God. And this announcement of friendship was not offered to the woman only, but also to her husband and to all their descendants—that means you and me. God said to the snake, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers.”**

Notice how wonder-inspiring our God is. He did not advise Eve to redirect her hatred upon the serpent. He did not command her to hate the evil one. Nor did God urge her to reach up to heaven with her prayers to invite the change. The fact is, when God did give her the opportunity merely to fess up, she couldn't do it. She utterly lacked the power to change her affections and save herself. So God would do it. He said, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman.”** The one key word is the word “I”. I God cut off the leaves of death at the roots and saved the man's and woman's lives by promising to send a Savior.

But who would this promised Savior be? He would be the offspring of the woman. In other words, the promised Savior would be true man. But God also said this to the snake: **“He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”** Satan would be crushed. The only one in the universe powerful enough to do that is God himself. So the promised Savior would also have to be God. True man and true God. The promised Savior would be both.

In the process of crushing the serpent and saving humankind, the promised Savior would have to suffer. The serpent would strike his heel. As true man, Jesus would step into our shoes. He would be our substitute. He would take on himself the blame for all sin from the very beginning in that first garden to this very day. He would let the life be squeezed out of himself. But as the death-plant with its leaves tighten its grip around him, it would be broken and torn apart, because as true God, Jesus is too large and too powerfully innocent for death to keep its hold on him.

Now his victory over death is our victory over death. You see, Jesus broke death's grip not just as God but also as a man. Now, since he is a man like us and on our team, he shares his breakout from death—his success in coming back to life—with you and me and makes it our success. Jesus once said, **“Because I live, you also will live” (Jn 14:19)**. Death has no more of a grip on people who trust in Jesus than it does on Jesus himself.

God said, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman.”** With this simple promise, the Spirit of God lifted these two fallen creatures, Adam and Eve, up from the dust, restored their love for him, consoled them, and rescued their lives. With these words, they were forgiven by God, reconciled to him, and made God's eternal friends and Satan's everlasting enemies. Note this well! God intervened and repaired what was broken. So great is his love for humankind. So great is his love for you. He refused to wait around up there in heaven for you to get up off your couch and do something about your own salvation.

To this very day the Spirit of God works the same way in you and me as he worked in Adam and Eve. He comes from heaven and makes it happen. Through his simple gospel promises and through his Word connected to water and bread and wine, he forgives our sins. He lifts us up, restores our love for him, consoles us, and rescues our lives. For that is how he has promised to come to us. We're saved not by our own will or efforts or compliance but by God's working through his Word and sacraments in us. The Holy Spirit puts the enmity between us and Satan by making us God's friends when he breathes faith in Christ into us and comforts us with God's assurance of salvation.

The promise in that very first garden set the stage for the history of the entire world. That promise, Genesis 3:15, is what the rest of the Bible is all about. It announced the coming of a Savior who would bring about reconciliation between us and God. Therefore the focal point of all Scripture and of all history is the time and place where the promise was fulfilled: on a hill outside Jerusalem called Golgotha. Everyone throughout history who believes this will be saved. Everyone who does not will be damned.

One would think the Garden of Eden would be a synonym in our minds for death trap. But because of the first gospel promise, all kinds of life has sprung forth from it. Through faith in that promise, people's lives are saved without end. It is the Garden of Promise. Amen.