

MODIFIED FROM ORIGINAL SERMON

Listen to: “This Dust” by Kip Fox

I love a good walk in the woods...or a nice garden... there is something peaceful... refreshing... satisfying... about it.... and with the right friend walking nearby or at your side... even in silence... it truly becomes a deep and relational oasis.

And yet, these brief glimpses are **mere hints of a beautiful, perfect place—called paradise!** When **God created the heavens and the earth...** When God created all living creatures that crawl on the ground, that swim in the waters, and that fly in the air... When God took the dust of the ground and created man; in His own image... When He created them, male and female to support and love one another... This my friends was paradise. It was good! Very good. It **was** perfect Paradise!

When God placed man, the crown of His creation, in a beautiful garden called Eden. Indeed, it was beautiful because it was perfect. There was no need to labor and till the ground because it produced all that man needed in abundance. There was no need to worry about the weather (dangerous roads or people dying of heat or cold) because the world was perfect and such danger did not exist. There was no need to worry about anything because everything was exactly right... exactly how God intended for it to be.

And **the best part that reality...indeed the source of that reality for man...was the relationship God had with the crown of His creation.** God and man were united together in perfect unity. God and man walked hand in hand, talked face to face, lived in perfect communion. As Luther states, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the first altar where Adam and Eve came each day

to worship God through their obedience. This beautiful Garden of Eden was indeed the beautiful, perfect place where God and man dwelled together in harmony.

Then came the disaster... Satan whispered that God was hiding something from them, holding back the ability to be like Him.... And man listened... selfish desire overtook desire for God. They ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—and the relationship has been changed, and not for the better.

A beautiful, perfect place lost—paradise lost. An **amazing relationship severed.** An eternal immortality exchanged for everlasting suffering and death.

Man was separated from the garden and more importantly separated from the face of God. (Man) Exiled from a perfect place of light and beauty and thrown into the darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. They were exiled, and their return was forbidden, their access to the tree of life cut off.

Dust to dust—we are created in God’s image from the dust now only to be returned to the dust in disgrace. We are created to live forever in the presence of God now only to be exiled to a land of darkness and death far from the face of God with its light and grace. How tragic for Adam and Eve. **How tragic for their children. How tragic for us!**

Exiled like Adam and Eve from the beautiful garden; exiled from before the face of God, from before the presence of God; exiled and driven out into the darkness of a sin-damaged world with sin-filled hearts. Sin exiles man from God. Sin exiles us from the courts of heaven, from the courts of everlasting life. Sin and death is something we can’t fix...

And yet just as eve was formed from the flesh of Adam.... One who existed before Adam, God himself would take one human flesh and be born to save us. A Redeemer, a Messiah, the Christ—The one who God promised would overcome the darkness and do battle with the evil serpent. The Seed of the woman who

would crush the head of Satan even as her Seed suffered the pain and indignity of bruised flesh. This one would redeem our relationship with God and restore our place in paradise with Him.

The Promised One would overcome; the ultimate battle would be fought on a cross. The burden He would carry to the cross would be our sin. The sacrifice would be His body. Christ would suffer what we deserve. He would bear what we could not. And He would accomplish that which has always escaped us: a return from the exile of sin and death. The Christ, Jesus, on the tree, removed the dividing wall of hostility. A spear would pierce his side... The water and the blood of Jesus, the Lamb, that cleanses and returns us to our God... would flow... even as Jesus, the Lamb, declares, “Today you will be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Garden of Eden → Garden of Gethsemane → Eternal Paradise

And so, it has come to pass. We have been redeemed and restored by our Champion, Jesus Christ. He has fought the good fight in our place and overcome all that kept us from the garden. Paradise lost to paradise won—the gates of the garden of heaven stand open before us. We who were exiled from Eden shall return through the gates of everlasting life. Indeed, the day shall come when we will walk through those gates and see the Lamb on His throne. There we shall see the waters of life flowing around the tree of life. There we shall bask in the Light that is the Lamb and dwell in His presence forever. Garden to garden—from Eden to heaven—a return from exile. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Amazing parallels

- The Garden
- The side
- The bride/relationship
- The brokenness and restoration of these things