

**"Promises Kept"**  
**Genesis 3:15**  
March 25, 2005  
Good Friday & The Annunciation of Our Lord  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Boise, Idaho  
Pastor Tim Pauls

March 25, 2005. Good Friday, of course; but this is also another holyday in the church year. It's exactly nine months until Christmas Day, so this is also the Festival of the Annunciation of our Lord, when the angel appeared to Mary and told her she would be the mother of God.

Jesus' conception and Jesus' death: it may seem a strange pairing at first. But hear the Word of the Lord from the third chapter of Genesis: "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel" (Gen. 3:15).

This is the Word of the Lord.

#### I. Eden

The Lord spoke these words just after Adam and Eve had fallen into sin. He'd created them and placed them in Paradise so that they might live with Him forever, with just one simple instruction for staying alive: don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But tempted by the serpent, Eve ate the fruit while Adam stood by and said nothing. Sin came into the world, and death through sin. The days of creation were suddenly numbered.

The consequences of this Fall would be many and horrendous, and the Lord was about to tell Adam and Eve what would happen. But first, even before He spoke of the pain and strife and death which was to follow, He first spoke to give them hope. To the serpent He said, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Enmity...an enemy of Satan was coming; and while the devil would manage to bruise his opponent's heel, his opponent would bruise, crush, the devil's head. Who would this be? The Lord declared it would be the Seed of the woman, a strange phrase indeed, because women don't have seed. Men have seed, women have eggs; it was as if this devil's enemy would be born of a woman alone.

Behold the great mercy of God on sinful man. Even before the Lord described the consequences of sin to Adam and Eve, He first promised that a Savior was coming. He'd be born of a woman; and while the devil would hurt Him, He would destroy the devil and his power once for all.

While the Lord spoke to give Adam and Eve hope, His words gave no comfort to Satan at all. He didn't specify which child born to which woman: so for thousands of years, each time a child was born, the devil would have to wonder if this would be the one.

Because the Lord's promise was sure: the Savior would be born of a woman. He would destroy the devil. And He would deliver His people.

## II. Nazareth

26Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" 29But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. (Lk. 1:26-31)

And so it was that God kept His promise. In the backwoods town of Nazareth, the angel appeared to Mary and spoke the Word of God; and Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost so that He might be born of the Virgin Mary. The Savior was now become flesh; and from the moment He took the form of a single cell in Mary's womb by God's creative Word, His flesh and blood had one destination—a cross on a hill called Calvary.

What followed were the devil's attempts to derail this plan. He plotted to heap scandal upon Mary so that even Joseph at first sought to divorce her. Once Jesus was born and the Word of this spread, Herod sent soldiers to have Him slaughtered; but while that evil ruler took the lives of many innocents, the Lord saw to it that Joseph took the mother and Child safely off to Egypt. Jesus would grow up in Nazareth, apparently a quiet life in a quiet town—hard to believe that is the life of the One promised millennia ago to Adam and Eve. But He was the One, for the Lord had kept His promise. When He began His public ministry, He would be popular for His miracles for a while. Eventually though, through the machinations of evil men, many would turn against Him. Eventually, He would be arrested, condemned, beaten and scourged; and then they would place the wood for His own cross upon His back and march Him to a hill called the place of the skull.

## III. Golgotha

And so we find ourselves at Golgotha this evening of the Annunciation, and these two holydays are inseparable: Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary to be nailed to that cross. At the Annunciation, the Lord kept His promise and sent the Savior into the world; here, at Good Friday, He keeps the rest of that promise and crushes the devil's head.

Behold your Savior on the cross. From the story of His passion, you can visualize the physical suffering, at least as much of the wounds and the blood and the cruelty as your mind will permit you to imagine. By faith, you also believe what you cannot comprehend: not only does Jesus suffer physically on the cross, but He also suffers God's judgment and hell for the sins of all the world. In other words, while the physical suffering is horrendous, it is only a small bit of the suffering that the Lord truly undergoes. You cannot comprehend the full, eternal agony that Jesus suffers on that cross.

And yet, you rejoice in this: while the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely unimaginable on the cross, for Him it is only the bruising of His heel. The Lord keeps that promise, too. Even as Jesus hangs on that cross in God's Judgment, He remains the Son of God who will be delivered from this condemnation. His heel is bruised—oh, how is it injured!, but the heel will be healed when the

price is paid.

The Lord keeps His promise as Jesus suffers on that cross-for one might say His heel is bruised from crushing Satan's head so forcefully. At Calvary, the devil is thoroughly defeated and disarmed.

The evil one would use your sins against you in order to accuse you: "Do you see what you have done? Surely God has no love or mercy for the likes of you, and you can't atone for your guilt." But this is crushed at Calvary. Your Savior declares, "I see what you have done; see the cross, and hear that there I have suffered for all of your sins, paid the price for them all. You can't atone for your guilt, but I have. And no matter the devil's accusations, I say that you are forgiven."

The evil one would use death and grave to haunt you: "What hope do you have as a Christian? You grow sick and weary; you lose friends and loved ones and eventually you also will die and go to the grave. What advantage do you have being a Christian? Forsake this Savior, for you still die." This weapon, too, is destroyed at Calvary. The Lord declares, "Until I return, it is given to you to rest in the grave; but look to the cross and hear this Word. I have already gone to the grave, and I have come back out. I am the death of death, because the grave could not hold Me. And as I have been raised from the dead, so also I will raise you, My people, from death and grave to everlasting life."

The devil will whisper that he still has the upper hand; sure, Jesus scored some points on the cross, but the evil one still has the power to snatch you into hell forever. But his power is destroyed at Calvary. The Lord declares, "I have paid the price and broken out of the tomb. Furthermore, I have descended into hell to declare My victory. The gates of hell could not keep Me out, nor could they keep Me there. I have conquered hell for you, and I will raise you up to heaven."

The promises made long ago have been fulfilled for you. The Seed of the woman was conceived in Nazareth in order to be the Sacrifice for your sin-promise kept. He went to the cross and crushed Satan's head, robbing him of every possible weapon by which he might snatch you away-promise kept.

And so, on this somber doubly holyday, as we gather in deepening gloom, beneath the sadness there is this great comfort and joy:

God keeps His promises.  
The Savior has come.  
He has died.  
He is risen.

And you are forgiven for all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen