

When Jesus taught the large crowds who gathered around Him, He often spoke in parables. Each parable was an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. He used common, everyday objects and experiences we know and understand to teach us something about the way His kingdom works—something we could never know on our own. He talked about sheep and shepherds, wheat and weeds, salt and light, brides and grooms.

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit does the same thing through the human writers He inspired—He uses familiar, everyday things like light and water to teach us about spiritual things that would otherwise make absolutely no sense to us. During the next seven weeks in this series, “God’s Living Water: Covered in Jesus’ Grace”, we will be looking at a number of things God teaches us about faith and our relationship with Him through water. Common, ordinary water.

Today, we will study the first time water is mentioned in the Bible, in the creation account in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. In Genesis 1, water is an obstacle. It covers the earth, making life impossible for us. After God creates light on the first day, He turns His attention to putting the water in its proper place on the second and third days—stretching out the sky on day 2, and making the dry land appear on day 3.

But a complete separation of water and dry land would not be good either. We need water regularly to satisfy our thirst and make food grow for us. We need it to survive, no person, animal or vegetation can live long without it. So, God saw to it that the earth was well watered. We see that clearly for the first time in Genesis 2 as Moses describes how God created the first man and woman. In verses 8–10, we read, “And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.”

Did you notice how careful God was to make sure the garden was a well-watered paradise? That water made fruit abundant and made the tree of life flourish. With four rivers watering the Garden of Eden, there would be plenty of room for Adam and Eve’s family to multiply and spread, which is exactly what God had said to the first humans in chapter 1, verse 28, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” As Adam and Eve’s descendants multiplied and grew, they would subdue the earth and increase the garden.

Have you ever wondered how different our lives and our world would be if Adam and Eve and each of us, their children, trusted God's command and did not eat from the forbidden tree? Our whole human family would live in perfect peace and harmony with one another and with all the creatures of the earth. We would enjoy abundant food, perfect climate, perfect health. Work would always be a joy and never a burden. We would know God personally, walking and talking with Him as they did. Human culture and the arts would have thrived, but we would be unaware of suffering, pain, disease, and death. There would be no fear, terror, violence, crime, or war. There would be no natural disasters like famine, drought, or flood.

In that perfect world, there was no death. God even planted a tree in the garden, the tree of life, which would let people eat of its fruit and live forever. God planted the tree of life so Adam and Eve and each of us could live with Him forever.

But there was another tree in the garden beside the tree of life. It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God solemnly warned Adam that the day he ate of the fruit of that tree, he would surely die.

When the serpent, Satan, deceived Eve with his lies, she ate the forbidden fruit and gave it to Adam, who ate it too. The effect of that fall into sin struck Adam and Eve immediately. They realized they were naked, exposed. They sewed fig leaves together to try to hide their nakedness, but it wasn't enough. When they heard the sound of God walking toward them in the garden, they were absolutely terrified. They tried to hide themselves among the trees.

Adam and Eve were very much aware of the wonderful relationship they had had with their Maker before they fell into sin. And for all the years they lived after that fall, struggling to grow their food and raise their children, they must have thought back to those days in the beginning when everything was perfect.

But when it comes to us, their children, none of us were ever perfect like they were at the start. We inherited their sinful nature when we were conceived and born. Just as a child born blind has no idea what it is like to see, we who are spiritually blind, deaf, and dead to God can have no idea what it is like to have that perfect relationship with Him, our Creator. We don't know what our first parents lost for us. We can't understand how amazingly wonderful life with God is—or how desolate and desperate life is without Him.

So in the next seven weeks of God's Living Water, we will look at the ways God used the image of water—or maybe I should say the *lack* of water—to

help us understand. Speaking of the lack of water, if you're like me, you've noticed how over the last few weeks, your lawn is getting more and more brown day by day. We will continue to pray to our Lord and trust in Him that He will send the right amount of moisture at just the right time, especially for the farmers' fields. Whenever the Lord allows dry weather to prevail, it can serve as a stark reminder that we truly are living in a fallen world that has been fouled up by sin. Because of that droughts sometimes happen. The brown, crinkly grass can serve to remind us of how our spirits are without God's living water: Cracked and shriveled up, longing to drink deeply of the living water God provides us in His Word and Sacraments.

As soon as they disobeyed God, Adam and Eve knew exactly what they lost. And even if they didn't understand what death was, they knew they deserved something horrible. But just when things seemed dark and dismal, and Adam and Eve feared the day of their death had come, God instead came to them and gave them a glorious promise. He told them that one of Eve's offspring would undo the horrible damage the serpent and their disobedience had done. The promised Savior would crush the head of the serpent who had led them into sin. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was that promised offspring who suffered and died on the cross to pay for our sins and our rebellion, and to restore that life-giving relationship between God and us.

Adam and Eve were driven out of that well-watered Garden of Eden. God didn't do that out of hatred, but out of *love* for His fallen creatures. The wonderful tree of life in the garden had actually turned deadly to them because of their sin. God explains it in Genesis 3:22, "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."

To be clear, it wasn't that God felt threatened with the notion of sinful man and woman living forever. He knew living forever in *sin* would have been worse than a death sentence—it would be hell—eternal separation from God and punishment for our sinful nature and the sins we can never stop committing.

So out of His deep love and compassion, God drove the man and woman out of the garden to grow food from the ground from which He had formed their bodies. And He placed an angel to guard the way to the tree of life.

There was no going *back* to the tree of life for Adam and Eve. They needed to go *forward* with the promise that God would raise up one of their descendants to undo all the damage Satan had done. They knew this child

would restore the image of God within them, making them perfectly righteous. He would restore their perfect relationship with God and each other one day. Instead of the garden's tree of **life**, they needed a tree of **death**: the cross on which Jesus Christ, the promised Savior, would take away their sins and the sins of each of us, their children, so that we may be restored to God, holy and pure, ready to live with Him forever.

Interestingly, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, shows us the time that first great promise will be fulfilled. It shows us Jesus Christ returning to earth to raise the dead, judge the world, and restore His shattered creation. Revelation 22:1–5 describes our eternal home. Listen for the descriptions that remind you of our first home in the Garden of Eden.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, 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, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

This is our future, because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen.