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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 0 0] Good morning. A warm welcome to the service. Good to have some visitors with us as well. And those who are maybe not visitors but who are on holiday and are back for a few days.

There's tea and there's coffee at the end of the service. If you're able to stay behind, please do so. I'll just go through the intimations on the screen. I don't have them in front of me. The evening service is at six tonight and Phil Pickett, who's been here before, he's a minister in Carloway, will be taking that service.

I'm in Kinloch this evening as Paul is over in Uist. The monthly prayer meeting for the elders at seven tomorrow night. Ladies' Fellowship, Monday night, and you have details there.

And on Tuesday in the morning, Little Fishers, as usual. Pray on for that work and Road to Recovery in the evening. Pray on for those who struggle. This is a difficult month, in particular for those who battle with alcohol.

Prayer meeting on Wednesday, and that is in person and on Zoom. And this coming Wednesday, we've got a guy called Duncan Peters, who's going to be speaking about work that is ongoing to Islamic people in a part of the country.

[1 : 1 7] So be encouraged to come to that, to hear, and to pray for that work. Mothers and Toddlers Gallic Group this Thursday, 10 to half past 11.

And Friday clubs, as usual, jam, connect, rooted at the usual times and usual places. And again, pray on for that work. Some days we can have, sometimes it can be between 50 and 100 people, young ones, through the church on a Friday.

And it's great to see them, but pray for them, many of whom don't go to any church. So pray for that outreach to the young ones. Service is next Sunday, God willing, conducted by myself, morning and evening.

And there we have the cleaning rotas. I have to note, 12th of December, I have to get the hoover out. And I think these are all the notices. And we'll begin this time of worship now.

Let's worship God, and let's sing to God's praise. We're going to sing, sing Psalms 23. Sing Psalms 23, a version of Psalm 23.

[2 : 2 3] And it goes to the tune for Jehovah St. Kenyu. I think we repeat the last line as we go through the tune. The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know.

He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow. My wandering steps he brings back to his way in straight paths of righteousness, making me stay.

And this he has done, his great name to display. Though I walk in death's valley where darkness is near, because you are with me, no evil I fear.

Your rod and your staff bring me comfort and cheer. And in a week where we're aware of those who are sick and struggling, and we're conscious of those who are feeling grief from loved ones lost, it's good to be able to sing these words and to look to the Lord Jesus as the good shepherd who is with us.

So we'll stand to sing to God's praise. You got it, Ian? The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know.

[3 : 51] He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow. I wander his steps he brings back to his way in straight paths of righteousness, making me stay.

And this he has done, his great name to display. And this he has done, his great name to display.

He leads me to rest where darkness is near, because you are with me, no evil I fear.

Your oil and your staff bring me comfort and cheer. Your oil and your staff bring me comfort and cheer.

[5 : 29] This light of my enemies, not a table you spread. Your oil and your staff bring me comfort and cheer.

Your God and mercy and grace will follow me closely in all of my ways.

I would dwell in the house of the Lord of my days. I would dwell in the house of the Lord of my days.

I would dwell in the house of the Lord of my days. I would dwell in the house of the Lord of my days. Draw near to God in prayer.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this, your day, and we thank you once more for the words that we have been singing.

[7 : 06] We thank you for the fact that we can gather together this morning as sheep that hear the voice of the Good Shepherd who says to us to come to him and to follow him.

And we thank you for the good shepherd. And we thank you that the words of that psalm are fulfilled in Jesus who said himself, I am the Good Shepherd, the one who lays down my life for the sheep.

I am the one who is able to give them eternal life. And no one can snatch them from my hand. And we thank you for the richness of the promises of the Lord Jesus.

Promises that we hear from him as we read his words and the Gospels and promises that we see fulfilled in him and worked out through him.

As he lived and as he died and as he rose for us. We thank you that the covenant of mercy and grace that we were singing of is a covenant that found its fulfillment in Jesus.

[8 : 18] We thank you for the grace of Jesus laying down his life so that we can be shown mercy. So that we can be shown grace. We recognize that we are sinners.

We are guilty. We are deserving of judgment, not mercy. But we thank you that the one who was sinless, Jesus, laid down his life.

He was not spared. But was delivered over to death to pay the punishment for our sin. So that as we cry out for mercy. And as we look for grace, we find it in him.

So help us, we pray, to hear the voice of Jesus today. We are conscious that there are so many distractions. Our minds are so full of everything that has happened in the week past.

And perhaps the things that are beginning to preoccupy us in the week ahead. So we pray that you would take away all these distractions. That you would help us to be still and to know that you are God and that you are with us.

