

Genesis 1:27-31, 2:20-23, 3:13-15

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] What do all of us here this evening share? I wonder if we would be able to identify something that we all share. We might imagine or we might hope that we all share a faith in Jesus. I certainly hope that that is the case, but I don't know all of you well enough to be able to affirm that definitively. We're all alive, some of us maybe just, but we're all alive. We share a common humanity. Thinking of what else we share, we all are sick and fed up of Brexit, regardless of where you stand on the issue. I think we can say that that is something we all share.

I was just seeing online today, you were perhaps more gainfully employed, but I saw that Porsche are warning that as a result of Brexit, Porsche are going to charge 10% more. Personally, I'm devastated.

I was planning on buying a couple, but I think I'll just move on and look elsewhere. But, you know, we're fed up of the whole matter, I think. I think I can safely say that we all share that.

But moving on to something of greater moment, of greater significance. We all share a common mother. Eve is the mother of each and every one of us. We all descend from Eve, from Adam and Eve.

And I want to talk about Eve this evening in the light of what we're told about her in the first chapters of Genesis. And given her significance, she is perhaps not often talked about or preached about. And when she is talked about, it's often in less than flattering terms. She is, after all, the one who messed up. She ate the forbidden fruit and all pain and suffering and death can be traced back to that fateful bite. Now, there is in the opening chapters of Genesis quite a lot of material about Eve. And we will need to be selective. We're not going to preach on one passage or one text.

[2 : 14] But try to consider Eve's life as a picture of the human story encapsulated in the life of this one woman. You see, in Eve's life, we see the three big events that mark humanity. Creation, fall, and redemption. Each of these big issues are part of and mark the life of Eve, as they do our own lives. And let's look at each in turn as they play out in the life of a real person, a real flesh and blood woman, a human being just like you and me, and not just a case study from which theological truth or insights can be harvested. So, let's think about it, Eve, but from this perspective of creation, fall, and redemption. First of all, creation. I'm sure Eve would have been more than willing to gladly echo the words of the psalmist in Psalm 139 and verse 14 when he declares that,

I am fearfully and wonderfully made. And that was certainly true of Eve. She was fearfully and wonderfully made. And what can we say about the creation of Eve? Now, creation is a big subject, and one we don't intend to tackle this evening. But just note some observations that relate to the creation of Eve. Just some truths about her creation in particular. The first thing I want to say, and it may seem a very obvious thing to say, and maybe almost unnecessary, is to say that Eve was created in time and space and history by God. Now, as I say, you might say, well, yeah, we know that.

That's no great insight. But it is important to stress that point. Eve really existed. At a given point in time, God created Eve in the manner described in Genesis. Eve is not simply a character and a creation myth that illustrates divine truth, which would be the line that many would take even within the professing Christian church. And there would be doubts cast as to the historicity of Adam and Eve. Well, we have no time for such a questioning of God's Word. Eve was a real woman created in time and space by God. So, we can begin there. But what else do we know about Eve's creation? What else can we affirm concerning our creation? Well, in the passage that we read, the first passage that we read, we read of how Eve was created in the image and likeness of God. Now, that's not true only of Eve. It is also true of Adam. In a way, that's the point. Adam and Eve equally bear the divine image. The language that is used in chapter 1 is very carefully crafted. And so, we read there, so God created mankind in His own image. In the image of God, He created them. Male and female, He created them. And so, very carefully, it is made abundantly and very explicitly clear that Adam and Eve together bear the likeness and image of God. Indeed, we might even say that the image of God is more fully seen in Adam and Eve together.

Of course, both bear the image of God. Each of us bear God's image. But in a sense, the language where it says, male and female, He created them does suggest that the image of God is best seen, best understood in Adam and Eve created together by God. Now, this shared image bearing has implications or plays out in different ways when we think of Eve. And obviously, here, we can't think of her in isolation, but in relation to Adam. The first thing we can affirm, and affirm with great confidence and clarity, is that Eve and Adam, Adam and Eve, are equal in value and dignity. Their value, their dignity, is grounded in the manner of their creation, created in the image and likeness of God. And we read that both equally are created in the image and likeness of God. And so, necessarily, men and women are equal in value and in dignity in God's sight. And as they are in God's sight, so they should be in our sight also.

