We thank You for the opportunity to come eat of the Tree of Life, in whose leaves are healing for the nations, healing for the soul, the body, and the spirit. We are thankful, Father, for that Word which is imperishable, that it is a seed which cannot be contaminated and has in it an organic eternal power, the Living Word.

We pray Father that You would sharpen all of our senses to be attuned to the Word. And we pray that You would rivet our attention upon Jesus Christ, the Author and the Finisher of our faith, that in seeing Him and what He has done for us, we would today come to your feast of grace.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

We recently have been spending time in Genesis, the Book of Beginnings, and realizing that God’s grace was not something new when Jesus came, but that God’s grace, the fullness of the goodness of God, was there in the beginning.

Today we begin in Genesis chapter two.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’

**Genesis Chapter Three**

1 He [the serpent] said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?’

Notice his distortion of the word of God. The Lord never said, You shall not eat of ANY tree in the Garden.
Two trees in the Garden were given names.  
One was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,  
which would lead to death;  
and one was the Tree of Life,  
which you are invited to eat of today  
because of Jesus Christ.

2 And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ 4 But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ 10 And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’ 11 He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ 12 The man said, ‘The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’ 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’

Verse 22

Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever—’ 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

Are you ready for some good news?

Two trees in the Garden were given names. One was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which would lead to death; and one was the Tree of Life, which you are invited to eat of today because of Jesus Christ.

A TREE AND ITS SEED

Trees are fascinating, aren’t they? My girl, who is almost too big to be climbing trees, has had a favorite climbing tree in our backyard. Maybe you have had a favorite tree. You would climb that tree, swing on it, or simply rest in a hammock under the shady canopy of its boughs. We had on our wonderful sabbatical trip a year and a half ago opportunity to visit both the Redwood Forest and the giant Sequoias. Astounding what a tree can become from a small seed, isn’t it?

Trees have always been an important symbol of life. They remain green during summer drought and they stand when other plants fall. And some, like fruit trees, are especially important in an agrarian culture, where they provide fruit in season. The two trees in the middle of the Garden were fruit trees.

PRINCIPLES OF SEED

EXponential GROWTH

On day three of creation, God did an amazing thing that we take for granted. He created trees that would bear fruit, in which was the seed that would produce more trees that would bear more fruit as
In the Beginning, God's Grace Was There

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Seed According to Its Kind
God said that every plant would produce and every fruit tree would bear fruit according to its own kind, and this is true of everything in the natural world. It is also true in the psychological world and it is true in the spirit. Everything reproduces after its own kind.

Symbol of Family Lineage
The two trees that were fixed in the middle of the Garden are a very important symbol of family lineages. This imagery is the source of our idea of a family tree, one seed grows with many branches and produces after its own kind, and the Scriptures are full of this image.

Luke 6:43-44
No good tree produces bad fruit;

Galatians 6:7
Whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-24
The golden lampstand in the Tabernacle.

... 17 Its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers were of one piece with it. 18 And there were six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; 19 three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand ...

There is scholarly agreement that the golden lampstand was a stylized Tree of Life, and its leaves are pictured as giving light to the twelve loaves of the Presence that nourish the twelve tribes.

The Tree of Life is all about God. Abundant life comes when the focus of our hearts is on Who God is and what He does. There, in that God-centered life, is a life of freedom, joy and faith.

Knowledge of Good and Evil? Why wasn’t it instead called the tree of lust, or the tree of deception, or the tree of death?

And further, why was there such an emphasis on the cherubim guarding the Tree of Life once Adam and Eve had sinned?

Today we will learn the answers to these important questions, and we will find that hidden throughout all of this story is the incredible gospel announcement of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

TWO FAMILY TREES

A Tree of Life and A Tree of Death
The seed of destruction began with a diabolical thought: What am I missing by not eating of that tree? Ultimately, all spiritual death is related to self-absorption. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is all about me, what I need to do in order to feel okay about myself. But the Tree of Life is all about God. Abundant life comes when the focus of our hearts is on Who God is and what He does. There, in that God-centered life, is a life of freedom, joy and faith. In short, the tree that is all about me is death, and the tree that is all about God is Life.

