

# *St. Augustine's* Sermons

Calgary, Alberta

October 7, 2007

The Rev. Jonathan Gibson

The Text: Genesis 2:4-17

The Title: "Pickled For Jesus"

*8:30 and 10:30 am, Holy Communion*

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## **Genesis 2:4-17**

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. 5. When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. 7 Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 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."

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

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This morning, we are celebrating a baptism. Trysten Cunningham, who has been part of our congregation since he was about four will now, as a nine year-old, be saying to Jesus and to us his Christian family members:

*I want to live as someone who admits my need for Jesus. From this day forward I choose to live as a disciple and follower of Jesus.*

Trysten is making a choice to ask Jesus Christ to have a deep and lasting influence that can shape who he is becoming and how he lives. So before we get into our study of Genesis 2, I want to teach you something about the word baptism. It means "to dip". In Greek there are two words for the one English word "baptize". The first word is: *bapto* and the second is *baptizo*. There is a clear example that shows the distinction between *bapto* and *baptizo*. It is in a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. He has a recipe for making pickles and this recipe is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (*bapto*) into boiling water and then 'baptised' (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change because the cucumber stays in the brine solution. When used in the New Testament therefore, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ and the way he influences our lives rather than a reference to the act of baptism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thayer and Smith. "Greek Lexicon entry for Baptizo". "The New Testament Greek Lexicon". <<http://www.studydrive.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=907>>.

Today Trysten is going to be pickled. As he then lives as one of the baptized, we pray that there will be the ongoing transformation in his life, which Jesus desires for all who are his.

So while the baptized are not preserved by being placed into a brine solution, we are preserved as we learn to live as God has designed us so to do. As I looked at Genesis 2 this week I saw in these verses a recipe for a spiritual brine, which when influencing our lives allows us to take on a Christ-like flavour.

The spiritual brine recipe that we read in Genesis 2 tells us that we can be changed and preserved as we understand how God has made us to relate to ourselves and to His Word.

But before we see what this text tells us about how God has made us I want to answer this question. What does Genesis two tells us about the character of the God who is has made us to so that we can relate to ourselves, God's word?

Last week you will remember that the name used to designate God in chapter one is the Hebrew noun "Elohim." We considered how this name is plural, which when coupled with singular verb tenses, anticipates the Trinitarian personality of God as he reveals himself through the biblical witness as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we come to chapter 2 the word Elohim is still present. But it is preceded by another name for God "Yahweh"

The word (YHWH) "Yahweh" first occurs in the Old Testament here in chapter 2. It is that most sacred and incommunicable name of Deity, called tetragrammaton, which is Greek for "The Four Letters". The English transliteration of the four letters is: YHWH.

The principal meaning of the term is self-existence; which is, in truth, necessary existence, as opposed to that which is derived from, or is dependent upon, another. Therefore one way of thinking about the name YHWH is like this: "He brings into existence whatever exists"

You will notice that in English we have two words to say God's name at the beginning of this passage. They are LORD God. This is the merging of Yahweh Elohim and this tells us something else about God's true character.

In Chapter 1 we are dealing with the making of things, and God is presented to us under the name of Elohim, i.e., the Creator. But when

man appears on the scene, God appears also in a different character. He now appears under the title of Yahweh Elohim, which means essentially the covenant-making God, the God who keeps a promise. It is particularly significant that when God first reveals himself to this race of ours, it is as a God who intends to keep his promises. As the camera now zooms in on the Man in the Garden in chapter two and away from the universal view of chapter one, we are brought into the presence of the promise keeping God who brings all things into existence. As we look at this text I am going to only concentrate verses seven and seventeen. As I do so, I will make two points:

- 1. We understand ourselves as we come to a right understanding of how God has made us.**
- 2. We can only live as God made us when we understand why we need to obey his word.**

Look down to verse seven please:

*Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*

I want to focus for a minute on two of the words found in this verse. They are "man" and "ground". The Hebrew for "man" is *adam* and the Hebrew for "ground" is *adamah*. It is worth noting that as in French, Hebrew nouns are masculine and feminine. Adam is a masculine noun, but *adamah* is a feminine noun. I think this is fascinating. For just as every human being born into the world comes from the womb of a woman, when adam was fashioned he came, so to speak from the womb of the ground, *adamah*.