[9 : 25] We pray that you would help us to hear your voice. Saying, come to me and find rest for your souls. And we pray for that rest.

We pray, Lord, that you would cleanse us from our sin. As we think about the ways that we have fallen and failed. The things that we have done and left undone.

The thoughts that have passed through our minds. The words that we have spoken. We pray, Lord, that you would cleanse us from sin. As we lay it out before you.

In the silence of this place. We ask that you would cleanse us. That you would wash us in the blood of Jesus. And that you would make us clean. And help us, we pray, to be trusting you.

We thank you that we can have rest day by day. As we come to the Lord Jesus. We thank you that we are called to abide in him.

[10 : 25] And as we do so, we feel no want. But we receive contentment. In the deepest place of our hearts. And we thank you that as we abide in Jesus.

We are made lively, spiritually alive. And bright. And you are able to use us. To bring glory to your name. And that's our desire if we are in Christ.

That we would. That it would be our chief end to glorify God. And not to lift up ourselves. And not to pursue our own comfort and security. But, Lord, that we would be found looking to you.

So help us, we pray. To be able to know and experience what we've sang. That the Lord is our shepherd. The one who is with us in life. The one who is able to carry us through death.

Into life that's everlasting. We pray for your comfort for those whose hearts are sore today. And we are conscious of those who have, in recent days, passed through death's dark veil.

[11 : 33] And, Lord, as we remember their lives, we are thankful for their lives. We're thankful for the memories that we're left with. And we're thankful for the gospel.

We thank you that there is that promise given. That when we are able to say from our hearts, the Lord is my shepherd, we are carried through death into life that's everlasting.

So we pray that each one of us, whilst there is time, would call upon the name of the Lord. Lord, and know that when our time in this world comes to an end, that we will be safe.

We pray your comfort for those whose hearts are sore. Lord, that you would give them your peace. That you would give them your strength. And we think, Lord, especially of Mary Cameron having lost her brother.

We pray for Kenny and for his family as he grieves for his mum. And, Lord, we pray for Elaine and Stockinish, and for others as well, who every time there's a death, feel that wound open back up, and the pain of grief once more.

[12 : 41] You are the God of all comfort. And we pray that you would draw near to those who need that comfort today. And we pray also, Lord, for your presence and for your grace, for your touch to be with those who are sick.

We are conscious of so many, even in this last week, who have received difficult news and difficult diagnosis, and who look at the future and wonder how it will be.

And we bring them to you and ask that you would minister to all those who are sick. We pray for Rachel McSween. And we pray for Donald with her. We ask, Lord, that your hand would be upon them both.

We pray for Marlene in hospital in Glasgow. And we ask that you would be with Kirstie and John and the rest of the family at this time. We pray for Roddy and Mia Vigin hospital at this time.

We pray for Kathy Campbell. And we're thankful for the news that she hopes to get home soon. We pray that you would be with each one of them. We pray for Ian Myrtle as he recovers also.

[13 : 46] For Neil Cameron at home as he recovers. And we pray that his strength would increase. And others that we've not mentioned audibly, but we can see in our mind's eye.

We bring them to you in prayer and ask, Lord, that you would touch them, that you would minister to them. You are the great physician. And you are the one who is with us.

Even when we do not feel a healing touch, we thank you that you are the God who is with us in every day that we have in time and then takes us into eternity.

We ask, Lord, that you would be with those who have worries and anxieties and stresses. We pray on for those who battle with addictions and who are feeling temptation in a greater way this month.

And we ask that you would strengthen them and help them to be steady. We pray, Lord, for those who are anxious and who are worried. The financial pressures of this season, relational pressures, we bring them to you.

[14 : 50] And we ask that you would minister to them. And help us in this month, Lord. We pray that you would give to us as your people boldness. Give us courage.

Give us opportunity to look around and to look for the opportunities that you will give us to tell people about Jesus. We see lights. We see trees.

We see signs. We see so many pointers to that season that is called Christmas. And we ask, Lord, that you would help us to speak of Christ.

So hear our prayers and bless this time of worship, we pray. Lead us and guide us and bless us in your presence. And we ask this in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Amen. Boys and girls, we've got a few of you away today, but there's some here too, so it's good to see you. Come forward. Well, everyone's getting more here every week.

[15 : 55] Unlike our dad and me. What on earth's going on? Boys and girls, how are you today?

You well? Good, good. Now, can you see I've got some things down here? What do you think these things are? Well, Cammie, how you come?

You can do this. So, I thought today I would show you some things.

And I think you'd call it, what do you call it? PPE? Protective stuff. So, Cammie, step up into the, step up right up here, where everyone can see you. Everyone can see you.