Relationship vs. Religion
Seed of Deception
The serpent said, Surely you will not die; you will become more like God if you eat of the fruit of this tree. This is the premise of all religion and pagan cult worship: you do something to make yourself more like God. Although that might not seem to be bad, this is why we fall into all of our various
All of religion is based upon the basic principle that you need to do something in order to be more like God. You need to eat of this tree, and you need to do this in this way. That subtle deception, which was the premise of the enemy’s attack, is the source of death. We ought to pay attention to that deception, You need to do something in order to make yourself like God.

The irony of this story is that the man and the woman were tempted to be like God when they were already like God. And the tragedy of the story is that the creature that was made in the image of God, was duped by a creature that wasn’t made in the image of God. Eve’s appropriate response would have been: Who are you, serpent, who is not even in the image of God, to tell me that I need to do something to become like God? I’m already like God.

Seed of the Law

Jesus was not angry with the prostitutes, drunkards, sinners, lepers or the demonized, but He was angry with the Pharisees, who were telling the people what they must do in order to be like God. The law kills, Paul says, not because the commands of God are bad, but because any system by which you try in your flesh – of your own effort – to become more like God, is the seed of death. The law, Paul said, arouses sin.

Seed of God’s Commands

Doesn’t a little part of you wonder that if God hadn’t mentioned the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve would not have even thought of it, and so wouldn’t have eaten of it? It is like the saying about a pink elephant: that the thought of a pink elephant wouldn’t occur to you until someone says, Don’t think of a pink elephant.

The fact of the matter is that it was good for God to give Adam and Eve such a command. It was filled with vital information, and the commands of God are not burdensome. But it was also the command that the enemy used to arouse sin. This is what Paul meant when he said that the law incites more sin.

The Narrow Way vs. the Broad Way

Seed of Freedom and Seed of Loss

The tree that would appear to give you more if you partake of it, will instead take away from you. The tree that would appear to give you more freedom, is the one that will take away your freedom. To the natural eye, being forbidden to eat from one tree only appears to be a loss of freedom. Adam and Eve, if you choose to do what you want to do in order to have more, you will lose everything. As soon as you eat of the forbidden tree, you will never again eat from any of the trees.

Seed of Destruction and Seed of Life

It is to say that broad is the gate that leads to destruction, and narrow is the gate that leads to life. The temptation of the spirit of this age is to say that it is most noble to make the right way as broad as possible; that we should not want to say that the way to life all boils down to one exclusive Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. That, according to the modern mind, makes you exclusive and intolerant, very narrow. But the Gospel says that this narrow way is THE way. It looks restrictive, but once you step through the narrow gate, you realize it is expansive, for there is an entire Kingdom beyond that gate!

The broad way: Eat of any tree you want. The narrow way: The command of God. It is a paradox, for as soon as Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, they lost everything. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you. Narrow the whole focus of your life down to one Person, and you receive everything. Focus your life on getting everything, and you will lose everything.

1 Genesis 1:26-27
2 Romans 7:5-11
3 1 John 5:3
4 Matthew 7:13-14
5 Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:31
The Most Glorious Narrow Way

If someone in today’s culture were to say:

I don’t like the exclusive claim about Jesus being the only way to God and to Heaven because that doesn’t sound like good news. I believe it’s okay to believe whatever you want to believe, and that the best value is to be tolerant of all the different views because there are many different ways to God and to Heaven, you might ask: How do you believe a person gets to Heaven?

And if the response is, By being a good person, the following conversation might ensue:

You would say, But to say that any good person goes to Heaven, means that you then have to define what constitutes a good person. What is the measure of being a good person?

And the response might be, Probably the Ten Commandments.

Well, you would have to say, the Ten Commandments say, ‘Do not lie.’ Have you ever lied? Have you ever told just a small fib? Have you ever just put a small twist on the truth to make yourself look better in somebody else’s eyes? Have you ever done that?

Well, yes I have, anyone would have to say.

Then that would make you a liar, you would say, so you wouldn’t measure up to the Ten Commandments and you wouldn’t be considered a good person.

The problem with this broad way is that as soon as anyone says that the good people go to Heaven, somebody has to draw the line of where the good begins and ends. Where is it that you make an A, and where is it that you make a B? And is the poor soul who almost received an A then out of the running? It is a paradox, but the worst news we could ever give to somebody is that only the good people go to Heaven, that there is no exclusive claim to truth, because everyone would then live with the ever-present existential angst of not ever having the assurance of a certain way to Heaven.