When you understand that the name of God, Yahweh Elohim, means the "Forever one, promise keeping God" and then understand that adam is not the first man's proper name but the Bible's designation for us human beings the contrast is striking. We are the earth people or we could say the "dirt people"; those who are of the dust.

There is the story of the little boy who came in some excitement to his mother and said, "Mother, is it true that we are made from the dust and that after we die we go back to the dust?" She said, "Yes, it is."

"Well," he said, "I looked under my bed this morning, and there's someone either coming or going!"

So we see in this verse that God first made the body of adam and he made it of the dust of the earth. Certainly it is true that the same elements that are found in the dust of the ground are found also in the body of man. It is shown to be a fact because it is to dust that we return.

We may not fully understand all that is involved in these pregnant sentences about the formation of man's body, but it is important to notice that though the body of man was evidently formed first, yet the text itself does not say the body but it says God formed adam of dust from the earth. I think this is significant. Adam is more than a body. He is not merely an animated piece of beef steak, a hunk of meat with a nervous system. He is more than body; he is soul as well as body. The functions of the soul are wonderfully linked to those of the body in ways that we have not even begun to fathom.

For instance, the functions of the soul (largely reason, emotion, will and conscience), are also in some most remarkable way functions of our physical life. Reason is related to the brain, for it is only as the brain operates that reason occurs. Glands have great power over our emotional life. The hormones which they secrete directly affect us emotionally. Thus the functions of the soul are tied most remarkably to the body, and no one fully understands the mystery of it. In the forming of adam God made body and soul together, with the capacities for function of the soul lying dormant within the body of man. This is why at the end of verse seven it says that it is only after God breathed into adam that he became a living creature.

The phrase *breath of life*, in the Hebrew, means "a spirit of life." The word for *breath* and *spirit* are the same, both in Hebrew and in Greek, so that this is more than simply a picture of God breathing into man's nostrils. This is not face-to-face resuscitation: it is the impartation of a spirit into man. As we know from other Scriptures, the spirit is our essential nature. It is this that distinguishes adam so remarkably from the animal creation. Thus as adam comes into being, adam comes full-orbed, as a threefold being, existing in body, soul, and spirit. It is the joining together of spirit and body which activates and galvanizes the soul, so that it begins to function.

Perhaps you can see something of the same principle in the operation of an electric light bulb. By itself a bulb is simply some wire and glass,

rather commonplace, but with a remarkable potential. Add an invisible substance, electricity, and pass it through that visible wire, and a third function is born: light. Light is different from the wire, and different from the electricity, but comes streaming forth from that bulb. It is very much the same way with man. God made a body, (the bulb) with its possibilities of function as a soul, (the lamp) and breathed into it a spirit, (the electricity) and the union of body and spirit produced the activity of soul, as light is produced from the union of the wire and electricity<sup>2</sup>.

When the spirit passes from the body, the life of the body ends. James tells us, "the body without the spirit is dead."<sup>3</sup> We bury the body, and the spirit returns to God who made it, the Scriptures say. Whatever portion of the soul (or the life of adam -- that part of us that has functioned within this time and space continuum) which has been saved, also returns with the spirit to God. It is most significant to note that, in the Scriptures, it is the spirit which is regenerated but the soul is saved. This is clear in these two psalm verses:

**Psalm 16:10** For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

**Psalm 33:19:** "that he may deliver their soul from death"

It is the soul, our inner being that needs to be saved. In the life that is to come the soul will be joined with a resurrected body that will be fully alive, much in the way I imagine adam is alive as described here in verse 7. That part of the soul which has lived in the power of the Spirit of God, functioning in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ as God intended man to live, is saved.

Our souls are thus being saved as we live day by day in relationship to the Son of God. This is why baptism is like being placed in a brine solution. As the cucumbers soak in the vinegar and garlic they take on their taste. As the soul of the Christians soaks in the life giving Holy Spirit we take on ever more fully the character of Jesus Christ.