All right. Okay. And talk us through. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Hold it up and let's see if the boys and girls can guess what these different things are for. What's this? Okay. Can you guess what this is? A fire.

[16 : 59] Oh, my. A jacket. Yeah. But what type of jacket is it? Is it a normal jacket that David's wearing? No. Shawnee, what type of jacket? A fire jacket. It's a fire jacket. Why do you call it a fire jacket?

What does it do? Because when there's a fire, when the fire goes on, it doesn't go through it. Yeah. It protects you. It gives you protection. If David went near a fire with his jacket on, he'd probably catch fire because he made a wool.

He'd probably got a warning in the back of it. Don't put near a fire. Don't walk out of fire. That's what my jacket says. This will protect you from fire to a certain degree, yeah? It'll protect you and it'll keep you actually double lines so it'll protect you from your heat and it'll protect you when you fire as well, yeah?

So protective jacket, number one. Also got, what are these? Gloves. Yeah, normal gloves. They're the gloves you'd wear when you're out in the snow. Snowball gloves? Miriam.

The gloves are for your hands to get burned. Yeah, the gloves. You can touch things that are quite hot. Not actual touch fire, but you can touch things that are really hot and they protect your hands from getting burnt, yeah? How about, you probably recognise this and it's what it says, yeah, everyone knows that.

[18 : 01] It's a fire in the middle. What does that do? I thought that was a hat for the communion. What does that do? Where does it go? It goes on your head. Yeah? Is that going to hurt me? No.

No. Do you want to try and hit it harder? No, we won't. No, don't do that. No, we won't. And that protects my eyes, yeah? So all these things are called protective equipment, yeah? The last one, I was going to put it on David and David, I don't know if he's willing, is, what's this now?

Yeah, hands up, anyone else? Sean, he seems to know all about it, yeah? Lois, what's that? Oh, come on. What do you think that is? Air. Air. Yeah, it's got air in it, so it'll protect you from the smoke.

If you go into a smoky building, this will protect you and give you air, so you can actually breathe inside a burning building or a smoke-filled building. Pardon? Oxygen. It's not oxygen, yeah, it's air. It's not oxygen, it's not pure oxygen, but it's air, yeah?

So that protects us. That protects everyone, protects us if we have to do something in a fire, okay? So it's called personal protective equipment. Thank you, Cammie. Thank you, David, for all that stuff.

[19 : 05] Thank you. I'll give that to you. Thank you. Thank you.

So, that stuff that Cammie was showing us, do you think when he goes home today for his Sunday lunch, when he's had his lunch and he's maybe sitting in the chair beginning to have a wee norak, do you think he's got that big jacket on?

No. And his gloves on? Do you think he's sitting at the kitchen table with that big puffer thing and the hard hat on? No. No. So when does he wear it? Only when there's a fire.

Only when there's a fire and he's having to go into a fire. I know everything. My dad works at the fire. He knows. Carl knows everything. My dad works at the fire brigade, so he knows everything.

So, and Marius just confirming that, yeah, with a head shake like that. So, it's protective gear, but you wear it when you're going into danger.

[20 : 12] You don't wear it all the time, but you're wearing it when you're going into danger, and it keeps you safe. I know there's still risks with it all, but it keeps you safe.

And, you know, in this world, there can be things that happen that are difficult, and this world can be a dangerous place in some ways, and who is it that says that they'll be with us?

Do we have, how can we be protected in this world from things when we're going through difficult things? Shawnee? God, yeah. Listen to these verses, okay?

God makes a promise, and this is through a prophet called Isaiah, and God says, in Isaiah 43, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

And when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. And when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned.

[21 : 23] The flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. And in this world, there are things, the waters, the rivers, fire, that's like a picture that God uses for all the things that are scary.

Put your hand up if you ever get scared. There are different things in this world, isn't there? And it makes us feel scared. There can be things in this world that are scary.

And God doesn't say to us, He doesn't say to us, you'll never have to deal with anything scary in this world. He's honest enough, and He loves us enough to tell us, sometimes things will come in to this world, and sometimes things will happen to you, and to those that you love, and they'll make you sad, and you'll be worried, and it'll be a bit scary.

But God says, in the middle of all that, I'll be with you. And that's a great message, isn't it? You know, when Cammie goes into a scary fire scene, then he's still going to feel scared.

But because he's got the gear on, he knows that he's more protected than somebody who would walk in with a Harris Tweed jacket. But, we are protected.

[22 : 55] We can be, we can be comforted in knowing that there's nothing in this world that we, or those that we love, go through, that we go through alone, if we're in Jesus.