Instead, you are able to announce the most glorious news that ever could be heard: the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, a mystery, and a seemingly narrow way. That Gospel – the glorious good news – is that WHOEVER accepts what ONE Person, Jesus the Christ, has done for them by shedding His blood; whoever accepts His death, His resurrection, and His saving power for their life to pay the penalty that they otherwise would have to pay; whoever accepts that He died the death that they should die, has opened to them the whole Kingdom of God, and it opens it up to them for all eternity.

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Growth of the Seed

Seed grows stronger in either direction. Either the curse grows and a family becomes worse and worse, or the blessing grows, and the family becomes better and better. It wasn’t so much the bite of the fruit that

6 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
was so destructive to Adam and to Eve. It was the seed of death that was in the fruit. The seed seems innocent enough; it is so small. But it grows.

Two Different Families, Two Different Seeds
Sociologists once studied two families, the family of Max Jukes (whose name is fictitious) and the family of Jonathan Edwards. Both families lived in the same eighteenth century timeframe. The head of the Max Jukes’ family was an unbeliever, a man with no morality, and he married a woman with similar values.

Over 1200 of the known descendants of the Jukes family were studied. Of those, 280 were professional vagrants; 130 were confined in a penitentiary for an average of thirteen years each; seven of them were murderers; one hundred were alcoholics; and 128 were prostitutes. Of the twenty who learned a trade, ten learned it in a state prison. None of them made a significant contribution to society, and even by the standards of those days, the group of family members cost the state of New York $1.3 million.

Jonathan Edwards came from a Christian family and married a Christian girl. Among his descendants, one hundred became clergymen, missionaries, or theological professors; over one hundred became college professors; over one hundred became lawyers; thirty of them judges; over sixty became physicians and over sixty became authors. There were seventy-five Army or Naval officers and thirteen presidents of universities; there were numerous giants of industry, several members of Congress, three senators and one who became Vice President of the United States.

All because of the seed of a family tree.
What needs to change is not the management of the fruit, but a change in the seed itself.

An Effort to Overcome Evil
The famous story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a classic novel bearing little semblance to all the horror stories and movies which evolved from the original. Dr. Jekyll was a man who was largely a good man, but he despised the battle of good and of evil that he saw within himself—a battle that we all have faced. This duality bothered him so much that he came up with a concoction by which he thought he could displace all the evil within himself by transferring it to a different person, leaving himself with only the good. And so with the concoction, Mr. Hyde was formed.

Mr. Hyde was all evil. He started out small, but the more he took of the concoction, the bigger Mr. Hyde grew. This is to say that the more that Dr. Jekyll tried to overcome and displace all the evil in his life by his own efforts, the bigger the evil became, until finally Mr. Hyde took over.

Two Seeds, One Serum
Another example of man’s effort to rid the world of evil is the story of Captain America. This is my favorite of all the superhero movies that have recently been released because there is no question that Captain America is the one who is good and that Red Skull is the one who is bad. In the modern movies today you cannot always identify the good or the bad characters and, if you aren’t mindful, you’ll find yourself pulling for the murderer!

Red Skull and Captain America both take identical serums. The injection makes a really good man, like Captain America, much stronger as a good man, so he is better. But it also makes a bad man, like Red Skull, much stronger in a bad direction, so he is worse.

These stories reflect the idea of the two family trees. The seed of one tree became worse and worse as it grew stronger and stronger, and the seed of the other became better and better as it grew stronger and stronger. It is as if a fertilizer was stimulating each seed to become more of what it already was.

You don’t manage the fruit; you change the root.
Man Without Christ

A Seed of Self-Absorption

When Adam and Eve took the fruit of the tree, they also took the seed that was in that fruit, and everything changed. Suddenly they were self-absorbed and it was all about me, me, me. I heard. I hid. I ate ... I, I, I.

If you were to follow the path of the seed of death in the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil all the way to the end of The Book, you would see that there is a Beast that is against Christ. This beast is in human form because it is of human seed, and it is the ultimate expression of man without Christ. There is a symbolic number assigned to that Beast – 666 – which is from the number for man, the number of the day on which he was created, day six. 666; man, man, man; me, me, me.

And the number seven is God’s number, from the seventh day, a day of rest, the day in which the work was finished. In other words, from beginning to end, the Bible is a story about the human temptation to make life self-centered rather than God-centered. Whether it is a lying serpent luring Eve into self-preoccupation, or a beast bearing the symbolic number 666, the antichrist has always sought to turn humanity’s focus away from God and toward self.

