

The Mother of All Life

Genesis 1:27-4:27

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In the first chapter and a half of the Bible, we see God busy at work creating a place we call Earth, and, at every step of the way, God declares His creation “good.”

Then, halfway through chapter 2, God explains what was edible and what was not.

Genesis 2:16-17, *“And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*

But, as God interacts with Adam, He discerns something’s not right. Man has no companion, no counterpart.

Genesis 2:18, *“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”*

In the original Hebrew, this expression, *“a helper suitable for him,”* does not imply subordination or inferior rank.

It’s just that none of the animals meet the requirements for the companion that God envisioned.

What God seeks for Adam is a helper like himself; something special. So, God puts Adam into a deep sleep, pulls a rib from his body and fashions a woman.

Genesis 2:21-22, *“So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.”*

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”

Both, man and woman, were created in God’s image with a specific purpose to fulfill; they were to be helpers to one another as they served God in the Garden.

We don’t know how long Adam and Eve reveled in divine goodness together in Eden, but as the saying goes, *“All good things must come to an end.”*

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And that’s exactly what happened. A villain appeared, promising a better life by simply eating the fruit of that mysterious and forbidden tree.

The fruit, described in Genesis 3:6 as *“good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom,”* proved too much of a temptation for the woman.

She takes a bite and then gives some to her husband. Immediately, their eyes were opened, and for the first time, humans experienced shame.

When God questioned what happened, the man blamed the woman and the woman blamed the serpent. Regardless of the excuse, God held all three accountable for this act of defiance.

One writer observed, *“It would be odd, indeed, if Adam were to be found blameless in the situation since Eve was made equally from him.”*

This is an important and often over-looked fact of “the Fall,” as we call it. Indeed, the woman was the first to eat the fruit, but when presented with the same choice, the man responded in the same way.

That's why, when God appeared after the transgression, the man was held primarily responsible.

Genesis 3:11, *“And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”*

Adam doesn't answer God's question. Instead, he points to the woman and says, Genesis 3:12b, *“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”*

He even put some of the blame back on God when he referred to Eve as *“the woman you put here with me.”*

Certainly, Eve wasn't without blame, but Adam shared equally in this sin and then furthered the transgression by trying to blame it on someone else.

So, the punishment was shared equally, including the serpent. The serpent must slink through life in the dirt on its belly, man must toil against stubborn, inhospitable land until his death, and woman must suffer pain in childbirth and the grief of being dominated by men.

Somewhat surprisingly, though, was that right after God doles out the punishment, the man finally gives the woman a name.

Genesis 3:20, *“Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.”* That's what Eve means *“the mother of all living.”*

This woman defied God and did the one thing God warned them would bring death. Yet, Adam calls her the *“mother of all life.”*

Right here, in the middle of what we call *“the Fall,”* is the message of God's redemption.

Life would go on, and it would happen through this same defiant woman, because, after their expulsion from the garden, Eve gave birth to their first son, Cain.

Genesis 4:1, *“Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.”*

Then, soon after Cain, came Abel.

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But once again, death enters the story. Many of us are familiar with the story of Cain and Able.

Cain became jealous of his brother, because he won the Lord’s favor. Then he lured Able into the fields, attacked him, and killed him.

Genesis 4:8, *“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.” While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.”*

It seems that the destiny of all humans is nothing but suffering and death, but then something happened. Eve gave birth to a third son.

Genesis 4:25, *“Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.”*

This one she named Seth because, Eve says, *“God has granted me another child.”*

In Genesis 4:26 we see that *“Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.”*

Eve could be remembered for many things: first woman, wife, and mother of three boys. And yet, over the course of history, Eve has mainly been remembered for that bite she took of the forbidden fruit.

That one act made her more infamous than famous. Because of that one act, throughout history Eve has been portrayed in art and literature, and by philosophers as a seductress, a noble savage, and a deceiver, among other dreadful images.

Upon her are projected the most primitive fears and desires concerning women. The result of such imagery and teaching is this commonly held view that woman alone was the source of original sin.

We, collectively, have become Adam, projecting blame beyond ourselves, and placing it squarely on that one woman's shoulders.

The primary result is that this passage has been used for centuries to justify the perpetual, and sometimes forced, subordination of women.

An early church father, Tertullian, told Christian women, *"You are the devil's gateway! Do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on your sex lives on in this age; the guilt, necessarily, lives on too."*

The vilification of Eve has been disastrous for women throughout history. But how easily we forget the details of this First Lady's life.

How easily we forget the swift agreement of the man as he joined his wife in sin.

Each of us has within us the capacity of free will, the freedom to be, to choose, and to do as we please. How we act upon that freedom can be blamed upon no one but ourselves--not Adam, not Eve.

Eve made a bad choice. Adam made a bad choice. You and I have made bad choices, probably more than once. And yet, God's story is so much bigger than the bad choices we make.

Life does not end with one error of judgment, no matter how bad. God's grace extends to us no matter what, and Eve's story is the first story of God's grace for humanity.

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I think Seth is early proof of this; we might even say he was the embodiment of grace.

When the Genesis story shows humans moving from disobedience in Eden to murder in the family; we quickly conclude that our story will end in hopeless disgrace, too.

Instead, God gives us another chance, through the birth of Seth. But when God extends grace, there must be a recipient. Grace doesn't just hang in the air like a cloud; it works in and through human beings.

Eve served as that receptacle. She bore the child of grace and knew the name the child deserved. She knew that through this child the human story would continue.

It didn't end with the death of goodness in Abel or in the spirit of jealousy and murder in Cain. Eve recognized the new life in Seth. He was an act of God's grace, and Eve was a knowing partner in this grace.

That's why Eve's name is so fitting; "*the mother of all life*," even though history tells us that Eve's name should be "*the mother of death*."

Because of a bad choice, she lost her original home. Then her husband blamed her exclusively for their troubles. And when it seems like it couldn't get any worse, her first child murdered her second child.

But, with God's help, she rose above it all. She kept the faith in God's goodness. And because of God's grace for this woman, another child was born, and then grandchildren.

Who were taught about the God who gave them life, and they learned to "*call on the name of the LORD.*" And so, God's history continued, even to today.

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Conclusion

Some say we are suffering the consequences of "*the Fall*" and "*original sin*" because Eve did the one thing God told her not to do.

Yet, I believe it's more accurate to say that we're here today because, through all her problems, Eve persevered with courage and resiliency.

But most of all, Eve received God's grace in faith. We would do well to do the same. Eve made a mistake, but then, so did Adam.

We defy God every single day, but the end of the story isn't death. It wasn't for Eve, and it isn't for us, either.

That's the amazing gift of God's grace, new life for those who receive it. And so, today we celebrate the "*mother of all life.*"