Because he says, I will be with you. That's actually the message of Christmas. Because you're going to hear this verse in the next few weeks. In Matthew 1, 23, it says, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son.

Mary will have a son. And they will call him Emmanuel. Which means, do you know what Emmanuel means? God with us.

That's right, that's right, that's right, that's right, Emily. And it's great to know that whatever we face in life, you know, we were praying for people who are sad, and we were praying for people who are sick.

But it's great to know that whatever we go through in this life, God says, I will never leave you, I'll never forsake you. Even in the sickness, even in the sadness, even in the scary things, he says, I will be with you.

[24 : 07] So let's be trusting Jesus. The other thing is, you know, Cammy could have all that great stuff in his fire engine, and then get to the scene of a fire.

What would happen if he didn't put it on? Would he be protected? No. He'd have to put it on to be protected. And so for us, Jesus says, I want you to trust me.

I want you to take me into your life, into your heart. And when we trust the Lord Jesus, he protects us in this life, in all the difficult things.

And then he even protects us when we're going through death. And we've seen, even in the past few weeks, I can think of some people who, even as they came very, very close to death, we could see how safe they were.

Because it was so clear that Jesus was with them. And that's his promise, that he'll be with us all through life, even through death, into life that's everlasting, if we trust him.

[25 : 27] So are you trusting him? Let's pray about that. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you love us. We thank you that you promise that if we trust you, you will come into our lives, you will come into our hearts, and you will protect us every day and in everything that we go through.

Some days are good and we find them easy and we find them to be happy days. There are other days that we come to and we're scared because there's things that we have to do that worry us and there's things that make us sad.

But we thank you that wherever we go through in this life, you've promised, Lord Jesus, that you will be with us if we're trusting you. And we thank you that even when we come to the end of this life in death, that you have promised that you will be with us and carry us through death, unharmed, into life that's everlasting.

So we pray that the boys and girls and the mums and dads and the grannies and shenners and all the adults and the young people here, that each one of us would be trusting you and that we would know that protection that begins today or the day that we trust you and never ends.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing now and we're going to sing the carol. 493 in Mission Praise.

[27 : 02] O come, O come, Emmanuel. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Shine ransom captive Israel. That fortune, Lord, the exile here until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, O come, the Lord of might, who to die tribes on Sinai's height.

In ancient times, in ancient times, in ancient times, in heaven, all. In cloud and majesty and all.

[28 : 41] Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, O come, O come, O God of Jesse, free. Right on AC ■■■■- Her, her ■
Anyor, her heaven From depths of hell my people sing And give them victory or blame
Rejoice, rejoice Emmanuel shall come Come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou day's dream, come and cheer. Her spirits by thy blood and tear.

Disperse the gloomy blood of night. And as dark shadows blue to flight.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

[30 : 31] O come, thou key of heaven, come and open wide a heavenly home.

Be safe, the way that leads on high. And close the path to mystery.

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

O Israel. Okay, boys and girls, if you head through to Sunday school. I think as many have gone out as I've stayed in.

And we'll turn to Genesis chapter 3. Genesis chapter 3.

[32 : 13] You might wonder why. Hopefully that will become clear as the service goes on. Genesis 1 and 2. We see the creation.

And we see how good. We see how good everything is that God has created. And then in Genesis chapter 3, we come to the fall of man.

So let's hear God's word. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

The woman said to the serpent, We may eat fruit from the trees of the garden. But God did say you must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden. And you must not touch it.

Or you will die. You will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened. And you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

[33 : 12] 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.

She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord as he was walking in the garden. In the cool of the day. And they hid from the Lord among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you?

He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid. And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it. Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate.

[34 : 16] So the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals. You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

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.

To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pains and childbearing. With pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. To Adam he said, Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat of it.

Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food, until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken. For dust you are, and to dust you will return. Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

[35 : 24] The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.

So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden, to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword, flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We'll sing now from Psalm 119. Psalm 119 verses 49 and 50 in Gaelic.

And the words there are on the screen. Psalm 119 verses 49 and 50. Remember, Lord, thy gracious word, thou to thy servant speak, which for a ground of my sure hope thou causest me to take.

These two stanzas we sing in Gaelic and we remain seated to sing. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[37 : 04] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[39 : 34] Thank you.

As we listen to your voice, we pray that you would give us understanding. We pray that you would help us to know that these words that we read are not simply the words of man, but they're the words of God.

And we pray that they would not return to you empty.

who are not yet saved, and who need to hear the voice of Jesus calling them to come for the first time to him, to repent and to believe, and to take hold of the promises of everlasting life.