But another thing we can note about Eve's creation that is maybe one that we don't focus on quite so much, is that Eve shares with Adam the task of ruling over creation as God's representatives.

[7:17] As often, the stress is made on Adam's leadership role within the order of creation, and there's maybe something that can be said for that. But in the language that we have there in chapter 1, where having been told of the manner in which God created Adam and Eve, male and female, we then have God addressing Adam and Eve and entrusting to them this authority over creation. Notice the language there in verse 28 of chapter 1, God blessed them, man and woman, God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and it goes on. He's not speaking just to Adam, he's speaking to Adam and Eve, and he speaks to both of them and entrusts to both of them this role of being his representatives, his vice regents, those who enjoy and are to exercise carefully and responsibly authority over creation and over all other life. And so Eve shares with Adam that task.

It's also clear from what we're told about the creation of Eve and Adam is that Eve and Adam are different. They're equal but different. Eve is said to complement Adam. She's described as a suitable helper or a suitable complement. It doesn't make her more or less, but it simply stresses the fact that Adam and Eve together complement one another. Why? Because they are different, equal in value, equal in dignity, equally loved by God, but different in their own ways. And these are all foundational truths that have implications for us today and always. We reject any purported reading or interpretation of the Bible that assigns to women a lesser place or value in God's sight. We need to recognize the responsibility of men and women to rule over and care for our planet. Now this extends to any number of tasks that men and women are equally called to and capable of. But we also need to recognize that God created men and women. Again, it's not rocket science. We'd all say, well, we know that.

And yet isn't it strange that we live in a world where even that foundational truth is being attacked and questioned and undermined, that humanity is divided into men and women. Two genders, two sexes, not a multiplicity of sexes and genders. Of course, for holding on to this foundational truth, we'll be told that we're on the wrong side of history. Isn't that the great phrase that people bandy about? You're on the wrong side of history.

Well, so be it. I don't think we are on the wrong side of history, but even if we were, so be it. And we also do need to recognize, as we draw out some of these truths, that men and women are different.

Not better, not worse, but different. As our friends in France say, *vive la difference*. So, Eve was fearfully and wonderfully made. I wonder, what was Eve's experience of creation? Well, very little, given that she was altogether passive in the act of creation. But let's maybe consider the first moments of her first moments of existence or self-awareness. In chapter 2 and in verse 22, we meet her for the first time, having been created, or her first experience of life.

[10 : 49] And we read there, then the Lord God made a woman from the rib. He had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. He brought her to the man. What must those first few steps in the shadow of God have felt like for Eve? And then we read that when she's introduced to the man, we read, the man said, there in verse 23, the man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman. The first words directed to Eve by Adam, the first recorded human words. What are they? What kind of words are they? Well, very strikingly, they are poetic words. This is poetry. The very first recorded words of humanity are poetry. And I'm not a great expert on poetry, but if that doesn't dignify poetry and give it a place of great importance, I don't know what does.

The very first recorded words in this world that God has created are poetic and in character. They're not only poetic, but they're euphoric. Adam is so excited by what God has brought him.

I think we can also detect in the words a tenderness and a love that is beginning to arise in Adam's heart for this woman who God has provided for him. Now, in the days and weeks that followed, we don't know how long transpired till the fall. Adam and Eve explored themselves and each other and the garden and God, and it was all a quite fabulous adventure. But then that tragic day dawned, and that moves us on to the second big reality of Eve's life, and that is the reality of fall, of her fall, of humanity's fall, a sad and shameful fall from grace. We know the story, and we often make the same mistake that Adam made and point the accusing finger of blame towards Eve. You remember the words of Adam, the woman that you gave me. What can we say about Eve's fall? Maybe thinking about before and during and after. When we think of Eve before the fall in what we read and in what we find in the opening chapters of Genesis, and particularly in chapter 3, before the fall, we might describe Eve as unprotected by Adam. Eve, in her dialogue with the serpent, it would seem had not been properly instructed in God's Word. Now, there may be an element in which she did know the truth, but she chose to twist the truth. That's certainly possible, but I think it's also reasonable to suggest at any rate that she had not been properly instructed. Remember that when God gave the instructions about the trees in the garden and what was permissible and what was not permissible, Eve had not yet been created. And so, we presume that it was Adam's responsibility to explain to her. So, when he is given Eve and Adam says, oh, there's some ground rules here in the garden and these are the ground rules. Well, he didn't seem to do a very good job because when the serpent comes, Eve is all over the place in terms of understanding what God had said. And I wonder, and I'm just suggesting this,

