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The Story: Finding the Scarlet Thread
Creation
Genesis 1-4

Well, our chicks have flown the coop. Cooper is back at Whitworth and Rachel flew to Gordon Conwell Seminary on Wednesday. For the next nine months, they are going to be hitting the books, preparing themselves for whatever future God has in store. And for the next nine months we are going to be doing the same thing... with this: *The Story!* *The Story* is an abridged version of the Bible, but it is put together like a novel—in chronological order—and it is a great read!

Twenty-eight years ago today, I preached my first sermon in the Memorial Chapel. Since then, we have never launched a more coordinated effort than this one. Every class, Bible Study and LifeGroup will be invited to participate. If you've wanted to read the Bible or wanted to start family devotions and have never done it... this is the time! Buy this, get the bookmark—if you are a LifeGroup leader, pick up these incredible resources—and then, do your homework! Each week, we will preach on the upcoming theme to set the stage. Then off you go to do your work, one chapter per week. The first chapter is 12 pages long. Surely, everyone here can read 12 pages in a week! So... here we go!

This week in Chapter 1 you will hear the Bible's answers to the great questions pondered by every human being: "Where did all this come from? Where did I come from?" *The Story* begins with this simple assertion: Everything we see—earth, sun, moon, sky, trees, animals, water—all of it was created by God... out of nothing. God, for his own purpose and pleasure, created the universe and all that is in it... with his words. He spoke... and it was. Bam! Do you hear God's creative delight in what Ellis read earlier?

"Hello trees!" God said. "Hello grass and flowers!" And everything everywhere burst into life. He made buds bud; shoots shoot; flowers flower. "You're good," God said. And they were."

Then comes the highpoint of creation: YOU! Everything else God creates by speaking, but with humans, God gets his hands dirty. He creates man out of mud and woman out of rib. You sense God's playfulness as he shapes his most precious of creations. Our culture tells us that we are accidents of a mindless process of evolution—slime plus time—but the Bible begs to differ. It declares that all things were created by God, and that human beings were the zenith of that creation—

created by God, in his image, for his delight—and placed in a paradise created for them.

But all of that was about to change. God placed only one restriction on Adam and Eve—one tree that they were not to eat from. I want you to listen to the saddest moment in human history... and particularly, for the saddest three words God ever spoke. Ready?

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." ¹¹And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ¹²The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

The Serpent—who was really the Devil in disguise—deceives the woman by convincing her that God is holding out. And she buys it! Against all evidence, she believes the horrible lie that God doesn't really love her. That if he really loved her, he wouldn't place any limits on her... any restrictions. That's good parenting, right? No restrictions.

And we still don't like restrictions... those quaint little restrictions on sex and on marriage, how we treat others and how we spend our money. We still don't like being told what to do, because we still believe the lie that we know best... that God is holding out on us. But let me ask this: if we really are the creation of a loving God who wants to bless us, who best to teach us how to live? This is God's world. God's ways of living are best for us, no matter the lies the devil—and People Magazine—tell us.

Adam and Eve believe the terrible lie that God doesn't really love them—that God is holding back the best from them, that He cannot be trusted. They eat the forbidden fruit and everything changes. Sin enters the world. The relationship with God is broken and they must leave Paradise. Still, God loves his children and wants to protect them. So, before they are expelled, we read this tender statement: ²¹*The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.*

This story is the foundation of **the** Story. If you don't understand creation: a loving, eternal God who creates all good things out of nothing; if you don't understand the fall: humans believe the lie that God doesn't really love them, so they break his rule and invite sin into paradise; and if you don't understand redemption: how a broken-hearted God still loves his rebellious children and wants to save and protect them... If you don't understand these three big concepts, you won't understand the rest of the Story, because this cycle repeats again and again: the God who creates and blesses, people who sin and hide, a God who seeks and restores.

Ultimately, that restoration comes in whom? Jesus. Most of us assume we have to wait until about two-thirds of the way into the book until our hero appears. But one of the most exciting things about the Story is this: we don't have to wait until Matthew to catch a glimpse of Jesus. The entire Bible whispers his name. We are calling this "The Scarlet Thread" that weaves throughout the Story. Did you see the Scarlet Thread this morning? I did. At least three times. Let's look.

Our first glimpse is in 1:28. "Let us create man in our own image." Anything odd here? Us! Who is God the Father talking to? The Son! The first whisper of Jesus is right here in chapter 1 as we eavesdrop on a conversation between the Father and Him about their plans for creation! We glimpse Jesus the Creator! John understood this. He wrote of Jesus, "All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made." (John 1:3) Paul did, too: "By him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible... all things were created by him and for him." (Col. 1: 15-17) Jesus was the agent of creation. Did you know that?

Remember three weeks ago how the haze from the fires clouded our skies? I was driving through town and saw the funniest thing. Tourists near Finholm were taking pictures on the observation deck in front of our beautiful harbor, but because of the haze in the sky, they didn't realize what they were missing. When skies are clear, that site deck offers a spectacular view of Mt. Rainier, but as they stood for their Kodak moment, they didn't realize the grandeur looming right behind the beauty. They just didn't see it.

It is a sad fact that many people worship the glory of nature and miss the Glorious Creator behind it all! When you walk out today, remember: Jesus is the grandeur that stands behind this beauty. That's the first whisper of the Son: Jesus is the Creator.