We thank you that the Lord Jesus alone is the one who is able to give us these promises. So help us, we pray, to hear them and to have faith that we may receive them.

[41 : 23] And what we pray for ourselves, we pray for the children, and we pray for the congregations around us, here and elsewhere, that the Lord Jesus would be lifted up and that many would be drawn to him.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. I remember speaking to someone. It was a family in Edinburgh.

A few months back when I was through Edinburgh and I had a couple of hours before a meeting, so I went to get a cup of coffee. So I was in this coffee shop and there was an American family actually who were there.

And as they were talking, they were talking to each other and Americans are very outgoing and friendly and so they kind of looked in my direction and said, how are things going? And I had a chat with them and I said, you know, you're tourists?

And they said, yeah, we're over visiting Scotland. And I said, what do you think of Scotland? And they said, well, it's quite nice. I said, quite nice?

[42 : 35] Where have you been? And they said, well, it's all been arranged by our travel agent before we came. Just a short trip. I said, yeah, but where have you been? And they said, well, we spent one day in Inverness and we saw that great castle.

I was thinking, castle in Inverness? There's a wee castle on the main street, but it's not that impressive. And they said, so we saw the castle in Inverness and then we spent the next day in the city of Dundee.

I was thinking about their travel agents and they said, we got to see the sights of the city of Dundee. We saw some boats. And I said, okay, well, and they said, now we've got about an hour just to see Edinburgh.

So I said, well, that kind of explains your lack of enthusiasm. You know, you've gone from Inverness, looking at a very non-impressive castle, to the city of Dundee, which no disrespect to any Dundonians, isn't the most beautiful city in Scotland.

And now you've got about half an hour to have a cup of coffee in Edinburgh. You're missing the castle. You're missing everything. I said, you know, this explains your lack of enthusiasm. You need more time for Scotland.

[43 : 55] You need to visit more places. You need to get up past Inverness. You need to get up into the highlands and the islands to get the full experience. And then you'll be really enthusiastic about Scotland.

And, you know, the same can be said in terms of the experience of Christmas. We're entering into the season of Christmas.

We're in now the period of Advent. And what I'd like to do over the next few weeks is visit a few places in the Bible that we might not otherwise visit in December.

We could go at high speed on the 18th of December to the stable and the manger. And we've done that in the past. But what I'd like to do in the month of December is go to a few places in the Bible so we can see a broader view of the Christmas story.

So we can trace the story of Christmas from the beginning. And we will start from the beginning. Because the first whisper of Christmas was actually heard by Adam and Eve.

[45 : 10] They fell into sin. But no sooner did they fall into sin than God promised to send a Savior.

So we're going to look today at hopefully four things. First of all, creation. Secondly, temptation. We see the world that God created.

Then we see the experience of temptation as the devil comes in. And then we see the sad state of condemnation as they fall into sin.

And the bleakness of that. And then the final thing is we hear a whisper. We hear a promise of the salvation that was to come through Jesus.

So first of all, creation. And if you were to scan back through Genesis chapter 1 and 2, you see the creation narrative. It's not that long since as a congregation we were in these chapters.

[46 : 14] So I don't intend to pour back over them. They're familiar chapters. We're introduced in Genesis chapter 1 to the Creator. In the beginning, God.

Which is an amazing statement. You could spend your whole life studying that one statement and still never get to the bottom of it. In the beginning, before the beginning, God.

And then we hear God speak. And as God speaks, He brings everything that is into being. He creates light. And He creates land.

And He creates sea. And He creates vegetation. He creates the sun and the moon and the stars and living creatures. And finally, God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit say, Let us make man in our own image.

And so Adam and then Eve were created. And the first marriage was conducted with God Himself officiating in that garden of Eden.

[47 : 24] They were given the most amazing home. They're placed in the absolute perfect environment for them at the Garden of Eden. And everything that they needed was in rich supply.

So when we go back to the beginning, what we see is that everything that God created was good. And it's important that we see that.

Everything that God created, it was good. It was very good. The environmental conditions were good. There was no global warming in the beginning.

There was no climate change in the beginning. The physical and the mental health of Adam and Eve were good. There was no sickness.

There was no depression. There was no anxiety. Marriage was good. There was no friction. There was no tension.

[48 : 32] There was no fracturing. So when we go right back to the beginning, we have this picture in Genesis of the world as God created it.

we see Adam and Eve in this perfect relationship with God and with each other.

We're given this picture. It's history. But it's also this powerful picture of the contented, blessed state that God designed us for.

that's creation. And I think we should revisit these chapters often.

You know, it's given me great comfort, I have to say, to revisit these first two chapters this week. Because what we see when we go back to the beginning is what God created.

