



## Christ Lutheran Church

605 South Fifth Street • Norfolk, NE 68701

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Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

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### ***“Tragedy Reversed.” – Genesis 3:8-15***

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – June 10, 2018*

**Pastor Chip Winter**

Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the Old Testament appointed for the day and already read for us from the book of Genesis.

My dear family in Christ, the ancient Greeks developed theater. Theater has influenced our civilization in ways beyond what you and I can often imagine. There is the debate whether “**art imitates life**” or “**Art effects life**” (I believe there are arguments to be made in both directions depending on the item) but either way, you and I are subject to the images, words and sounds that come to us, bidden or unbidden. I should probably have asked a few more questions of our children about this – our son, who is a language arts teacher with a minor in theater, or our daughter getting her masters in theater.

One of the genres the Greeks are credited with creating is “**tragedy**.” Three authors in particular, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, achieved greatness in this form of literature/stage. Living four hundred years before Jesus they still influenced writers such as William Shakespeare, who drew upon their works in his tragedies.

The plot of the tragedy characteristically describes a central figure who exhibits many virtues but, due to one flaw, ends up in a horrible state. Usually these figures are fictional or are drawn from ancient mythology.

Sadly, today's text describes the greatest tragedy of all time. We move from a blissful existence of unending life in perfect communion with God to the crushing reality of a fallen world, with certain death lying before us. And the real tragedy is that this really happened – this is no fiction.

Worse yet, it's not something you and I merely observe, as if we were in an audience. This is not simply meant to entertain or educate, as with the ancient Greek tragedies. No, this tragedy is one in which you and I participate. It's about Adam and Eve, but it's also about all of us. Our first parents, in their desire to be like God, lost His gifts of innocence and holiness, and that's been the inheritance for every generation, since.

Adam and Eve were the apex of God's creation. God had breathed into Adam the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). He had fashioned Eve as a craftsman would (2:22). Creating them in His image and likeness, God's actions in Genesis 1 and 2 display His benevolence – all of God's gifts were for the benefit and support of Adam and Eve. God gives and gives and gives.

God gave (1) the heavens and the earth; (2) the sun, moon, stars, and seasons; (3) the sea and all the life in it; (4) the land creatures; (5) our headship over all creation; (6) our language; along with (7) marriage and family. And with all that, free will. Adam and Eve had the capacity to turn away from the One Who had given them all things. And therein is the tragedy. The turn to self-absorption, self-will, and self-assertion is the origin of sin.

Here is where the tragedy is also seen as ours. We all know our own will to self-absorption, self-will, and self-assertion at the expense of God and our neighbor. We, too, have wanted to do our own thing. History, as well as our current culture, exhibits the same preoccupation with self.

The results of this tragedy are ominous and pervasive. Such preoccupation with self is not simply the breaking of a rule. It breaks down all that God has so freely given us. It breaks down (A) our relationship with God – Adam and Eve need to hide from Him; (B) our relationship with our neighbor – Adam blames Eve; (C) our relationship with the world – labor and toil are required to live; and (D) our relationship with our own being – now we are confused about who we are, Whose we are, and it will only end in death, unless Jesus returns first.

But, God does not abandon Adam and Eve. He does not abandon us. He reverses the tragedy, He promises that the seed of the woman will reverse the curse, restoring our relationship with God.. By this heir along down the line, as St. Paul so succinctly put it, **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”** (Romans 8:1).

In the seed of the woman, our relationship with one another is restored. The seed, Jesus, states **“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you”** (Luke 6:27-28).

In the seed of the woman our relationship with the world is restored. **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come”** (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In the seed of the woman, we are forgiven; our identity as God’s beloved children is returned. **“But now, thus says the LORD, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name; You are mine”** (Isaiah 43:1-2).

So, rejoice and be glad! In Christ Jesus, the tragedy of our sin and self-will has been reversed. Unlike the Greek tragedies, concluding in despair and death, our tragic situation has been reversed by the One who took all our sin, all of our selfishness into His own body on the cross. God's character as the lavish give of gifts, the lavish lover, was again seen and this at its pinnacle. He gave His Son for our redemption and our restoration.

The Psalm appointed for today – **“O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities”** (Psalm 130:7-8), is fulfilled in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.

And this is the narrative, the speech, the Good News that we have to share with the world. The reality of the tragedy reversed is something to live and to speak: **“Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, ‘I believed, and so I spoke,’ we also believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence”** (2 Cor. 4:13-14).

The darkness and death which had confined us as children of Adam and Eve are now removed. The days and nights of our lives are no longer limited by our self-absorption, self-will, and self-assertion.

Rather, our lives are now defined by Jesus' death and resurrection. We live a new life in Him – buried with Him in a death like His, we are raised with Him in a resurrection like His (Romans 6). What will be known in its totality when Jesus returns – **“Behold, I am making all things new”** (Rev. 21:5) – is already begun among us. The tragedy is already reversed. Amen.