But the good news of the Gospel announced that God’s grace is sufficient for us. In Christ, we no longer need be enslaved by self-preoccupation. We are invited back to Eden-like worship, where God alone is exalted and the worshipper can experience once again the bliss of self-surrender.

In short, the hell of religious shame says I must do something to be like God, so it’s all about me and what I’m doing. But the riches of heavenly grace rejoice: Through Christ, I’m justified and reckoned righteous so I can rest in the assurance that I’m already like God.

A Seed of Anxiety

Adam and Eve wanted wisdom, but in the end, all they had was self-absorption, and with it came anxiety. The problem of the world from the tree of knowledge that breaks my heart and fuels my heart of mission, is that of every child who instead of being innocent, has a knowledge of good and evil and is prone to say,

How am I doing? How do I look? Do I look okay? Do I look thin enough? Have I done enough? Have I pleased you? Am I going to be okay? What do I need to do in order to be acceptable?

Out of that knowledge, every form of evil arrives, and it is that angst that the devil uses to lure people into addiction, depression, and suicide. It all came from that tree.

Religion teaches people to keep eating from that tree, as if God is going to somehow heal you if you take one more bite and get a little bit more knowledge about what you need to do to be more like Him. That leads to death. Jesus said to the Pharisees:

You search the world over for a convert and make him twice the son of hell that you are. You are telling him to go to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil when I, The Tree of Life, am standing in your midst.

Fear of Rejection

From each other The seed of death began working immediately in Adam and Eve, before God spoke a word, before He announced any curse, before He banished them from the Garden. It began because the weight of the guilt made them hide from each other. It took away their unfettered joy and affection. We’re naked. Now we have to hide from each other. God made them for each other, but they had to hide from each other for fear of rejection.

From God Hiding from God under the weight of their guilt, the guilt brought its own punishment just by the severe weight of it all. God was grieved and said, Where are you? Why did you eat of the tree

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7 Matthew 23:15
8 Luke 17:20-21
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that I told you not to eat of? I gave you thousands of trees, and now look what has happened.

Notice that this is not a story about prohibition. What a misunderstanding of Christianity to think that this is a story about what you cannot do. I don’t know how many trees were in that Garden. It was expansive. It was massive. It was beautiful. It was flowing with rivers and beautiful fruit, and the man and woman could eat of any of it. This is a story about God making a world and saying, That is very good! It is a story about God setting the man in that Garden to care for it. It is a story of vocation. It is a story of intimacy. It is a story of love. It is a story of permission, not prohibition. There was only one tree that the man and woman could not eat from.

THE GRACE OF GOD

So Many Gifts

Everywhere you turn in these opening verses of the Bible, especially in these chapters which we call the story of the Fall, I see once again the story of grace. So many gifts.

The command was a gift, as are all commands from God. Note that while there was no sin in the world, God gave a command: Do not eat of that tree. In fact, if you are hurting today, ask God to give you a command, because if you are paralyzed, the best thing you could ever hear from Jesus Christ would be: Take up your mat and walk. His commands are not burdensome.

The Garden was a gift; the woman was a gift; the marriage was a gift; the presence of God with them was a gift.

So many gifts, yet the most marvelous gift of all appeared after they had sinned...

The Unfinished Sentence

GENESIS CHAPTER THREE

22 Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever—’

The English Standard Version, from which I read today, then has a dash because verse twenty-two ends without the sentence being completed. I don’t know if there is another place in the Scriptures where God speaks with an incomplete sentence, but such occurs here. It is a fragment in the Hebrew: lest he reach out his hand and take also of the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever—

God stopped. To complete the sentence was unbearable to God. We’ve all stopped mid-sentence at the thought of unbearably painful possibilities. If there is something that would be of such bad news to say, you would not be able to even complete the sentence. You would think about the possible consequence of what could happen and you would say, God forbid that would ever happen, because if it does, then—and you would stop because it would be too unbearable to finish the sentence. It was too unbearable to God; He didn’t finish the sentence. Instead He had to move to action. He quit His speech and He moved to action.

therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

God never acted more passionately than this. He stopped mid-sentence and moved to drastic action. The God of grace said,

Quickly, get cherubim around the Tree of Life. Quickly, quickly, because now that he is in a sinful condition, now that he is under the weight of guilt, now that he is in shame and condemnation, we cannot allow the man to eat of the tree of immortality and make that condition permanent. Do

It has always been God’s heart, and it is still His heart, that none should perish, but that all would have eternal life.

Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:11; Luke 5:24; John 5:8
not let him come back in here and live in an eternal state of guilt. Do not let him make permanent the sin that he has done. Quickly!

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

The Second Adam

Driving Adam and Eve away from the Tree of Life was the most gracious thing God could have done, for it has always been His heart, and it is still His heart, that none should perish, but that all would have eternal life.10

As soon as God sent Adam out, He looked at His Son, for He knew the plan. He would send a second Adam,11 Who would come of the imperishable seed of the Tree of Life,12 Who would never eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Who would come in innocence and remain innocent,13 Who would be tempted in every way that Adam was tempted, and every way that you and I are tempted, yet never say yes to the serpent14 and never say no to His Father.15

The second Adam would come and the Father would place Him also in a garden, this time a garden with gnarled olive trees outside of Jerusalem on a hill at the Mt. of Olives. He would claw the ground of the garden of Gethsemane,16 and He would sweat blood,17 because there He was being fiercely tempted. Do you know what He was tempted with? He was tempted by every demon of hell: Become like God alone. Do not be a man. Do not let yourself die. Do not go to a cross. Do not feel the weight of the sin of the world. You have a legion of angels at your disposal.18

The temptation for the new Adam was as it had been for the old: do something to be like God. But His mission was to be both God and man, and to go to the cross. And though He sweat blood, and He said, I wish this cup could be taken from me, He said, Not my will but yours, Father, be done.19

They put Jesus on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; put Jesus on the tree with the weight of the guilt that Adam and Eve felt that made them want to hide, with the weight of the guilt of every boy, every girl, every man, every woman that has ever looked at something they wished they hadn’t looked at and fallen from innocence, has ever said something they wished they hadn’t said and fell from innocence, has ever done something that they wished they hadn’t done and fell from innocence.

Every bit of the weight of the guilt of the world was manifest in that cross, and the second Adam let Himself be nailed to that tree of death.20

And while He was on that tree, the unthinkable happened. Jesus ingested the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. He was banished from Eden. He was banished from fellowship with the Father, separated from life. He suffered and He died for you. He experienced hell for you. The Innocent One was reckoned guilty.21

An Unthinkable Exchange

When you accept Jesus Christ, you, the guilty, are declared innocent.22 An unthinkable exchange took place that day. That tree of death (the Cross) became to all who would receive Jesus, a Tree of Life. For in that shed blood was a cleansing so complete, so full and so free, that anyone who would accept Jesus Christ would have the right to become a child of God, born of a new seed, born of a new Adam, born of a righteous, imperishable seed.

And as a child of God, washed in the blood of Jesus, you have been given Jesus’ own

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10 Ezekiel 33:11; John 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9
11 1 Corinthians 15:45-46
12 Luke 1:35
13 Hebrews 7:26
14 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15, 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22
15 John 8:29, 14:31; 15:10; Hebrews 10:7
17 Luke 22:44
18 Matthew 26:53
20 John 10:14-18; Philippians 2:8
21 Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; Isaiah 53
22 Isaiah 53:6
For in that shed blood was a cleansing so complete, so full and so free, that anyone who would accept Jesus Christ would have the right to become a child of God, born of a new seed, born of a new Adam, born of a righteous, imperishable seed. And as a child of God, washed in the blood of Jesus, you have been given Jesus’ own righteousness.

righteousness, so that though you are not innocent, you are so redeemed that when you return to the eastern entrance of Eden, and the cherubim who are brandishing their fiery swords see you, they see Jesus. They do not see the first Adam. They see the second Adam. They see the Adam Who was always free to eat of the Tree of Life. And then, when the cherubim see you robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, they will step back and, instead of brandishing their swords, they will open their arms and say,

Come! Have your fill of the Tree of Life! Eat your fill of the feast of grace, for that tree was never cut down. That tree has never disappeared. That tree has always been there. It was there in the Garden. It was there in the time of temptation. It was there in the frustrations of it all, and it is there now. It stands through Jesus Christ.

