**Breath Of Life**

**Genesis 2:7-17**

Trinity VII – 07.18.2021

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

Come travel back with me to a time long ago. God is there, 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 – had created.

He speaks 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 others that God imagined and brought forth by Word of His mouth that sixth day of creation.

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 dust of the earth. Very tenderly He shapes and forms the dirt, sort of like modeling clay. It is evident He is fashioning 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 dirt clog in his hands changes miraculously, it becomes flesh, blood, bone, sinew, hair – it becomes a living, breathing man – the first man – Adam.

Then God plants a special garden for the man. A garden unlike what we have come to know as gardens. Envision a lush place where fruit trees and vegetables grow up without being accompanied by weeds. Imagine a garden with paths through it upon which one could wander, picking and eating at your leisure – everything lush and green and beautiful (without weeds) beyond what we can imagine.

And then 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 plant a special garden for him?

Why? Because man is the crown of God’s creation – created in the image of God! All that was created, was created for man to have dominion over – to nourish and care for it, to be God’s steward of it all. All of creation was made so that God could set man in the midst of it, to give it to him as God’s gift to man. Man, made in God's image, perfect and holy, was unlike the other creatures God made. God breathed His own breath of life into him, man was above and beyond the other creatures in some man ways we cannot imagine.

While not in our text, we know 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 her to him to be One Flesh.

This perfection and beauty they enjoyed at that point in creation is beyond our ability to comprehend. They walked together with God in the cool of the evening. They knew God perfectly, intimately, and God spoke with them.

But all of that changed with their sin. We cannot begin to understand all this, because our world is tainted and imperfect, everything is fouled up by sin.

So, where is this garden?

We know the present geographical setting of the four rivers that flowed out of the garden, but sin has changed the world. The picture in our text is from the time before Noah, when there was still one continent – before the continental shift that broke them apart, moving them by the bursting forth of the great deeps in the flood.

We know this because our text speaks of THE RIVER that flows out of the garden splitting into four rivers which flow to or around various “lands.” Dear friends those lands are not all on the same continent. The river called Pishon, we believe is today is called the Ganges which is in India. The Gihon flows around Cush, modern day Ethiopia - the Gihon would be the Nile, but today the Nile does not flow around Ethiopia. The Tigris in Eden flows to the east of Assyria, but today the Tigris flows on the west side of Assyria. These rivers, originating in Eden, identify rivers and places that are on three continents today. They do not share a common source today, as they did in the times of Eden.

Sin brought about Noah’s flood which changed the earth's geography significantly, and apparently washed the Garden of Eden off the face of the earth.

We know this truth, “If you love me, you will do as I command!”

How many parents have said words similar to that, if not that exactly? Only the rules were much more extensive.

Adam chose a different path, he doubted God. He wanted to do his own thing. He wanted to be like God. He and his wife ate that which had been forbidden to eat. God had placed them into His incredibly wonderful creation to care for it for Him, 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 July of 2021 – and into the foreseeable future. Perfection no longer reigns, sinfulness does. Not just in man, but it has also corrupted all creation.

Come travel with me in your mind to another special place. It is dark, hard to see, another tree looms in the dark – no garden, but a tree. Peering harder, we note three trees, not just one – a dark, bleak scene on a hillside. Getting closer we hear weeping. Other voices are shouting obscenities. In the gloom we discern men nailed to those trees, the center tree garnering all the attention – women beneath it weeping, nicely dressed men mocking the Man nailed to it.

With a loud voice, that One cries out, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” He sighs heavily, His head drops to His chest, as His last breath leaving Him.

The Word of God which in six days spoke all into existence, whose hands formed Adam and Eve, is enfleshed in Jesus Christ. He bore all the sinfulness of all mankind upon the cross. Breathing His last, He dies the death He promised in the garden. In His burial Christ lays in His tomb the sins of all mankind gathered in His flesh. Three days later He rose from the grave, sin and death defeated and left buried.

It is this same Word of God enfleshed, this Jesus Christ, who is still breathing life into His people. After rising from the dead, Jesus came to His disciples 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. With His Word 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 that has come into the world, and into our very own flesh as descendants of Adam. We are descendants not only of the flesh, but of the sinfulness we share with him by nature of that flesh.

But as God breathed His own life into Adam and gave him life, so also He breathes His Spirit 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 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 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 – it is buried with Christ – and the new has come.

You and I are a new creation, not yet fully realized. We are the living hope of all creation which groans in eager anticipation of our revealing on the last day. While t has been subjected to sin and corruption with the fall, it waits in hopefulness. Each day we see creation peaking forth in that hope – blooming roses, lush raspberries, sweet corn, newborn puppies, beautiful sunrises, and God’s eternal promise in the rainbows which lighten our hearts in the midst of a storm. Yes, it is as our new banner says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!”

We have the very breath of the Lord granting us life – everything we do as the redeemed of God for our neighbor and in faith toward God is an act of praise. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus, life everlasting given and renewed in you – and our every breath is praise to His holy name.

Yes, you are a new man in Christ – unto life everlasting. Amen.