[49 : 39] We see the world the way God designed it for us. And we need to see that because sometimes this world can be a hard place to live in.

You know, people we love become ill. And there's a huge wave of that just now in this community and in the congregation. we see illness, we see suffering.

And in this world things go wrong in our work and in our homes. Things can start to go wrong and we pick up the newspapers and there's never a month where there isn't news of some natural disaster somewhere because of an environment that's crumbling.

Romans 8 talks about the creation groaning and we see the evidence of that in all kinds of natural disasters and the suffering that flows from that. And then we've got the reality of death.

We grieve when we lose loved ones. and sometimes in the midst of pain people look up to God almost with a clenched fist and say why did you make us this way?

[51 : 10] Why did you bring us into this kind of world? Why does it have to be this way? Why the suffering? Why God did you allow that person that I love to die?

Why did you make the world this way? It's not a week that passes that I don't hear that question. And the answer to that question is God didn't make the world that way.

God did not make the world that way because in the beginning there was no suffering. and there was no pain and there was no sickness and there was no sadness and in the end when Jesus returns and makes everything new if we fast forward to Revelation 21 we see that there will be no more death and there will be no more mourning and there will be no more crying and there will be no more pain.

See the things that we suffer through were not God's original design. They were sin's distortion.

And in Genesis 3 we see how sin breaks in. So we begin with creation. It's good. It's very good. It's perfect. No sadness.

[52 : 50] No suffering. No sickness. No pain. No crying. Everything is as it should be under God's design. And then we move to temptation.

Look at verse 1. We'll just step through the verses. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. We know the serpent was the devil.

We're told that in Revelation 12.9. John speaks about that ancient serpent called the devil. And he said to the woman, verse 1, Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?

Now God hadn't said that at all. God had actually said you can eat from any tree in the garden except one. The whole garden is yours to enjoy.

There's just one tree and you're not to eat from it. And as Adam and Eve obeyed God in not eating from this one tree, they're expressing their love for God and their trust in God.

[54 : 00] It wasn't a trap. It was a tree whereby they could express to God that they loved him, they trusted him. But that's the tree that becomes the focus of the serpent.

So he says, look at that tree. Doesn't it look delicious? Doesn't it look better than any other tree? why don't you give it a taste?

And the woman said to the serpent verse 2, we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say you must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden and you must not touch it or you will die.

So Eve, when she responds to the devil, she responds with something that is half right but not fully right. Because God never said that they couldn't touch the tree.

He just said that they couldn't eat from the tree. They could touch the tree, they could climb the tree if they wanted. They just couldn't eat from it or they would surely die.

[55 : 17] Verse 4, you will not surely die, the serpent said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

So the serpent is using his words to just chip away at the character and the word of God. The serpent is causing Eve and Adam, who is very silent here, but he is present.

The serpent is causing them to doubt God's word and to believe that God's plan is not the best plan. The serpent is trying to cast out over the character of God.

He's trying to get them to believe that God is not at nature good, but he's withholding the best from them. And Eve and Adam are chewing this over.

and Eve looks at the tree again. She's looking away from God. She's looking at this tree.

- [56 : 27] And 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 she ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it.
- And the moment they ate it, everything changed. And evil and sin and death and suffering broke into the world.
- They face temptation. They're tempted to mistrust God's word. They're tempted to mistrust God's character. And they decide they will believe the devil, not God.
- They decide rather than worshipping God, to bow down before a tree. And everything breaks down.
- And it's a sad story, the story of the first temptation and the fall. But it's a story that we need to be familiar with because the serpent, the devil, he only has one trick.
- [57 : 47] He only has one mode of operation. And what he did in the beginning is he tempted Adam and Eve, he's still doing today. Still he whispers to us, can God's word really be trusted?
- Are you sure? Are you sure the Bible can be trusted? And he whispers to us, do you think God's plan for your life is the best plan for your life?
- Are you sure about that? Why don't you go your own way? Why don't you make your own plans? why not just do what feels good to you rather than be submissive to this design, this book, this word of God?
- Just do your own thing. Whatever feels good, just do it. Take another drink. Go with that woman. Put the Bible down, pick the device up.
- It's much more exciting than that dusty old book. See, the devil is doing all the same things. He's still trying to tell us every day God is not good.
- [59 : 09] His word is not right. His plan is not best. He's withholding the best stuff from you. And when we listen to Satan and when we give in to temptation, whatever it might be, yes, there's a moment of thrill.
- There's just a second of pleasure. But then we're into a whole world of misery. Because we sink into a pit of sin that we can't get out of.
- Not on our own. So we see creation, it was good, perfect, God's design, that blessed state.
- And then there's temptation. temptation. The devil comes along and says, why not go your own way? And sin crashes in. And everything that's good is going. And suffering starts to bite.
- And death creeps in. because we're into that state now, thirdly, of condemnation. There's lots of Christmas films over the month of December.
- [60 : 24] There's a whole channel in our house that seems to be on constantly with Christmas films. Christmas. But one Christmas film that I would recommend, or one Christmas book I would recommend is The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.
- Written by C.S. Lewis, a Christian. And in that book, C.S. Lewis essentially is retelling the big story of the Bible. And in the story of the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, these children, they enter through this wardrobe and they discover a world where it's always winter.
- But it never gets to Christmas. It's a world that's bleak. It's a world where there's no sunshine. Everything is cold.
- Everything is grey. And we're told in the book it's that way because of the witch. Because of the curse of the witch. And C.S.
- Lewis in that book, in that story, he's painting a picture of the world once sin came in. And sin came in not through a witch, but through Satan.