Come to the Garden

We are invited back to that Garden every day and every moment of worship. We are invited back in because on that day in which the tree of death became a Tree of Life, EVERYTHING changed. The Temple, which faced east, just like the Garden of Eden, suddenly was shaken; the Temple veil which separated the Holy of Holies was rent fully asunder from the top to the bottom; and the Holy of Holies was opened up, because that tree has never been cut down.

THE TREE OF LIFE

The Tree of Life was there in Psalm 1: Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord and his law he meditates day and night; he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in season and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

That tree was there in Psalm 92:12: The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

That tree is hidden in Song of Songs as the bride sings, As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house and his banner over me was love.

That tree is there, hidden in Proverbs 3:18: Wisdom is a Tree of Life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.

It is in Proverbs 11:30: The fruit of righteousness is a Tree of Life.

It is tucked away in Isaiah 44:23: Sing O heavens, for the Lord has done it ... The Lord has done it. The Lord has done it! The Lord has done it... shout, O depths of the earth; break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it.

It is in Isaiah 65:22: They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

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23 2 Corinthians 5:21
24 Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45
It is tucked away in Jeremiah’s prophecy, Jeremiah 17:7-8: *Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.*

It is there in Ezekiel’s vision of the temple, Ezekiel 41:17-19: *And on the walls all around, inside and outside, was a measured pattern. It was carved of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Every cherub had two faces: a human face toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side.*

The tree was there in the book of the prophet Joel, Joel 2:22: *Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things! Fear not, you beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit.*

It is there in Matthew 3:10: *Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down.* BUT,

It is there in Matthew 7:17: *Every healthy tree bears good fruit… A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit…*

In Luke 13:19: Jesus said, *The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree.* And The Tree that stood for all eternity and all time finally shows up in the last book of your Bible with the revelation given to John on the Isle of Patmos:

Revelation 2:7: *To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the Tree of Life;*

Revelation 22:2: *Through the middle of the city; also on either side of the river – in the middle of it all – the Tree of Life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed… and*

Revelation 22:14: *Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have the right to the Tree of Life and that they may enter the city by the gates.*

**COME TO THE TREE OF LIFE**

The invitation of the Gospel is simple and glorious. Humanity wanted to do something to become like God, and in so doing introduced guilt, shame, angst and separation from the very God they wanted to be like. But Jesus Christ came as the second Adam and never ate of the tree of death until He went to the cross on your behalf so that you, today, are the people of Revelation 22. In Jesus Christ, your robes are washed in His blood and the invitation is open and expansive and free. Come to the Tree of Life and have your fill. In it is healing for the nations!

**And THAT is the Gospel!**

*Father, we are so thankful for what You have done for us in Jesus, and we pray, Lord, that you will call us to The Tree of Life. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

**An Invitation**

The Spirit and the Bride say, *Come to the banquet. Come eat of the Tree of Life. You’ll never get rid of your sin by eating more of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. You’ll never become healed and whole and joyful. You’ll never have a peace that passes understanding, if you live under the angst of asking the question about me, Am I doing it right?*

The Lord invites you to turn your eyes towards Him, to a different tree. Jesus is our Tree of Life, and we are privileged to eat of this tree every day and for all eternity. Whatever you might need of God, you will find it in your worship of Him and your trust of Him. There is so much in the Tree of Life.

Revelation 22 says that in the leaves of that tree, speaking metaphorically of Jesus Himself, there is healing for the nations. And there is healing for your soul; there is healing for your life.

The picture of Adam and Eve, banished from the Garden, unable to return to eat of the Tree of Life, may have become vivid to you today, and suddenly you have realized that is where you have been, on the outside of the Kingdom. But you see what Jesus has done for you. He took the penalty for you so that the way would be open and you could come and freely eat of the Tree of Life.
There is no other Name; there is no other Tree; there is no other place for life, but in this One, in this One Jesus. In this one tree is an expansion of everything that you ever wanted. But, the confusion is this. The serpent says, Do something, for you to be like God. Do something. It is all up to you. And so all of your religious efforts and all of your sacrifice, all of your self-condemnation comes from that seed, and it is death. Reject it, and instead say, I can’t do that. I don’t need to be God. He is already God and I’ve been made in His image. Therefore I will accept the cleansing work of Jesus Christ and be content to eat from the Tree of Life all of my days, and forevermore.

And may the Lord God bless you and keep you, and be kind and gracious to you, and make His face to shine upon you, and give you His peace today and every day, forevermore. Amen.

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