I wonder if Adam has some responsibility in this matter. It's also true that, in a sense, Eve was abandoned by Adam at the point of temptation. It was his responsibility to shield Eve, but he's passive throughout, present but passive. Notice in chapter 3 and verse 6 where we read about these events unfolding. We read, when the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. And then we read, she also gave some to her husband who was with her. Now, again, we can't definitively state this, but that little expression, who was with her, suggests that he was there the whole time. You know, this wasn't some private dialogue between the serpent and Eve and then once everything is just coming to a head, then Adam appears. No, he was with her. But he was silent. He was silent. He should have jumped in and said, no. But no, he was silent. And so there's a way in which he falls short in his responsibilities.

But having said that, we also have to recognize that at the moment of disobedience, Eve chose to sin. Eve does bear responsibility. This in itself is evidence of her dignity and worth, that she can be attributed responsibility for her own actions. She is not just a victim. Indeed, that's very clear in the manner in which God directs words to her. In chapter 3 and verse 13, then the Lord God said to the woman, what is this you have done? And so in this way, God is recognizing and it's being acknowledged that she was responsible for her actions. And of course, as a result of the fall, Eve, together with Adam, experiences shame and guilt and isolation and death. And we all share in Eve and Adam's guilt.

[16 : 11] The point is often made that Adam sinned in representation of all humanity and so we all fell with Adam. And this is true. And it's of critical theological significance when we consider Jesus as the second Adam acting in representation of his people. But I think we can also legitimately identify Eve with Adam as sinning in representation of all their descendants. And so when we think of Eve, we think of her creation, we think of fall. But then there's this third major theme in the life of Eve, and that is redemption. Where in the midst of the darkness and the hopelessness, there are words of hope for Adam and Eve. In chapter 3, when God is responding to this turn of events, to the disobedience of Adam and Eve, and he directs words to the woman and to the snake and to the man. Within these words, there are words of hope. There is a glimmer of hope. Words that speak of redemption are uttered by God.

And very particularly in words that he directs to the snake. In verse 15 of chapter 3, we read, and I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. Now, though these words were directed to the snake, they are, I think again, very, I think it's clear, they were heard by Eve. If you see the order in which God addresses the different parties, there in verses 13 to 16, in verse 13, as we've noted a moment ago, he directs words to Eve, what is this you have done? And then we read, so the Lord God said to the snake, you know, because Eve says, well, it was the snake's fault. And so God turns to the snake and directs words to the snake. And having directed to words to the snake, in verse 16, or rather in, yeah, in verse 16, we read to the woman, he said. So again, everything would suggest that everybody is hearing everything.

And so the words that God directs to the snake are heard by Adam and Eve. And so they are able to be party to these words of hope, this hope of redemption. Now these, the words that I read there in verse 15, they're sometimes described as the proto-evangelium, or the first gospel, the first glimmer of the gospel anticipating a Messiah who would redeem a fallen humanity.

Now I want us to spend a little time, just a very brief time, thinking about this hope of redemption, but from Eve's perspective. You see, when we read these verses, or this verse in particular, verse 15 of chapter 3, it's impossible for us not to read it in the light of Jesus, in the light of all that we know about Jesus. And so we read that verse, and we say, well, isn't this wonderful how this was fulfilled in the person of Jesus? And of course that's true, and it is wonderful. But let's try for a moment to imagine the significance of these words from the perspective of Eve. Eve doesn't have that background that we have. Eve doesn't know that a man called Jesus would come at a given point and do what he did.

All she has is this glimmer of hope, these words that speak of redemption, of victory over evil, of the mess being sorted out somehow. That's what she has. Let's try to think of this from her perspective. What does Eve know? Well, she knows that one of her sons, the language used is of offspring or seed. So she hears what God says to the snake, and she understands that one of her sons will somehow sort out the mess and crush the head of the snake. So that's what she knows. And then what happens in the story as it unfolds? Well, in chapter 4 and verse 1, we see what happens next. Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. What might Eve have thought regarding the mission and destiny of her firstborn son? Remember, she has heard that her seed, her offspring, would crush the head of the serpent. And now she has a son, her firstborn. Is it not reasonable to imagine that

