

**Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church (Columbus, OH)**  
**Lent Midweek 1 – March 9, 2022**  
**Genesis 3:1-21 – The Redemption of the Sons of Dust**  
**By Vicar Peter Wagner**

In the name of Jesus. Amen. For the five Lenten midweek services this year, we'll focus on the Old Testament lectionary readings. All of them come from Genesis and Exodus. The theme holding all five sermons together will be: The Redemption of the Sons of Dust. All five texts deal with the earthly suffering of Adam's sons, but they all hold out hope for God's redemption.

Today, in Genesis 3, we begin with Adam and Eve's fall into sin, which brought death into the world and condemned us all to dust. But even in mankind's darkest hour, God offered hope for our redemption: Satan would be crushed by the offspring of the woman.

In the coming weeks, we'll see that promise begin to play out. We'll see how the patriarch Jacob wrestled with God, limping in the dust, clinging to God's blessing of redemption. Jacob refused to let go of the hope promised of old. We'll see how God used Moses to strike the dust of Egypt in judgment, to bring his people out of bondage to slavery, to free them from dust. We'll see how God was patient with the redeemed sons of Israel in the dusty wilderness. He gave them manna from heaven despite their grumbling. It was bread not earned by the sweat of Adam's brow, but nourishing bread of life to sustain them in their earthly sojourn. And finally, we'll see how Abraham offered his only begotten son Isaac, but God provided a ram in the thicket. That ram points to the Lamb of God, who takes away our sin, who redeemed the sons of dust by offering himself in our place. He entered the earth without decaying to dust in order to raise our decaying bodies from the dust.

Dear friends, we are the sons of dust. Last Wednesday we heard it clearly. It was smeared on our foreheads. **“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”** It was smeared in the shape of a cross, to teach us the cost of our redemption. On account of the original sin and guilt we inherited from the first man of dust, we deserve death. Our world, now torn apart by war and death, is like this because of our original sin. And on account of our sin we're cursed to a life of toil, to the sweat of our brow, and to a futile end, decaying to dust in a grave.

Why such condemnation? Adam and Eve's sin seemed innocent and harmless. They only ate some fruit. They hurt no one. Was it really a capital crime? We think like that way about our own daily sins. Surely what we've done or left undone is not so serious. Surely we don't deserve death. But by this thinking we prove we're just like our parents in the garden. We think we know better than God. We think what he's commanded and forbidden need not govern our lives.

Adam and Eve tried to sew fig leaves to cover the shame of their exposed sin. They hid in fear of God, trying to conceal their sin just as we try to conceal our guilt. Their efforts were useless. God knows where we hide, what we've done and left undone. But instead of wrath, God sought his dear, lost children in love. He calls to us across time as he called to Adam, **“Where are you?”** He sent his Son to walk again with us as he did in the garden, to talk with us face to face, to restore his relationship with us.

Still, sin has deadly consequences. Since Adam thought he knew better than God, God cursed him to a life of toil against thorns and thistles. That meant hard physical labor, but it also meant spiritual futility, a hopeless fight against thorns and thistles of sin and cares that choke out faith. We inherit a human nature that thinks we can earn our daily bread by the sweat of our brow. We deceive ourselves that our condition is not so bad, that we can uproot the thorns from our own hearts. Perhaps with enough effort we can purge our sin, we can produce good fruit of righteousness that satisfies God.

That's what Cain thought. He brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, expecting God to be pleased. God was not pleased because Cain approached in false faith, faith in himself. He trusted in works-righteousness, in his own efforts to produce an offering from the ground. And he expected a reward for the sweat of his brow. His brother Abel did not bring the fruit of human labor in the dust. He brought the life of an animal, a life God

himself fashioned from dust. By faith, Abel trusted that all life is from God, that his own life was in God's hands, and that's why God accepted his offering.

We must all acknowledge that we are creatures of dust. Our life is in God's hands. He alone provides what we need; we cannot redeem ourselves. Son of dust though you are, your loving God provides your redemption. He promised to strike Satan down, to make him crawl in the dust on his belly. He said to the serpent, **“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”** To bruise Satan's head is to crush him to the grave. Our great hope and blessing is that our enemy is cursed to die under the woman's offspring's foot.

In the end, only Satan eats the dust. The sons of dust are redeemed. **“He shall bruise your head,”** sets the stage for the rest of human history, for our redemption history. From the woman came Seth, the son of promise. And from Seth came the line of the faithful patriarchs, Enoch and Methuselah, Noah and Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And from Jacob came the twelve tribes, delivered from Egypt by Moses, brought into the Promised Land, ruled by David and Solomon.

And from the house of David came at last the promised Seed: Jesus Christ, Son of God and son of dust. Born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law of Adam's curse.<sup>1</sup> Satan struck his heel by having him crucified, laid in the dust for three days. But by his resurrection, Jesus dealt Satan the decisive blow to the head. God destroys our enemy for us – that is our hope of Easter rejoicing!

So Adam called his wife's name Eve. Eve means living. Her name reflects hope in God's promise, that she would be the mother of the living Redeemer, that through the Redeemer she would be the mother of all who inherit eternal life.

For now, till Christ comes again in glory to utterly strip Satan of his power and make him finally eat the dust, we sons of Adam still eat the bread of futile toil. We still fight thorns and thistles for our bread. But during Lent, during this time of penitence and fasting, Jesus leads us away from eating our bread by the sweat of our own brow. Lent teaches that we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.<sup>2</sup> Lent teaches that the new, second Adam came to bear Adam's curse on his brow, to give Adam's sons better bread to eat.

Jesus came to destroy the thorns of our futility. He came to wear a crown of thorns on his brow. He came to give us this day our daily bread, bread earned by his agony and the bloody sweat of his brow. His body is the bread of life that feeds the sons of dust with the forgiveness of sins. It's the bread of life we never purchased or earned. His blood has purchased our way back to Eden. He redeems us to bring us back to Paradise, to let us eat from the tree of life and live with him forever.

And rather than letting us clothe ourselves now with fig leaves, rather than letting us conceal our sin, God gives us better garments. **“The Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”** Those animal skins were better than any manmade garments. Fashioned by God himself, they represent a life, slaughtered in our place. Jesus is that life. God's Lamb died in our place to clothe us with his righteousness, to daily forgive us and cover our sin with his white robes.

Therefore, O sons of dust, do not despair. Hope in your salvation. Hope in the steadfast love of the Father, in the redemption of the Son, and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Amen. And now may the peace of God which passes understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 4:4

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 4:4