

Prayer

Your ways are ways of peace, Lord Jesus; so make us agents of peace. Your ways are ways of love, Lord Jesus; so make us carers of others. Your ways are ways of truth, Lord Jesus; so give us hearts to explore it and speak it. We ask this because peace, love and truth are Your gifts to us and we long to use them according to Your will. Thank You Lord, AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Local Services

Pray today for those who live near to you who are old, perhaps those who live in care or nursing homes. Pray against the ill treatment of the elderly, and for their blessing.

On-going prayers

- *Pray that the benefits of science will be shared for the good of all*
- *Pray for people who are working to restore broken communities*
- *Give thanks for water, for all it is used for, and for all it does*

Meditation

Lord God Almighty:

Give us joy; and may we delight in You and Your presence;
Give us mercy; and may we do what is right for those in need;
Give us faithfulness; and may we not let other people down;
Give us grace; and may we reflect the love of God in the world;
Give us kindness; and may our deeds be a blessing to others;
Give us patience; and may we continue to trust You all the time;
Give us peace; and may we rest and be refreshed in You;
Give us love; and may we follow our Saviour in all we do;

Lord God Almighty;

Give us Yourself; and may we always witness to Your glory.

Bible Study - Genesis 3:20-24

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all those who live. ²¹ And the LORD God made leather garments for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

²² Then the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil." Therefore, in case he were to reach out his hand and also take from the tree of life, and eat, and lives forever, ²³ the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden, to work the soil from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man; and he placed the cherubim to the east of the garden of Eden, and a swirling fiery sword to guard the way to the tree of life.

Review

This passage concludes the second story of Creation which was begun in Genesis 2:4. Much has happened, and this text comes after the three famous pronouncements by the

Lord against the serpent, the woman and the man (3:14-19). In different ways, each had sinned; the serpent by being the agent of evil (Satan), the woman for giving in to selfish desire and temptation, and the man for blindly accepting temptation and sin from his wife without question. The damage had been done and a barrier created between God and His creation, and we might imagine that the story would be concluded at this point. However, it does not, for the Lord never merely accepted the presence of sin and evil in His world, and acted to protect His creation in four different ways. Again, we might imagine that God would be angry and full of wrath because of what has happened, but the tone of His voice in this passage is restrained and sad. His action is forthright and strong (3:24), but also full of compassion (3:21), for this, indeed, is the beginning of God's relationship with fallen humanity.

There are four features of this text, each of them either adding considerably to what we already know about what happened in the Garden of Eden. Firstly, in the naming of Eve, Adam began to fulfil God's earlier prophecy (3:16) that he would dominate her, for to 'name' something or someone was to exercise power and control over that which was named. Yet Adam appears to have done this with a degree of love, giving her a name that reflected what God had said to her about her glorious, though difficult, role of childbearing. He called her 'Eve', meaning 'life', or 'the mother of all living' (3:20).

The second feature is God's clothing of Adam and Eve. When the two of them realised their sin and attempted to clothe themselves before God could find them, Adam and Eve had attempted to cover themselves up by sowing together fig leaves (see 3:7) but this was never likely to last long! God, however, made them substantial clothes from skins of leather, presumably from animals; leather was highly valued in ancient times for its longevity and its protective qualities. In this way, God acted like a parent providing for a child leaving home, a picture which was not far from the truth (2:24)!

The third feature indicates God's dilemma about what to do with Adam and Eve. He was obliged to evict them from the Garden of Eden itself, because the Garden represented the perfection of the original creation, and this had been bighted. Adam and Eve had fallen prey to their own desires and could not be allowed to remain in the Garden because of the essential spiritual divide created by their sin, and this separated them from the holiness and perfection of Almighty God. Nevertheless, God still cared deeply for the two of them because although fallen, they were still made in His likeness. Verse 22 depicts God thinking about He had to do with Adam and Eve, as if He was mulling over the awful consequences of what had happened and thinking about how it could be handled. He sent them away, but with the ability to procreate and provide for themselves in the new world that awaited them.

The final feature of this passage is the manner in which God prevented Adam and Eve from returning to the Garden, placing a cherubim and a 'swirling fiery sword' at the east of the Garden. These insurmountable obstacles represent the essential difference between earth and heaven. Firstly, the difference between what was sacred and profane was represented by the guarding cherubim (angelic beings charged with the protection of Ark in the Temple – see Exodus 25:18). Secondly, the difference between life immortal and death, which was guarded by the fiery sword (a symbol of division and war, but also the Word of God in later scriptures – see Micah 4:3f. Psalm 37:14; Eph 6:17). Adam and Eve could not go back in time to change what had happened, and the world was changed forever.

In all this, one thing happens in the story almost subversively. Genesis 3 began with the text talking about 'the man' and 'the woman', as if describing people generally. However, towards the end of the chapter, here in the last few verses, it slips into using the names 'Adam' and 'Eve' as two names for two individuals, for the first time. After all that had happened, now we have two 'real' people like us, who have before them the challenge to

live as we do within a fallen world. Adam and Eve are now real characters within the Bible story with lives to live and in whom we can see God's purposes at work.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What impression do you have of the character of God from this text? Describe these characteristics of God.
2. To what extent is it true that people know the difference between good and evil (3:22) and how does this affect real life?
3. What does it mean to us now for there to be a 'cherubim and a sword' between us and God?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

The second story of Creation sets in place an understanding of fallen humanity against which the Gospel of salvation takes place. Genesis 2 and 3 have been the subject of constant debate over thousands of years, and yet they have also captured the imagination of artists and musicians alike. How do you react to the whole story? It can be difficult for those of us who have lived for years as Christians to empathise with a story which describes the fallen state of men and women. However, it is a reminder for us of the sins of the world in which we live, and to which we are still prone, and also a warning about what will happen to us if we miss our way on the path God has set before us, and choose our own.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *What picture do you have of God? Is he a great father figure dominating everything and issuing commands to you and to everything around, or is He a friend walking with you, for example? There are many possible pictures by which we may be blessed, but do ask the Lord whether you are picturing Him correctly.*
- *Pray for those who find it difficult to have any particular image of God either through fear or because they have been robbed of their self confidence in spiritual matters. Pray that God will bless them with a new experience of His grace.*

Final Prayer

Jesus, we give You our praise, knowing that You are with us in remarkable ways; for You read our minds, You touch our hearts, You see what our eyes see and You sense our feelings. However, Lord Jesus, please make Yourself known to us in each and every moment, and guide us according to Your will by the power of Your love. AMEN