**What’s In the Text?**

**Genesis 1:1-2:3**

*The Great Vigil of Easter*

*04.08.2023*

I want to read a bit further in Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17 *Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil…*

 *15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Come travel back with me to the beginning of recorded time. There is God, looking over what He has created so far – land, vegetation, the sun, the moon, all the stars, birds, and fish. God is walking the earth, looking at all that He, by the creative power of His Word going forth from His mouth, has created. You hear Him speak again, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” The ground ripples and bubbles, and suddenly, springing forth and sending clods of dirt flying, are all sorts of animals: cows, horses, lions, tigers, brontosaurus, iguanas, deer, sheep, badgers, and all sorts of animals which walk upon the land.

Did you hear it? God spoke and all that exists came into existence. God spoke and the land spewed forth living creatures.

But then God reaches down and scoops out some earth – dust. Very tenderly He shapes and forms the dirt, sort of like modeling clay. You can see that what He is fashioning looks something like a mud model of you, me, and other men. Then God takes a breath and covering what looks like the face, breathes into it. The beautifully formed clod of dust in His hands changes miraculously. Now it is flesh, blood, bone, sinew, hair – a living, breathing soul – the first man – Adam.

God has a special garden for the man, a garden unlike what we have come to know as gardens. A lush place where fruit trees and vegetables grow up without any weeds. A garden with paths through it upon which one could wander, picking and eating at your leisure – everything lush and green and beautiful – let me repeat – without weeds. It is anything we can imagine.

God places the man in this garden and tells him, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Why would God go through all the trouble of doing something so drastically different in the making of man? Why not speak man into existence as the other animals? Why the special treatment of breathing His own breath into him? Why this special garden for him?

Why? Because man was as the crown of God’s creation! All that was created, was created for man to have dominion over – that man might nourish and care for it. All of creation was made so that God could set man in the midst of it and give it to him as a gracious gift to man. Man was made in God's image, a different sort of creature than all the others, with a reason and intellect above all others – perfect and holy. He was, unlike the other creatures God made. Having God's breath of life in him, his life was to be without end.

Afterward, God gave Eve to Adam – flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. She was made by the very finger of God as He put Adam to sleep, took a rib from him, and formed Eve from that very rib. Then God brought her to Adam and gave him to her.

There is the scene. It is perfection and beauty that we cannot understand. They walked together with God in the cool of the evening. They knew God perfectly, intimately, and God spoke with them.

“If you love me, you will do as I command!”

How many parents have said words similar to that, if not that exactly? Only that parental rules are much more extensive. Adam and Eve had one rule – don’t eat the fruit of that one tree.

Adam chose a different path, he doubted God. He wanted to do his own thing. He wanted to be like God. So, he and his wife ate that which had been forbidden to eat. He had it so good, there were so many incredible things in the wonderful creation which God had given him to manage, but it was not enough, He disbelieved God!

Satan used that one tree to tempt man, and by man's unbelief of God's Word, man was cast out of the garden. The breath that gave Adam life was an eternal breath. It gave life, but now it was an eternity in a different state – a state of sinfulness. Sinfulness brought suffering, pain, death, weeds, and separation from God.

And it was not just Adam and Eve who would suffer under sinfulness, but their offspring right up until April of 2023 – and into the foreseeable future. Instead of perfection and holiness, sinfulness now reigns.

Come again with me, travel to another special place. It is dark, hard to see, but there appears to be a tree there, no garden, but a tree. Wait, squinting and peering harder into the darkness, we see three trees. It is a bleak scene, hard to see because of the dark. People are gathered there. Getting closer we hear that some are weeping! Others are shouting obscenities. Getting closer still and we can make out men nailed to those trees. We also notice that the center tree is garnering most of the gathered crowd’s attention – a number of women are beneath it weeping, and others, nicely dressed, are mocking the Man nailed upon that tree.

With a loud voice, that One cries out, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” And when He had said this, He breathed His last. (give heavy, breathy, sigh)

That is where we were left yesterday. It was the scene of the Crucifixion of God’s Christ. The Word of God which spoke all into existence is enfleshed in the man Jesus, God’s Christ. All the sinfulness of all mankind was gathered into the Son of Man upon that cross. In breathing His last, He dies the death promised in the garden. In His burial Christ lays in the tomb all the sins, of all mankind, that had been gathered into His flesh.

Today we are in Vigil. We know what is coming. We know that on the third day He rose from the grave, sin and death defeated and left buried in Sis tomb. He has won the victory over Satan.

This same Word of God enfleshed, this Jesus Christ, is still breathing life into His people. Rising from the dead, Jesus came to His disciples locked in the upper room and spoke to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.”

Just as at the beginning, He breathes life into lifeless clay. The cold hearts of sinners are made to breathe with new life as the breath of God breathes His forgiveness and His life into them.

You and I see the evidence of sinfulness – we see the very suffering and death which has come into the world, and into our own flesh because we are the descendants of Adam. We are descendants not only of the flesh, but of the sinfulness we share with him by nature of that shared flesh.

But as God breathed His own life into Adam and gave him life, so also He breathes His Spirit – His breath – into us and gives us life through His Word. Christ gives us not only His breath, but His very flesh and blood. We eat and we drink! We receive forgiveness! We are blessed with holy and sinless food from the Tree of the Cross to nourish us in the dreary desert of this life. We are blessed with holy and sinless food which strengthens us unto life everlasting as Christ feeds us and makes His dwelling within in us.

Yes, we are those who have inherited from Adam – sinfulness and death.

But we have died with the second Adam, buried with Christ, through baptism, into death. And, as He has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too walk in newness of life. For if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old has passed away –buried with Christ – and the new has come.

As we wait to fully break out in Resurrection joy – you are already raised to new life as the new man you already are in Christ. Live in Christ Jesus – today, tomorrow, and always. In the name of Jesus. Amen.