[20 : 45] Eve might have thought, well, this is the man, this is the son who will do that which God has determined. He is the one who will crush the head of the snake. But what happened? Well, we know that Cain crushed the wrong head. He didn't crush the head of the snake. He crushed the head of his own brother. Cain, like his mother before him, was tempted and fell, and he crushed the head of his own brother and killed and murdered him. And even that truth that, again, we're very familiar with, have you ever paused to consider this at the very human level of a human tragedy or a family tragedy? Can you imagine the moment Eve discovered what had happened? In a way, she lost two sons that day, the one who died and the one who killed. The one who killed now condemned to the life of a restless wanderer on the earth. And I wonder if in the midst of her tragedy, I wonder if Eve doubted God's promise. Did she lose her hope? That glimmer of hope of redemption? And when we wonder if that might have been true of Eve, it reminds us of our own reality as well, as those who are created by God, who are guilty of sin, but who also have the promise and the hope of redemption. We also, with Eve, recognize that in our experience the promise and the hope of redemption doesn't deliver in an instant a pain-free life.

Eve, even as she clung to the promise, experienced heartbreak and pain and doubt and fear, and no doubt often cried out, how long, O Lord, when will it be? And perhaps there was no answer to that cry. She simply had to trust. And so too with us. There are times when we simply have to trust. But God is faithful and keeper of promises. And so we read at the end of chapter 4, after the tragedy of this violence and death, we read that Adam made love to his wife again. And she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, there in verse 25 of chapter 4. So Seth would take the place or his place at the head of a godly line of descendants that would in time see the coming and birth of Messiah Jesus. We can follow the thread of that godly line in chapter 5 of Genesis. It begins with Seth, the son who God gave, in a sense, to replace

Abel who had been killed. And then in chapter 5 we see this whole line, this godly line with Seth at the head, right down to the appearance of Noah. And at the end of chapter 5, after Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem. And so there's this line through which the promise is being kept and incubated, as it were, from Seth right through to Noah and Noah's son, Shem. And then when we turn to chapter 11, we see how that line continues, God preserving that line. Because in chapter 11 and verse 10, we read this is the count of Shem's family line. So from Seth to Noah, Noah the father of Shem, and then from Shem we have this line right through to Abraham. And then if we turn to the New Testament, to Matthew chapter 1, we pick up the story or we pick up this godly line from Abraham right through to him, right through to Jesus and the coming of Messiah. And so the promise is true.

The promise is firm. And though the centuries would pass, the millennia would pass, the promise was always going to be fulfilled in God's time, at the time of God's appointing. And so we see in the coming of Jesus, the seed promised by God in Genesis chapter 3. Jesus, who was tempted like his mother Eve, but without sin. Even seeing the parallels between Eve's temptation and Jesus' temptation can be quite instructive. The common themes that there are this evening doesn't allow us the time to do that.

But what certainly is true that though Jesus was tempted like Eve, he was without sin. And Jesus triumphed over death. At the cross, the devil struck his heel, but Jesus crushed his head. And Jesus redeemed his people. You know, one picture employed to illustrate an aspect of the redeeming work of Jesus is that of new clothing or new vestments being granted to God's people. How Jesus clothes his people in his own righteousness. And this aspect of the redeeming work of Jesus is perhaps hinted at, even in the experience of Adam and Eve, when they were clothed by God following the fall. You know, in chapter 3 we read how they felt shame as a result of their sin. And then we read of how God clothed them, how he took the skin of an animal, perhaps following a sacrifice, and the shedding of blood, perhaps, and he clothed Adam and Eve. Just a hint of a far greater and more marvelous clothing that would be provided by the work of Jesus, clothing his people in his own righteousness. And so we meet and discover something about Eve or are reminded about Eve, creation, fall, redemption. This is Eve's story, but this is our story. This is your story. And in it we see the hand of a God who loves his people and who reaches out to his people and who rescues and redeems his people. Well, let us pray.

[27 : 06] Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your Word. We thank you that we turn to it with a confidence that it is indeed the very Word of God. And we thank you that as we turn to it we encounter truth that is though so old in many ways, yet so real and relevant and timely and contemporary for our own lives and circumstances. And so we do pray that you would help us to consider and to process all that we have discovered in your Word this evening, and that it would be food for our soul, that it would instruct us as to how we are to think and how we are to live and how we are to behave. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.