From Eden to Bethlehem: The Promise of a Redeemer
Genesis 1:28-31; 2:15-17; 3:15; 4:10-12, 26; 6:5, 11-12; 9:1-2; Job 38:10-11, 16-17; Luke 3:36-38

Intro:

Read Genesis 1:28-31. The first command that God ever gives in his story is in order to humanity to multiply, enjoy, and become the attendants of his garden. We are his hired hands representing him and enacting his authority over creation…the overseers of all life. This is where we begin our message series. With the original commission of how humans are supposed to be.

The name of this new series is Eden to Bethlehem. We will be looking at Jesus' family tree. From the very beginning God gave a promise of Redeemer and a Savior. While awaiting this promise, the Bible traces the family tree in the various stories pertaining to the family ancestry of this coming Savior. This tree is full of imperfect people that make mistakes, but at every turn we can see God being faithful to his promises.

This week we'll be looking at the family ranging from Adam to Noah. This time, we'll be able to look at God's faithfulness to His promise to bring Life and restore Life.

The Problem:

Before we start down the road to a Redeemer, we first need something to redeem. We need to know why we needed to start down the road to Jesus to begin with.

I believe most of us are familiar with the story of the fall of humanity. God makes Adam and Eve; He gives them a choice; they choose to decide what is right and wrong for themselves at the coaxing of a serpent. They chose themselves over Someone they loved.

Recently I spoke of the serpent's question, “Did God really say?” The accuser never approaches you with a flat-out lie or temptation. It always starts with getting you to doubt where the line between right and wrong is.

Immediately after failing, Adam and Eve start to treat God and each other differently. Whereas before there was love and trust, now there is fear and distrust and self-preservation. In the midst of all this God promises a Savior. Read Genesis 3:15.

So from the onset of our breaking with God, there was the promise of a descendant, a Redeemer, a Savior, who would come to restore life to what it's supposed to be. God is being faithful to his promise to restore and redeem life.

But why?:

Why was Jesus the plan to begin with? Why plant the garden knowing humans would fail? Why start this off at all, knowing he would have to come to Earth as Jesus and suffer? Why allow evil if you could simply make earth perfect and keep it that way?

It's okay to ask these questions because we need to keep in mind God is faithful to his promise to bring life. As it turns out, bringing that life is complicated as regards you and me.

To illustrate, I'm going to do a little coin illustration. *See heads, know tails. See evil, know good.* Good and evil are two sides of the same phenomenon. If you see one, you are immediately aware of the other. So if you are capable of comprehending good, then you are immediately capable of comprehending evil.

If you think I'm getting a little too deep, then you need to consider that this very concept is in the Bible. Only it's not a coin, it's a tree.

Read Genesis 2:15-17. If you ever thought that was a funny name for a tree, then your insight is good. That's because the tree represents the same choice as the coin. Eat or don't eat. Do the task that maintains your relationship with God, who is the standard of good; or perform your own task and break with that standard, knowing that you are trading good for what you want.

If you see one side of the coin you understand the other side. If you know that you're not supposed to eat of the tree, you immediately understand that you can eat from the tree. The only way to prevent the knowledge of one side of the coin is to hide both sides. The only way to prevent evil is to remove the choice. If you can't choose it's because you can't think and if you can't think then it's because you're not <u>alive</u>. You'd be a toaster waiting for programmed instructions from a smartphone. But remember God was faithful to His mission and promise to bring life. He was not content with a husk that obeyed instructions.

To be alive, we must think. If we must think, then we must choose. If we must choose, we must be able to fail the standard. And when we fail the standard, we must be redeemed. God decided making us alive was worth it, and then He decided to save us, Himself.

Mini sermon in a sermon: God decided you were worth making before He made you, and that you were worth redeeming before you messed up. You therefore have no right to despise yourself.

Start of our Journey:

We've established that God is faithful to the promise to bring life and redeem life. We've also established the method. That is this so-called descendant. So let's start the journey to this descendant.

First up, after Adam and Eve, we have Cain and Abel. We know how that turned out. If you're unfamiliar with the story: Abel offered a gift to God that was true. Cain offered a gift to God that had something wrong with it. Cain kills Abel. What was wrong with Cain’s gift, we don't know but the concept of a begrudged gift isn't alien to us. Basically, the story demonstrates that something was severely wrong with humans.

Read Genesis 4:10-12. We're only in the second generation and we're already murdering each other. Death has once again interrupted, but God is faithful to His promise to restore life. Cain is driven away from his family, and his line continues its disappointing march through history. However, a new line is established.

Seth:

Adam and Eve had another son. Seth…a new line. Then Seth had a son. The name of Seth's son, and the aftermath gives us an idea of the new direction.

Read Genesis 4:26. Enosh, literally translated, means “frail mortal.” Then people called upon the name of the Lord. There's a lot in a name. Naming his son frail mortal gives the impression that Seth expected Enosh to depend upon God under the assumption that his human form was frail. It's a humble name. The result was people calling upon God. In other words, depending upon God. Out of the tragedy of Abel, life is restored. The line respects God once again.

Read Luke 3:36-38. So we see Jesus' parentage traced all the way back to this new line of Seth. (This also matches Genesis 5 if you wish to go through that.) Going down the line of Seth we eventually get to Noah.

The Bad Day:

So when we get to Noah, there's an obvious and imminent problem from presumably the other line. Read Genesis 6:5, 11-12. It's corrupt! And not just with a simple “rule breaking…” We are talking violence. In other words, “give me what I want or I will kill you" was the law of the land. That gives me the impression that people were worse than anything we have ever seen.

We know from Sodom and Gomorrah that God will not destroy a city if a single righteous person is there. There was also a time where God did not allow Abraham to go into the land of Canaan because Philistines were not all bad yet. So if we're to the point of wiping everything out, it had to be bad. Nevertheless God made ‘A Way’. But wiping out everyone would not do the trick. Simply recreating humanity would have required redemption also.

God made ‘A Way’ to restore life through Noah. We're familiar with the story of the world flooding and Noah in the animals being saved, but what I want to concentrate on this time is the water.

How does the bible regard water? The Hebrews had a particular notion of what deepwater represented, and I have a couple of verses from Job that I think best demonstrate this. Read Job 38:10-11, 16-17. In the Hebrew tradition, deep water represented death, chaos, an abyssal nightmare. More importantly, against this illustration of ultimate death, God's power is always displayed as Superior.

The Earth was formless and void before creation (Genesis 1:2), but the Spirit was above the waters and not threatened. The Earth flooded, but God brought Noah through the waters of chaos and restored life. Seas being parted by Moses; seas being parted by Elijah; the baptism of Jesus passing through the waters; Jesus calming the storm because, like the Spirit, hovering above the waters in the beginning, He is also not threatened. Passing through the waters is synonymous with redeeming life in scripture, but it was first established with Noah. God intended life to pass through death and be restored.

Read Genesis 9:1-2. The same commission given to Adam is regiven to Noah. We must halt our journey through the family line here for this week. But the point is, we still have that commission as partners with God…attendants of the garden. The job is still open.

Reflection Questions:

- The serpent began by making Eve question what God had said. Where do you see that same question, "Did God really say?" influencing the way people approach right and wrong today?
- What does it look like to depend on God rather than ourselves?
- The message described water as a symbol of chaos and death, yet God repeatedly demonstrates His power over it. How does the story of Noah help us understand God's ability to bring life out of situations that seem hopeless?
- Where do you see God's faithfulness continuing even when humanity repeatedly fails?