

Compassion for a World that Functions the Opposite of Eden

Wouldn't it be great if this world operated like the Garden of Eden? Seriously, think about it for a moment. Imagine having everything you needed. Imagine being content with yourself and others. Imagine having plenty to do, to eat, and no threats to your life. But as you know, all of this changed. Sin ruined everything. And so, here we are in this world –with tears, sorrow, hunger, fear, pain, need, and want.

Regardless of what silly positive motivational speakers say, this world is tough and harsh. Turn on the nightly news, and you will see how tough the world is. Every day, people die of hunger or war, natural disasters destroy things, people suffer, and big people stomp on little people. It is a jungle out there. Sure, there are stories of people doing kind things in this world, but these stories tend to be few and far between. The reason why? This world is, more often than not, a cutthroat dog-eat-dog world. That is to say, we live in a cruel world where everyone competes non-stop for awards, recognition, and resources.

For example, because sin wrecked the world and our hearts, we are not content, satisfied, or generous. Instead, our minds and hearts are constantly wanting money, sex, power, and material things. Once we get these things, greed sets in, and we hoard. And when we are not hoarding, we overconsume to the point of wasteful gorging.

Worse, our sinful hearts go the way of pride, not humility. We go the way of envy, not charity. We go the way of vengeance, not patience. Indeed, this world is sick. Mankind's heart is ill as well. We are living the opposite of the Garden of Eden, which is why there are so many tears. This is why this world has so much sorrow, hunger, fear, pain, need, and want.

Now, we need to pause and be honest about things, though. Too often, people blame God for all of this. But truth be told, it is our fault, not His. Let us not forget that Adam and Eve ruined everything in the Garden of Eden. And just in case you want to blame them, keep in mind that you were right there with them. Please do not be so naïve to say, "If I were Adam or Eve, I wouldn't have messed things up so bad. I would've done better." This kind of prideful thinking is exactly what landed Adam and Eve into so much trouble in the first place.

And so, the way things are in the world is because of us. The way that things are in our hearts is our fault. My sin is my fault. Your sin is your fault. And this broken world? It is our entire fault. All of humanity – the rich, the poor, the wise, the foolish, the strong, and the weak – all of us are in this together. To paraphrase the Apostle Paul, "Nobody lives right, not one. Everyone has taken a wrong turn. We all have participation trophies for being the sinner of the year. We don't know the first thing about living kindly for others."

If I have not been blunt enough, let me try to be even blunter. If God were to blast each and every one of us to hell, that would not be harsh, evil, or unfair. You heard that correctly; if God were to crush the world in one powerful act of vengeance, it would not be harsh, evil, or unfair but completely good, for that is exactly what we deserve.

But the Lord God does not do this. The Lord God is not distant in heaven, cooking up a recipe of poison for you and me, plotting to destroy us with an evil plan. Instead, He is compassionate.

Consider how last Sunday we heard of that great crowd gathering around Jesus. They had nothing to eat. Instead of dismissing them on their way into the wilderness to fend for themselves, Jesus freely fed them. He told them to sit on the ground so that He could give them food. He did this because He had compassion for the crowd.

The word compassion is interesting. It is a word that captures not only an emotion but also a characteristic of Jesus. Simply stated, when Jesus had compassion on the hungry crowd, His inner gut was eaten up with pity and mercy for them – to the point that He was driven to do something for them. Compassion is an intense word – showing a deep sense of gut-wrenching anguish and desire that forces a person to act on behalf of another. And so, because of compassion, Jesus multiplied bread and fish to feed the people.

We must not let the simplicity of this story pass us by. Jesus fed the people spiritually and physically by teaching and giving them food. He did this because of His compassion. And so, right there, those people were given a glimpse of the Garden of Eden. There, at that moment, they had everything. Their souls were full of the rich Word of God, their stomachs were full of good food, and they rested on the ground without worry in the presence of Jesus. Content and satisfied!

Do you realise that in Christ and His Second Coming, the paradise of Eden will be restored to you? Jesus Christ has endured the burden of the curse of Adam and Eve and was raised on the third day to bring you back to the paradise of Eden and the paradise of Eden back to you. He does this because He is compassionate towards you. He was not content or satisfied to leave the world and you in sin.

So, what this means is that in Jesus, you receive the comfort of the Garden of Eden. Whenever Jesus comes to you at the Lord's Supper, you taste the bounty of Eden. And when Jesus returns a second time, the abundant bounty of Eden will be restored to you with a new heaven and earth.

And so, when the world throws its worst and even turns its back on you or turns you upside down, your hope is not in this world but in Christ. Your hope is in the fact that Christ has not left us for dead but has had compassion on us. Your hope is in the everlasting kingdom. Your hope is in the new heaven and earth – the abundance of Eden that will be restored to you.

Without His compassion, we would be left for dead. But because of His compassion, Christ Jesus not only bled and died for you but promises to come again to renew the abundant bounty of Eden by giving you a new heaven and a new earth. And hear this: in Christ and His gifts, there is complete contentment and satisfaction.