

It's Come Full Circle

1. How we lost Paradise
 2. How we regain Paradise
- (Revelation 22:1-5)*

Don't you just love when things come full circle? It's the most satisfying and pleasant experience in life. And I love the moment when you realize that something has come full circle. Whether it's in a movie where the hero and villain were twin brothers fighting for the love of their parents, then they went down different paths in their life, one turned evil, one stayed good and later in life it came full circle when they meet up in one last battle for world domination. Or maybe the story of Joseph when he had dreams of his brother bowing down to him, then they sold him into slavery, he became powerful in Egypt and his brothers came to him during a famine to get food and it came full circle as they bowed down to him. Or another very small example. My wife and I are in choir together here at church and we realized the last time she was in a choir was in 8th grade with me. We just thought that our lives had come full circle. It's awesome when things come full circle. This morning we are going to realize that the Bible actually comes full circle. We see that when we look at the first pages of the Bible and last pages of the Bible. We see how we lost paradise and our relationship with God and then it comes full circle when we look at how paradise was regained

Just imagine for one moment what it was like in the Garden of Eden. It was paradise. Adam and Eve had everything they wanted. They had beauty all around them. They had a beautiful marriage with no bickering or fighting. Each one fulfilled their role perfectly. They ruled over all the animals and even the whole earth. Picture what your paradise here on earth would look like. Maybe it's out on a boat in the morning; the only thing around you is the peaceful serene water. There's no wind, no people; just you and the lake. Maybe it's that moment when you reach the top of the summit of a mountain and you look at the gorgeous vista around you with a gentle cool breeze brushing across your face. Maybe it's being a Cubs fan right now. Well, take those paradises and multiply it by 50. That's what it was like for Adam and Eve. And it wasn't because they had all these amenities. It wasn't just due to the fact that they were ruling over everything in the world or that they had a perfect marriage. The best part of this whole thing was that they had a perfect relationship with their Father in heaven. That's what made it paradise. They lived free from sin. They didn't know what it felt like to live with sin. They loved God perfectly. It's hard for us, because we have been corrupted by sin, to imagine how absolutely perfect and wonderful it was. We only see the world through the lens of sin. A perfect world can never be in focus. While we are living here on earth, we'll never understand what a beautiful perfect relationship with God is. And that is a direct result of what Adam and Eve did.

God specifically told them not to eat of this one tree in the garden. If they ate from this tree God told them they would die. You might ask, why did God put that tree if he knew there was a possibility for them to sin and lose that perfect relationship with him? It was an opportunity for them to show love for God. It was opportunity to worship him. Every time they walked past that tree and didn't take the fruit they were showing honor, respect, and thankfulness to their God who had given them everything. But you know what happened. They were tempted

by Satan and they ate the fruit. In that one moment, everything for them was lost. They're innocence, their joy, their relationship with each other, and their relationship with God. Paradise was lost in that one act. Our friendship with God was terminated. Because of this we are born in sin and this world has become filled with sin.

There's two ways that our corrupted selves view this predicament. One is hopelessness and despair. It's easy for us to sit behind the scenes and watch it all play out and just complain about Adam and Eve. Look what you did! You ruined it for the rest of us! Now look at our world. Look at us. Your sin is why world is spiraling out of control. We look at the actions of others, parents killing their infants, mass genocide, racism, the social corruption and violence and the natural disasters can make us bitter about life and we cope with it by ranting about it to our friends and on Facebook. In one instance it's ok for us to mourn and react to the wicked that's going on because of Adam and Eve. David in the psalms cries out a bunch of times "How long O lord are you going to let the wicked prosper (Psalm 94:3)?" But soon these small complaints can turn into serious worry and lack of trust in God. We become hopeless in this world and think that God is not in control.

On the opposite end of the spectrum another way we view the loss of paradise is with indifference. We can speak out and grumble about how terrible it was that Adam and Eve lost paradise for us, and it is terrible.

While we might say with our lips that this was terrible, our actions often reflect the fact that we're okay with Paradise being lost. While we would never say we love committing sins, there's a part of us that enjoys specific sins. And if our relationship with God was perfect, then I couldn't do the things my sinful nature desires. If your relationship with God was perfect, then you couldn't talk about that person behind their back. If your relationship was perfect, then you couldn't get to another base with that girl. If paradise was still here on earth, then you wouldn't be able brag and boast about all your accomplishments. Our actions tell God that we don't mind that sin has corrupted us and that we don't really need or want fixing.

The main point is to show you that sin has twisted our thinking. We are broken people who only know what a broken world looks like. And there's absolutely nothing that we can do by ourselves to fix this problems of complaining, worrying, and indifference. The devil is doing everything he can to make us come full circle from the point Adam and Eve lost paradise to the point when we die in sin and lose paradise forever. So how do we regain what was lost? That's what makes the Apostle John's vision so awesome for us.

In our reading for today we are brought into the middle of his last vision. An angel is showing him the new city of Jerusalem, but this isn't a vision of a restored Jerusalem on earth. This is a picture of heaven. It's the most beautiful place you could imagine. The whole city is gold. It's clear as glass. The city walls are adorned in gems and jewels. John says he didn't see a temple because Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

And then the angel brings him a little further into the city where he sees something very interesting. He sees a restored Eden. He sees the river of the water of life, clear as crystal. He sees the tree of life on each side of the river bearing fruit every single month. And the leaves are for the healing of nations. This is paradise. This is what Adam and Eve experienced. And then in verse three he says, "**No Longer will there be any curse.**" (Rev 22:3) This is what we want. We want to drink from that perfect water. We want eat from that tree. We want to no longer live

under the curse of sin. That's what God says through John. That's what's going to happen for us. He says, "**The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.**" (Re 22:3–5). You will be those servants serving God. You will be living under that light of God. You will reign in paradise with Jesus forever and ever. Your relationship with God is perfectly restored. It's come full circle for us in the best possible way. We once had paradise with Adam and Eve and now we will be right back where we started.

Notice I've only told you that that is going to happen and not how that's going to happen. How do we regain paradise? Well it was regained for us. Right after we had lost paradise God already told us how we would gain paradise. He promised to send a Savior to crush the devil and to defeat sin and to restore paradise for us. God in his grace has put his name on our foreheads. He has made us children of God. He bought us back with the Blood of the Lamb. Through the waters of baptism he washed our sins away. Through faith in Jesus we will reign forever as saints in his holy city.

That's a lot of good stuff. I'm getting pumped to live in heaven. But I'm here on earth which is still corrupted. What do I do in the meantime? Peter recognizes that this earth isn't our permanent home. Heaven is our real home. So he tells us, "**Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**" (1 Pe 2:11–12). As foreigners here on earth, live as though you are living in the city of God. Live as servants of God. Live as though you have the name Christ stamped on your forehead. By the way you act, let people know that the love of Christ dwells in you richly. Fight the temptations in your life. Don't be negative in the way you talk about people. Do everything you can to bring people the only thing that can change this sinful world, the word of God, that water of life. We want everyone to reign with us in heaven.

So it's come full circle. We lost paradise, but know that you have regained it through what Christ did for you. Now we wait for that day when we will experience paradise first hand in all its glory. I can't wait to be there with all of you.