

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,

If I were to go down to the Outlet Mall or stand at the door to Wal-Mart and ask the simple question, “What season are we celebrating?” I think that the majority of the people would quickly answer, it is the Christmas season. Maybe even some of us gathered here today would answer the same way. It is Christmas time. While it is true, that the Christmas season seems to start earlier and earlier each year, there is a season of the Christian Church year that actually comes before Christmas. That season is the one that we are celebrating right now and will continue to celebrate all the way until we celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. That season is obviously the Advent season. And what exactly is the Advent season? What is the purpose of the Advent season? The word “advent” is a word which means “coming”. So during the Advent season we are getting ready for the coming of Jesus, the Savior of the world. Our theme for this year's midweek advent services will be, “The Savior is Coming.” Over the next three midweek services we will look at the Savior's coming from some different perspectives. Each of these perspectives is meant to help us prepare our hearts and lives for the coming of our Savior. Today are thoughts will look at the Savior's coming and use this theme:

Theme: The Savior Is Coming – As Promised

- 1. We are not saved by keeping God's Law**
- 2. We are saved by God keeping his promise**

In order to truly get ready for Jesus' coming, we have to back up all the way to the Garden of Eden. In this garden, God had placed Adam and Eve and all the animals. It was a place where Adam and Eve were perfect and so was the rest of creation. It is in the midst of this setting that we see the promise that we are looking at today.

Let's talk about Adam and Eve and their life in the Garden of Eden. How were Adam and Eve saved? Were they saved by keeping God's will? Were they saved because they were so good? What we see so clearly when we look at Adam and Eve's life and all those who have followed Adam and Eve is that they didn't follow God's commandments perfectly and neither has anyone else. What we begin to see so clearly is that salvation does not and cannot come through keeping God's commandments. Although God had given Adam and Eve a commandment about not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would not be saved by obeying that command. It had been an opportunity for them to demonstrate their obedience to the Lord. It ended up presenting an opportunity to defy the Lord. The commandment did not bring salvation, but condemnation.

Salvation, therefore, comes through a promise. Salvation is not man's doing, but God's doing. God made the promise. God sent the Savior. God worked salvation for all mankind. Our hope is in God's promise. And as soon as they broke God's commandment, God issued that promise. **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” (Genesis 3:15)**

When God had first confronted Adam about his sin, Adam said, **“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:12)** He claimed that his temptation and his sin

came through the woman. God, therefore, told Adam that his salvation would come through the woman, in particular, through the Seed of the woman. Our hope is in the promised Seed, the Seed of the woman. The promised Seed (which is Jesus) would free mankind from the sin that had infected them. The devil, in the form of a serpent, had struck the lethal blow. He had gotten Adam and Eve to question God's love for them. Remember his temptations – *Why would God withhold part of his creation from you? Why would you deny yourself that which would make you better, make you happy, and make you like God?* Eve bought into the devil's lies. She was deceived, and she ate. Adam who stood there next to her, who had personally heard the word of God, who was to care for his wife, did not intervene. Nor did he protest. Nor did he hesitate. He, too, ate. And so, the commandment by which Adam and Eve were to learn holy obedience became the commandment by which Adam and Eve were to be put to death.

Salvation does not come by commandments. We may commend ourselves because we know how to behave and because we do the good that God commands, right? Then why is it that husbands and wives lock horns with each other? Why is it that parents lose patience with their children, and children roll their eyes at their parents? Why is it that we detest our jobs, our coworkers, the customers, our neighbors, our relatives, and people in general? What is worse, we often times assess blame to God! *Why am I not happier? It was the woman you gave me. It was the children you gave me. It was the parents you gave me. It was the job you gave me.* Etc., etc.,....

Salvation cannot come through commandments because we don't keep them. Satan still convinces us that we will be better and happier if we defy God's commandments. Like Eve, we buy into his lies. We are willingly deceived. Like Adam, we know better because we have heard God's commandments. But we do not protest or hesitate. We defy our God, and we cannot stop ourselves. Even though we know what is evil, we still do what is evil. And the consequence for sin still stands: **"You will surely die." (Genesis 2:17)**

Salvation does not come through commandments. Salvation comes through a promise. We hope in the Promised Seed. We hope in the Seed of the woman. He is not the Seed of the man; for Adam passes along to all of his descendants the sinful nature which brings death. He is the Seed of the woman – conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. ***"He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father, and he is man, born in time from the nature of his mother, fully God, fully man."*** (Athanasian Creed) The Seed of the woman enters our world holy and blameless. But he, too, would be under the commandments. He, too, would have the opportunity to demonstrate glad and willing and perfect obedience to the Father.

We hope in the Promised Seed, the Seed of the woman, and we are not disappointed. The Seed of the woman comes to destroy the serpent who deceived Eve. He comes to crush the head of the one whose venom was injected into mankind. But there would be a cost. Though salvation is given freely to us, there is a great cost to be paid for us.

As the Promised Seed (Jesus our Savior) crushes the serpent's head on the cross of Calvary, he also suffers the death blow himself. He takes the venom into his body. He feels the lethal injection enter his veins. And so, he suffers and dies. He suffers in hellish agony under God's curse; for he has taken our sin and guilt. But this is how he overcomes sin, death, and the devil. He pays for sin at the cost of his life. He puts an end to death by absorbing death for us all. He crushes the devil where his cross is driven into the place of the skull. All punishment, all pain, all death, all damnation is done. The Seed of the woman crushes the serpent's head.

And as a Seed, he is planted in the tomb in the garden. He springs to life on the third day, the firstfruits of the harvest – the first of those who will rise from the dead. And he has planted in you the seed of faith. He has made you his own, to follow in his steps so that you, too, will rise from the dead.

We hope in the Promised Seed. Death does not rule you; you have eternal life. Punishment does not await you; you have God's forgiveness. Hell holds no terror for you; for yours is the kingdom of heaven. Damnation has been put away; salvation is yours. For, the Seed of the woman has absorbed the worst the devil can do. He has taken all of it, and he has left sin, death, and the devil powerless.

Adam and Eve had been driven from the Garden of Eden because of sin. The Tree of Life was forbidden. But now sin has been taken away. Therefore, Paradise awaits you. The Tree of Life is given to you. The tree is the cross. The fruit which hangs from it is Jesus Christ. And Jesus promises you: **“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:54)** He who has overcome sin, death, and the devil gives you forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. It all comes through a promise. It all comes through the Promised Seed. We put our hope in him, and whoever hopes in him will never be put to shame.

Isn't that what the Advent season is all about? It is a time for us to once again remember the promise of the Seed that was promised so many years ago and was fulfilled in the birth of Jesus as our Savior. The Advent season is another opportunity for us to gather around that promise that saved us from our sins. It is this time of the year where we once again remember why we need to get ready to worship the Promised Seed who showed us the greatest love of all – by becoming flesh and to suffer and die so that we might have eternal life. May we take some time this busy yet joyful time of the year to see that the Savior is Coming – just as he promised. Amen