[61 : 38] In Genesis 3, the serpent, he's unmasked. We see that Satan is the one who caused sin to break in. And because Adam and Eve listened to Satan rather than God, because they trusted Satan rather than God, condemnation came into the world.

And into their lives. They thought they were going to be wise. They thought they were going to be happier. They thought they were going to have this higher state of being.

And actually what happens is everything falls and everything gets dark and everything begins to decay. The son of God's perfect blessing, we could say, stopped shining in the experience of Adam and Eve and winter sets in.

They're in a state of condemnation. And I don't have time to step through every verse, but we can see, even as we scan through the verses, the change in the experience of Adam and Eve.

In the beginning, they're spending time with God. They're walking in the cool of the day with God. They're in this state of perfect fellowship with God, but now once sin has broken in, verse 8, they're hiding from him.

[63 : 02] They don't want to be with him. In the beginning, they have peace with God and with each other. Now that peace is gone.

And when God says, what have you done? They blame each other. it was him, it was her, it was the serpent.

It was you, God, because you're the one who put the woman in the garden. Rather than confess their sin and seek forgiveness, the blame game has started.

And in verse 10, we see what they're feeling deep in their hearts is shame, guilt, not the contentment and joy that they were made for.

And they begin to feel pain, verse 16. The pain of childbirth. But more than that, just the pain of raising children in a world that's now different.

[64 : 06] Every parent knows the stresses and the worries of raising a child in a world that's full of sin. we see dangers, we see struggles, we see strife, and it's a scary thing to be a parent.

And that's what sin brought in. And in verses 17 to 19, work becomes hard. No longer is work a joy.

Work is drudgery. they're battling in this garden with thorns and thistles rather than vegetation and plants and lush things.

I think probably at this point that's when the wasps came in too. And in verse 23, they lose their home. This home that God has given them, this garden of Eden, this perfect home they're cast out of it.

And that's what sin did. They went from communion with God and contentment in God to condemnation.

[65 : 28] And we still see that. We still feel that. We still experience that in this fallen world. world. We're living in a world that hides from God rather than comes to Him.

Living in a world that will go anywhere but to God. And we all know about the problem of pain in different ways.

And we all know about the problem of there being a lack of peace at every level. In terms of global conflicts, in terms of politics, in terms of family dynamics, even our inner state, we know about that lack of peace that sin has brought in, that state of condemnation has brought in.

We know about the anxiety of bringing up children in a world that's dangerous and full of thorns and thistles. I think it was Tim Keller who said to parents one day, you're only ever as happy, parent, you're only ever as happy as your least happy child.

And we know that. We know the pain and the anxiety of bringing up children in a world where things are not the way they're supposed to be.

[66 : 58] sad. And when they're sad, we're sad. And when they suffer, we suffer. And we know that this world is not our home, not the home that God created for us.

We experience the struggles and the weariness that sin has brought into this world. We know what it is to be under condemnation.

The condemnation that sin brought in when Adam and Eve fell. And that makes us recognize that we need a Savior. We need a Savior.

So we see creation. It's perfect. Temptation. The devil breaks in and says, go the other way. Then the condemnation, the winter, the bleakness of that state of sin.

And finally, we come to the good news of salvation. And it is told against a very dark backdrop, isn't it?

[68 : 13] You know, when we look into a jeweler's shop and the shiniest diamonds or the shiniest pearls are out on display, they're always set on a dark velvet cushion because the light shines all the more brightly against the darkness of the background and against the dark backdrop of condemnation, the story of salvation begins to be told.

Against the dark backdrop of the fall, we get the first news of a Savior. And notice that the promise of a Savior is first spoken to Satan.

which I think is a great thing. We can only imagine the dismay that Satan felt when the sovereign, all-powerful God tells Satan, I see what you've done.

But let me tell you, I will undo what you have done. Verse 15, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

He will crush your head, Satan. You will strike his heel. That's a promise that leads us to Jesus.

[69 : 40] God's love. If you go through the Old Testament, we can see that there's an ongoing enmity between Satan and the people of God, who are the offspring of Eve.

Satan, if you track through the Old Testament history, we can see that Satan is continually trying to wipe out the people of God. And there's nations like Egypt that are used, there's emperors like Babylon that are used, to try and wipe out the people of God.

There's this ongoing enmity. Think about the book of Esther that we studied recently. And remember the attempts that were made by Haman. He wants to wipe out all the people of God.

He wants that whole line to be wiped out off the face of the earth. Now, why was that? Because through that line, there was the promise of a saviour.

And so Satan is using his people to try to wipe out this line so that the saviour could not come. Because he knows that if the saviour comes, his head will be crushed.

[70 : 59] And sin will be destroyed. And so you see all this tension, all this conflict through the Old Testament. But still the promise is coming through and the volume is being turned up.

A saviour is coming. And eventually, as we fast forward through the Old Testament and into the New Testament, we see that this promise is fulfilled in the coming into the world of Jesus.

The saviour did come. And what did Jesus come into the world to do? Well, John tells us in 1 John 3 8, the reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

work. And we see that. Everything that Adam did wrong because of the devil's work, Jesus did right.

He reversed it. Adam failed to live that perfect, righteous life. He gave in to temptation and sinned. But Jesus lived a perfect life and he resisted temptation continually.

[72 : 30] He was the sinless son of God and he lived for us. And then he went willingly to a cross where his heel was struck by Satan.

on the cross Jesus died for us. But through Jesus' death Satan was defeated.

His head was crushed. Divine justice was satisfied as Jesus took the punishment for our sin and secured the salvation that we need.

we're going to sing in a second. O loving wisdom of our God when all was sin and shame a second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came.

O wisest love that flesh and blood which did an Adam fail should strive afresh against the foe. Should strive and should prevail.

[73 : 51] that's what happened. Genesis 3 15 is the first chapter in the story of Christmas.

It was God's first whisper of a promise to send a savior for sinners and Adam heard it and Adam believed it because we're told in verse 20 Adam named his wife Eve.

Why? Because she would become the mother of all the living. not the dying under sin and condemnation but the living because through her line the savior was coming and at Christmas we remember that God kept his promise because if you trace the line forward from Eve all the way forward we come to Jesus the child who brought back to life those who were dying who ended the winter of sin's curse who suffered condemnation on our behalf so that we can enjoy salvation if we believe in him.

So do you believe in him? That's the question. Do you believe in him? Will you accept him as your savior?

Will you receive these promises that are first told in the garden and come true in Christmas in the coming of Christ?

[76 : 08] We'll pray. Amen. Lord God, we thank you for your word and we thank you for the gospel message, the good news about Jesus which we can hear even way back in Genesis.

We thank you, Lord God, that it was your plan from the beginning to send a savior, to save the people, your people, who turned from you, who turned against you into sin.

We acknowledge that we are these people, but we thank you that there is the promise that we look back on now of a savior who came and lived and died and rose, so that sin's curse can be reversed, and that we can know everlasting blessing and joy and peace and life if we believe in Christ.

Give us faith to believe, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll sing to finish Mission Praise 563, 563 in Mission Praise, and I think the tune to this, my right Adam, is While Humble Shepherds.

I think I'd written that down, so yeah. The tune is the familiar tune to While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks, praise to the holiest in the height, and in the depths be praised, in all his words, most wonderful, most sure, in all his ways.

[77 : 52] typical church things like Him.

He's Thank you Praise, and in the depths be praised, in all his works, most wonderful, was truly on his ways.

O loving wisdom offered, Lord, when all was sin and shame, a second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came.

O wise this love, that flesh and blood which did in Adam fail, should strive afresh against the foe, should strive and should prevail.

And that a higher gift than grace should flesh and blood refine.

[79 : 22] God's presence and his very self and essence all divine.

O generous love that he who's brought in man for man the foe, the God all agony in man for man should undergo.

And in the garden secretly and on the cross on high, to tissues, brethren, and in spite to suffer and to die.

Praise to the Lord, yes, in the high and in the depths be praised.

In all his words, most wonderful, most sure in all his praise.

[80 : 39] Amen. And I may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit, be with us all now and forevermore. Amen.