In Genesis 3:14, whisper number two comes in God's curse upon the serpent: "... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

One time in college, my friends and I went down to the Naches River. A cable stretched across the river and we decided to pull ourselves across. I held the cable

down so the others could climb up. As the last person shinnied across, I looked down and there, in front of me, was a coiled rattlesnake. I let go of the cable so fast that I nearly shot my friend into the river. All I could think of was getting away from that snake. And I assure you, the last thing I thought of doing was moving closer, raising my foot, and stomping on its head.

But that's exactly what we read. "... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Who is this stomping offspring? Jesus. Here in Genesis 3, we get a glimpse of a battle that will take place thousands of years later... on a hill in Jerusalem when the sinless offspring of this woman will be murdered on a cross. In that moment, all of God's enemies breathe a sigh of relief, including Satan who thinks he has won! But three days later, the unthinkable happens. The Son raises from death to life, and the Serpent looks up to see His big heel about to come crashing down on his head! Despite all appearances today, Jesus the Crusher has already won the victory!

So we catch a whisper of Jesus the Creator and Jesus the Crusher. And this week, you will find one more glimpse of the Scarlet Thread. It is in the story of the expulsion from the garden. Adam and Eve have broken God's rule, broken his heart, and now pay the consequences. Still, we see God's enduring, redeeming love. Chapter 3:21: *The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.*

Before the fall, Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. Now, in their shame, they must be clothed. So God in his mercy cares for them. He makes garments for them. What kind of garments? Skins, which means animals had to die in order for Adam and Eve to live. Here we discover the first shedding of blood; the first sacrifice offered for the sake of God's precious, broken children. An innocent animal's life is taken, its blood is shed, so that the shame of God's beloved can be covered.

This is a third glimpse of Jesus. We hear a whisper of a future time when God will require an even greater sacrifice... the sacrifice of his own Son. His life will be taken, His blood will be shed. Why? So that He can provide a covering for His beloved but broken children... a covering for the sin and shame that haunts them.

So, we see Jesus as the Creator who will become part of his own creation. We see Jesus as the Crusher who will first allow himself to be crushed. And now, we see a glimpse of Jesus as the Coverer who, by his own death, will cover the sin and shame of all mankind.

Some of you might say, "Pastor Mark, this seems like a stretch! It's not clear to me that this is talking about Jesus!" That's okay. For now, just take my word for it. As we journey through this book, chapter by chapter, layer by layer, you are going to see more and more evidence proving that in these early whispers God is weaving

into the Story a single Scarlet Thread that ties the whole thing together. And when we finally reach Matthew, you will say, "Ahhhhh, that's what the Old Testament was talking about! That's what we were waiting for."

But we are just starting. So this week, as you read the first chapter, keep your eyes open. Will you glimpse Jesus as Creator in a new way? As you walk the harbor this week and look out over water and trees and seals and mountain, remind yourself, "Jesus made that!" And when you look in the mirror remind yourself: "Jesus made me, in his image! He made me just the way I am, on purpose, and he loves me just the way I am." Bruce Jenner needs that reassurance. So do you! Jesus the Creator.

Or as you read about Isis or Planned Parenthood or another gunman shooting a police officer, remind yourself, "This is the work of the Devil! But he is on borrowed time. One day Jesus is going to crush him for good. One day, Jesus will sweep up every evil thing and cast it into the fires of hell along with the Devil who caused this pain in the first place." If you feel like evil is closing in—in your life, in your family, in your marriage... If you feel like the Devil is winning, remind yourself the Crusher is on your side!

Or maybe this week you will remember this: everything I have done in my life that shames me—the things that haunt me at night, the things that cause me to want to hide from God—those things are covered by the death of Jesus on the cross. He has washed away my shame with the blood of his sacrifice, and I no longer need to walk in humiliation before him. Jesus the Coverer has taken care of that!

Earlier I told you that this story includes what I think are the three saddest words God ever spoke. Did you catch them? "Where are you?" Did God really not know where Adam and Eve were hiding? Of course he did, but in their shame they thought they could hide from God. And the cry of God's heart was, "Where are you? Why are you running from me? Why would you ever want to hide from me?"

Take note of this, because this is God's cry that will be repeated throughout the entire Story! When the people stay in Egypt too long, God comes looking for them. "Where are you?" When they rebel in the wilderness: "Where are you?" When they are carried into exile: "Where are you?" When they languish in 400 years of silence: "Where are you?" And ultimately, God comes looking for his people in person—in the person of Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate cry of God: "Where are you? I'm coming for you. I'm going to find you! And I'm going to bring you home."

Last year, a townswoman walked by our Harbor baptisms, and as she watched and listened, she felt compelled to be baptized... but she didn't. All year, she felt guilty about her missed opportunity. Well, two Sundays ago, she was walking again and, and guess what? There we were in the Harbor, baptizing...34 baptisms. She watched and listened, and do you know what she heard in that moment? A quiet voice saying: "Where are you! I've been calling you. I love you. I want you!" She

could resist that voice no longer. So she came down to the beach, found an elder, repented of her sin, confessed her faith in Jesus and became baptism number 35.

When she came up out of the water, soaked from head to toe... that was a symbol of what Jesus the Coverer had done for her... what Jesus always wanted to do for her and what He wants to do for you, too. Everything that is broken and shameful, Jesus has covered it. He has made all things new. She can now walk before Christ with her head held high, because Jesus has covered her shame and sin with his perfection.

I wonder, is the same voice calling out to you this morning? "Where are you? Why are you hiding from me? I know of your shame, your embarrassment. But I am ready to cover that up. Will you let me do it?"