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Genesis 3:14-24

Created but Cursed

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When I was living in New York I knew an elderly couple. Their house was severely damaged in a storm. The roof leaked badly. Several interior walls became moldy. The floor collapsed in spots, and the electrical system began to fail. Their home was clearly unsafe and hazardous.

But not to them. The couple just smiled, and said, "It's not so bad. We're doing fine here." Whenever neighbors tried to help, or a grown daughter sought to intervene, this couple calmly refused any and all offers. This elderly couple just went on living in a deteriorating, dangerous house – needlessly pretending, it seemed to me, everything was OK.

I tell you that sad story to tell you this. You and I are part of a similar, but even sadder story. I hate saying this to you, but we are all living in a house like the one I told you about. As humans, we are living in a fallen world. God created the universe, God created planet Earth, God created us and everything around us. And it was all good, all perfect, all flawless. But God's glorious creation has been severely damaged and compromised.

We live in a fallen world, a dangerous world. The world we live in is not the same as that which God created. When sin came into that world – when human beings named Adam and Eve used their free will to disobey God's clear command – everything changed.

If you don't know the story, read Genesis chapter 3. A serpent with deceitful words, subtly putting a wedge between

humans and their Creator. A woman, of her own free will, taking forbidden fruit and eating it. And a man, equally responsible, taking his own bite. The Bible tells us that Adam and Eve willfully fell into sin, just as you and I willfully sin every day with our actions, our words, our thoughts.

And sin changes everything. Sin wrecks everything. Sin degrades relationships. Sin divides us from God. Sin brings shame and pride, anger and lust, greed and laziness into our lives. Sin curses the world God created. And sin curses, in a billion ways, the lives God created us to live.

Today's Bible story lays out that curse of sin. God, confronting evil head-on, tells it like it is. "Here's the new reality that your sin has brought about," he says. To the serpent, who was actually Satan: "Cursed are you above all animals. On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat." To the woman, Eve, a different curse: "Pain in childbearing, and a distorted marriage relationship that slips from 'love and cherish' to 'desire and dominate.'" And to the man, Adam: "Cursed is the ground because of you. Pain and toil and sweat will be your lot, just to survive."

These curse words recorded in Genesis 3 are horrible. They're awful to read, but they are among the most important verses in the Bible. Because they're describing the reality we're living every day. This right here is our unavoidable experience. We are created, but cursed. The world we live in is created by God – and we can still see his fingerprints in the beauty and majesty around us – but the world we live in is a fallen world.

Like that elderly couple up in New York, we're living in a deteriorating, dangerous world. Created by God, but cursed because of sin.

Now, I don't want to just dump that on you today, and leave you by saying, "Go in peace. You're cursed. Adios." So let me give you some things to do. Here are three things I think we all have to do.

As we reflect on our theme today, "Created but cursed," first, we have to: **Be realistic about the world we live in.** Just like that couple with the hazardous home, sometimes we Christians like to pretend that this world is really OK. Or that life in this world is supposed to be fair. Or that our loved ones are never going to have to suffer, and that our kids should always be happy and healthy. Sometimes we forget the reality that we're living in a fallen, messed-up world. Sin has brought suffering and death into God's world, and we all have to live with the cursed reality that God describes in Genesis 3.

This is why the Bible teaches us not to chase after treasures here on earth, but to seek our treasures in heaven. This is why God's Word cautions us about the ways of the world, and the temptations of the flesh, and the pervasive influence of the culture around us. This is why Jesus teaches his disciples to be in the world, but not of the world. It's created, but it's cursed. So be realistic about the world we live in.

Here's a second thing we all have to do: **Take ownership of the fallen world.** It's not just Adam and Eve's fault. It's my fault, too. I sin every day. So do you. We all fall short of the glory of God, and we all bite that apple time and again. That elderly couple up in New York didn't want to take ownership of the problems in their house; but we have to. My sin, my mistakes, my rebellions, my failings are my own fault. And they've damaged God's beautiful creation, I know. How about you? We all have to take personal ownership of this fallen world of ours.

And here's one more thing we have to do today: **Cling to the hope God offers.** The Bible doesn't end on page 3. God didn't give up on Adam and Eve. And God doesn't give up on you and me. Our sin is real, and its negative effects are powerful. But God is even more powerful. His love is stronger than sin, and his goodness is greater than evil. And even while God is justly pronouncing judgment upon sinners in the words of a curse, God is also offering hope.

Remember the story. Even while cursing the serpent, the Lord offers the first glimmer of the Gospel. He proclaims that a descendant of the woman will crush the serpent's head. And that's Jesus. We'll hear next week about how, in Christ Jesus, God brings about a new creation in us.

For today, cling to the hope that God offers you. He hates your sin, but he loves you, the sinner. As God protected and preserved Adam and Eve, making garments for them after the curse was pronounced, so your God protects and preserves you in the faith. He provides you forgiveness and pardon, for Jesus' sake, and offers you the hope of a restored relationship that will live into eternity, when this fallen world is long gone.

To sum up, we are created, but cursed. So be realistic, take ownership, but cling to the hope God offers you. Amen.