

“Placing All Your Hopes in One Person”—Genesis 4:1

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Placing All Your Hopes in One Person”, is Genesis 4:1 → *Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord* (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

Where do you direct your hopes? According to common parlance you may hear many people use the word hope in reference to wishful thinking. While many people may talk about their “hopes and dreams” in such a manner the real question is: Where do you direct those hopes? It is common to look for outside factors to help you bring those hopes to fruition such as an education, a job, an environment (i.e. moving to a new community) and, of course, relationships.

Placing all your hopes in one person is very common. How many people enter marriage expecting their spouse to fulfill their “hopes and dreams” concerning affection, being cared for, accepted and loved? How many corporations hope the new CEO will revive or even save the

company? I've heard numerous discussion of people placing their hopes for daily living in a political leader. I remember a member making this statement to me in my first year of ministry while talking about the congregation surviving: "Pastor, if you can't make it happen, no one can." Probably intending it as a compliment it actually reflected a delusional hope, that of placing all his hopes in an individual to "make it all come together" for him. If you do this, expect to be severely disappointed and let down in the end because sinners make lousy gods.

If you think you have a challenge determining in whom to place your hopes to "save" our messed up society with the direction it appears to be taking for your posterity, just think of the challenge Adam and Eve faced in their messed up society. Adam and Eve had a messed up society? How could they have a messed up society when it was just the two of them? Messed up societies are rather obvious in a world with 7.5 billion people. I would think Adam and Eve's world should've been rather mild compared to ours with just the two of them.

However, let's take a look at it from their perspectives. They had the privilege of experiencing perfection, a world of complete harmony without sin, sinners and psychotics. A perfect world with a perfect relationship with each other was "a given" . . . literally given to them by Yahweh as Genesis 1:31 states: *God saw **everything** that He had made, and behold, it was **very good**.* Then came the worst day of their

lives. They chose to disobey the LORD, bringing a messed up relationship with Him, between themselves and with the world around them (cf. Genesis 3). Just think of how this life-changing decision affected their hopes for the future.

You cannot totally relate, can you? Of course not. You were born into a messed up world of sin, raise in the midst of this mess and have never known a perfect life in a perfect world. This is why hope—even a hope for a perfect world after death (i.e. in heaven or “a better place”)—is no more than wishful thinking for so many people. “There’s just go to be something better in store for us because this world is just not cutting it!” It is natural for our human nature to desire perfection. God created Adam and Eve perfect with the desire for all humanity to experience His perfection eternally. Unfortunately it remains wishful thinking as long as you refuse to recognize your sin, your messed up heart and mind and your sins which have contributed to this messed up world. At least Adam & Eve didn’t have to wonder about that for which they were hoping because they knew what perfection was like in the first place . . . and lost it.

In whom are you going to place your hope? Our text records Eve’s words at the birth of her first son: *I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD*. Seems to me like kind of a strange statement. Usually people who experience the birth of a child say something like “It’s a boy” or “It’s

a girl”, not “It’s a man.” In all fairness, though, she could have simply made the comment based upon him being like Adam, the only male she’d ever encountered and he was a man. However, it could have been a statement reflecting her hope for Paradise restored.

Such hope was not unfounded but rather placed in their lives by Yahweh Himself. While speaking to the devil in Genesis 3:15 the LORD said: *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.* Based upon this promise Eve would have lived in hopes of a child coming from her womb who would *bruise* the devil’s *head* (i.e. destroy his power). What a wonderful promise! There is hope of Paradise restored! With such a mentality it would not be an improbability to think that Eve is holding her baby boy and placing all her hopes in him to make things perfect again.

As Cain’s life unfolded, though, Eve must have been sorely disappointed in this man. His behavior gave evidence that she gave birth to and raised a son who was *conceived in their own likeness, after their image* (cf. Genesis 5:3; Psalm 51:5), that is, born sinful. The Biblical account records the sinful actions of his sinfulness produced when he killed his brother Abel (cf. Genesis 4:8). If Eve had her hopes placed in this one person to restore perfection, she soon discovered how they were misdirected. She failed to recognize what many people fail to recognize

today as well—a sinner cannot bring about the perfection God desires. While people avoid admitting their sin, let alone even talking about it, God deals with it once and for all time, including eternity.

Since the serious nature of your sin is so great only God can deal with it properly in order for you to experience Paradise restored on the Last Day. Notice His promise to the devil (as well as all mankind embodied in Adam and Eve) began with the words *I will . . .* and continued by stating what His Savior would do. He would destroy satan's grip on mankind in sin but it would not be easy. Thus, Yahweh's words that the devil would *bruise His heel*, that is, cause Him to suffer the just punishment for your sin. If you're going to place your hopes in one person with any certainty of achieving the perfect life it had better be in this Seed from the woman.

Hundreds of years later a man holds another baby in his arms in Whom he is placing all his hopes. His name is Simeon. Luke 2:25 describes him as a *righteous and devout* man who was *waiting for the consolation of Israel*. He had been waiting in hopes of seeing the Seed who would restore Paradise based upon the Holy Spirit having revealed to him *that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ* (cf. Luke 2:26). Imagine what he went through every time a firstborn son was brought into the temple for purification rites. His hopes were high. However, this hope was not wishful thinking. It was faith that the certain

promise of God's Word would be fulfilled in his lifetime.

On this particular day the Holy Spirit revealed to him that Jesus was the Seed to fulfill God's promise of Paradise restored, causing him to burst into a song of praise with which we are very familiar. We sing it when we return from receiving the very body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper. His song of praise is called the "Nunc Dimittis" (cf. pp. 165,182,199-200,211 in Lutheran Service Book, based on Luke 2:29-32). The Holy Spirit gave him the discernment to place his hopes in Jesus **on the basis of God's promise** recorded in Genesis 3:15, not according to his own sinful, worldly wishful thinking. He recognized the suffering which this baby would have to endure for sinners such as himself (cf. Luke 2:34-35) in order to bring the hope of the ages to fulfillment—Paradise restored.

Do you desire a perfect life? Do you seek a life free of pain and sickness? Do you hope for the perfect relationships in life? Do you want an end to your struggles and problems in life? You should. It's that for which God originally created humankind. Your hopes can be transformed from wishful thinking to watchful trusting in the certain promises of God, fulfilled for you in the Person & Work of Jesus, the Seed of the woman (cf. Galatians 3:16; 4:4-5). As you confess your sins and trust in the perfect life, the perfect sacrificial death and the never to die again resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, the Holy

Spirit will take your hope out of a wishful thinking mode and transform it into a confident assurance of Paradise being restored for you **on the Last Day when Jesus returns in glory**. In this world you will still experience sinfulness in all of it's forms—broken relationships, sickness and disease, emotional and physical pain, giving into the temptations to sin, etc. But you can confidently place all your hopes in Jesus, the Seed from the woman, the sure and certain hope given the Holy Spirit. Just as God kept His promise to send Jesus to crush the devil's power for you, He will keep His promise to send Him again so you can experience Paradise restored at the restoration of all things on the Last Day. Amen.

*Through Christ we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

*Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings,*

*knowing that suffering produces endurance,*

*and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,*

*and hope does not put us to shame,*

*because God's love has been poured into our hearts*

*through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.*

(Romans 5:2-5)

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