

Advent is a time of reflection, a time when we reflect on all the different ways that Jesus comes to us. And most often, of course, we focus on his birth, which, of course, is only natural and a good thing to do, especially at this time of year. But as we reflect on these things, Christians, the best thing for us to do is to ask a simple question, and that is the question: why? Why has Jesus come? Because it's not enough for us to say that he has come. We should also think about why, so that we understand the purpose of his birth. And that's what we're going to do tonight and over the next couple of weeks throughout this Advent season.

So where better to begin, then, than at the beginning, the beginning of all things? Because even from the beginning of creation, we can see the reason why Jesus came. In the beginning, the book of Genesis tells us, everything was created good. God created our first parents, Adam and Eve, and he placed them in the garden in Eden to work the ground and to keep it. And he gave to them a clear commandment: "You can eat of any of the trees of the garden, except one, the tree in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And as long as they kept that commandment, as long as they listened to God, everything was good. Even the work that they did was not a burden. It was a joy. It seemed like the most easy thing in the world to do, because that is what it was like. Everything was good!

But into the garden came a serpent. And the book of Revelation calls this serpent, the ancient serpent, the Dragon, whom we know as Satan. And Satan had come to destroy what was good in God's creation, because he was a murderer from the beginning. He was seeking to corrupt it, to turn it away as he had turned away from God. And so he came to the woman with a very simple question, verse 1 of our reading: "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" Of course, that was not an honest question for him to ask. He knew perfectly well God had never worded his commandment in that way. He knew that he was twisting what it was that God had said. But that didn't matter, because his purpose was to plant a little seed of doubt within Eve, and unfortunately, he succeeded in that purpose. And that seed blossomed and grew into sin, so that when he next speaks to Eve, he just straight up lies to her. Verse 4, he says: "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." None of that was true, and Satan was deliberately making God look terrible through all of this, making him seem petty, like the only thing he wanted to do was hold on to power for himself and to not do what was best for his creatures. But Eve believed him, sadly, and she took from the fruit of the tree and ate, contrary to the commandment of God. And Adam also took the fruit from her hand, and he ate as well. The creation had now become corrupted. Everything had been turned upside down.

But the problem here, Christians, was not the fruit. Fruit is just fruit. There was nothing about the fruit that made it poisonous or that made it bring sin into the world. As Jesus said, food does not make anyone unclean. It is not food which makes us sinners, but rather that which comes out from the heart that causes us to sin. And that was the problem. Adam and Eve refused to listen to God. They rejected his clear commandment, because they wanted to be like God, determining what is good and what is evil. They wanted to be the Lord, to be able to give God commandments, to tell him what he should do. And unfortunately, this is the very heart of sin, passed down from generation to generation. It is the original sin that we have even from our very birth, because we're just like our father Adam, mimicking him in turning away from God, mimicking him in refusing to listen to God, mimicking him in wanting to be God, to be the one

who gives the commandments. And God's once good creation had been corrupted by the sin of man, who had been deceived by the devil.

Now, God does the right thing here, Christians, by laying judgment upon us all for that sin. Eve is cursed, along with all of her daughters after her, with increased pain in childbearing. It would no longer be a joy, but a toil and a burden. Adam, along with all of his sons after him, is cursed in his work, so that the field now fights against him rather than working with him. And God does this to show them and us that we are, in fact, creatures and not God. Because we aren't able to get away from this. We're not able to get away from the reality of the way things are now. And the last judgment that God lays upon us shows us this the most clearly, because God says that we will return to the ground from which we were taken. Death has now come into the world. How can we be God if we can't even save ourselves from death? Sin brought this judgment upon us, and every sin that we commit after it only reinforces the justice of that judgment. We stand condemned, separated from God, even from our very birth.

Now, Christians, God would still do the right thing if he just turned away. He would be doing the right thing if he just destroyed us all. Because sin has corrupted all that was once good, and God would be just to just do away with everything. But that's not what he chose to do. God chose to redeem his creation, to save us from our sins. Because God knew what was going to happen even before it did. There is no such thing as a surprise with God. Adam didn't have to sin. He wasn't bound to do it, but God knew that he would. And so in eternity God chose to do something about sin. He couldn't just ignore it. That would not be right. It's not just right to ignore sin, hoping it will somehow go away. Rather, sin must be dealt with, so that all things will be made right again.

And that's exactly what God did. Verse 14 says: "The Lord God 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.'" Now, notice God does not ask Satan what happened. He doesn't give him a chance to repent. God simply lays the curse upon him. And it's the first curse that actually comes out of his mouth. Satan is cursed to be forced into the dust, to be the lowest of the low, below even all of the other creatures of creation, because it's a picture of the judgment that God now lays upon him. Verse 15: "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." And Satan's curse is our blessing. It is our great hope. Because the conflict is going to continue. Mankind is not going to come to an end the way that Satan wanted. Children would continue to be born. Generation would follow after generation until the coming of the Seed, the one promised in the future. That Seed would bruise the head of the serpent. Satan would be utterly defeated by the Son of Eve, and that Son would come to bring an end to the curse of sin and to deal with it once and for all.

And Christians, that Child is the Son of Mary, the babe of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Jesus has come to be the serpent-crusher. He was born to bruise Satan's head. As the Gospel of Matthew says: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." And that is why Jesus came: to be our Savior. Because in him, we find life. In him, we no longer turn away from God. In him, we no longer strive to be God. Jesus has come to make all things new and to become a way for us back to the garden, and in fact, something greater than the garden, the true Eden: eternal life with God in heaven forever.

So that's the first reason, then, why Jesus came, and we'll see others in the next couple of weeks. But we should never forget this one. Because Jesus is indeed the reason for the season. He was born not just to come into the world, but to save us from our sins. And so we can look forward to Christmas, because in it, we find the beginning of our new life in him!

Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, chosen even from before the creation of the world to save us from our sins, forgive us those sins, and lead us in the way which leads to everlasting life; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.