That "saved" soul is what we have left after this life, and only that. All else is wood, hay, and stubble, to disappear in the judging flame of God.

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<sup>2</sup> Ray Stedman; "The Making of Man"  
<http://www.raystedman.org/genesis/0312.html>.

<sup>3</sup> James 2:26 KJV

In fallen adam the spirit that is given to adam is dead. This is what the Scripture means when it says man is "dead in trespasses and sins,"<sup>4</sup> The bulb is in the socket, but the Spirit of God is not able to work because the lamp is not plugged into its source, therefore his spirit does not function as it should.

Do you see how the soul reflects like a mirror the activities of the spirit? If the spirit of Christ is at work in the soul of a person they will be alive. If however a person does not have their soul shaped by the Spirit of Christ then the works of the flesh are characteristic of such a life. The soul mirrors a dead and lifeless nature. This is what creates the intense, worldwide restlessness of our race, the inability to be satisfied, the unending search for answers that are never found. It is all an expression of a wasted spirit, lying ruined within us because of the fall of adam. But in the beginning as adam came perfect from the hand of God, he was a lamp -- and a lamp that was lit -- alive in ways beyond anything that we can conjecture.<sup>5</sup>

So if verse 7 teaches We understand ourselves as we come to a right understanding of how God has made us. Verse seventeen teaches:

**We can only live as God made us when we understand why we need to obey his word.**

This is my second point.

It is as if the Word of God is to the Christian what plugging the lamp into the outlet does for our light bulb. It is the source of the bulb's power.

Please look down to verse 17:

*"You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 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."*

If we are not connected to the source, God's Spirit, through God's word, by obeying His word it is like unplugging the lamp from the socket. And if we do this God is saying that His Spirit will die within us.

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<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 2:1 KJV

<sup>5</sup> Ray Stedman; "The Making of Man" <http://www.raystedman.org/genesis/0312.html>

Now to more fully understand this verse, we need to jump to chapter 3:5 where the serpent says to Eve:

**"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."  
(Genesis 3:5 RSV)**

What the serpent says here is not a lie. We see this developed throughout Scripture as the serpent becomes identified with the Devil. The devil wants to unplug us from our true source. He often does this by using truth, or, rather, misusing truth, in order to draw us on until we become the victims, ultimately, of his lie. But he baits his trap with truth, and here is the truth from the lips of the devil. "You will," he says, "have your eyes opened when you eat of this fruit, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." That suggests a clue as to what this fruit was and what it did.

How does God know good and evil? Think about it for a moment and you will see that God knows evil, not by experience because he cannot experience evil, but he knows it by relating it to himself. That which is consistent with his character and his nature is good; that which is inconsistent with it is evil. That which is out of line, out of character with himself is evil, destructive, and dangerous; but all that is in line with his own nature is good. That is how God *knows* good and evil. He relates it to himself.

But God is the only one who can properly do that. For he alone is the promise keeping forever one, Yahweh Elohim. We are made from adamah. This means God is the only Being in all the universe who has the right to relate all things to himself. When a creature tries it, he gets into trouble. The creatures of God's universe are made to discover the difference between good and evil by relating all to the Being of God, not to themselves. When adam ate of the fruit he began to do what God does -- to relate everything to himself. Yet, as a creature, he has no real ability to maintain this kind of relationship and thus he is constantly interjecting an unbalanced element into life. When man began to think of himself as the center of the universe, he became like God. But it was all a lie. Man is not the center of the universe, and he cannot be.

This is why we need to relate everything to God through His word, because in this book God has shown us how to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil. We die when we choose to be like God because

the spirit at work within us can no longer be his spirit but the spirit that in contrary to Jesus , the anti-Christ.

So this is why Jesus is so important. The Bible says that in our natural state we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.<sup>6</sup> We are all in the state of death. But as Trysten will say in his promises and as all the baptized say repeatedly throughout their lives, it is as we come to see Jesus as the one who rescues our souls from the spirit of the anti-Christ and then imparts his Holy Spirit to us that our souls can come alive so that through these physical bodies of ours the light of Jesus can truly shine.

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 3:23