

From Restriction to Redemption

By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison

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Genesis 3:1-9

But... Sermon Series

1.) GOOD. Main narrative in G 1-2. 6x in G 1 = is good. Concludes on 7th use = was very good. God offers incredible gifts (i.e. "The Garden") God is sensitive to the needs of Adam.

1st "not good" is found in 2:18: *Then the Lord God said, "It is NOT GOOD that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* Adam got a helper.

Jesus also told us He would ask the Father to send a Helper, too. (HS). Trinity text: *And I will ask the Father, & he will give you another HELPER, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, bc it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.* Jn 14:15-17

2.) They could have anything & everything they wanted "BUT," (used over 4,200x) 1 restriction. Gen 2:15-17 *The Lord God took the man & put him in the garden of Eden to work it & keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, **but** of the tree of the knowledge of good & evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

3.) We REBEL bc we don't like restrictions. Restriction can lead to freedom. I could go over and "play" the piano by pounding on the keys, but you'd not call it "music." Pianists learn by practicing scales. They aren't free to pound away. Their freedom has restrictions.

(Gen 3:1-8) The serpent's Q sowed the seeds of doubt/mistrust. The serpent's question initiated the fall of all humankind. The serpent's Q created distance btw the Creator & the creature. Mistrust replaced trust. Disorder/rebellion sweeps thru the Garden. Disobedience creates feelings of guilt and shame. Disorder and chaos replace stability. Barriers are erecting barriers between people. We deal with our guilt by blaming others, including God. We not only have a problem with authority and with our peers and helpers, but we also have problems within ourselves. We have all inherited this rebellious nature, we all have it within us. We are all have variations of the 7 Deadly Sins (Pride, Envy, Anger, Lust, Greed, Gluttony, Sloth) Not all stories have a happy ending.

4.) God tries to REDEEM us. Look for the 4 Q's God asks Adam & Eve.

⁹ **BUT** the Lord God called to the man & said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, & I was afraid, because I was naked,

& I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, & I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, & I ate."

(Genesis 3:9-13) This is the story of the Bible: Good/Rebellion/God's question to redeem.

Scripture presents God asking questions: **Cain:** *Why are you angry? Where is Abel your brother?*

To **Job:** God can't stop asking questions – it goes on for chapters

To **Moses:** When he told God he wasn't eloquent of speech: "The Lord said to him, *"Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"* Ex 4:11

Isaiah: *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* 6:8

1st time **Jesus** speaks, He is a pre-teen. He asks a Q of his parents: *"Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"* Lk 2:49

Jesus asks more than 300 questions. He questions the Pharisees, the governing officials, the disciples, the leper, the beggar, the prostitute. He asks questions from the cross and asks Q's after His resurrection. Maybe my favorite question Jesus asked was of the lame man in John 5: "Do you want to get well?" Even Jesus' sermon on the mount is peppered with Q's. Jesus befriends & welcomes the question; not for manipulation, harm or for selfishness, but to help. Jesus is inviting us into the source of truth. It is an invitation to intimacy. Q's take us somewhere – to mistrust or doubt OR to the source of truth.

A few years ago, I wrote a few guest editorials for the Tulsa World. When the editor reviewed my articles, he noted I used lots of exclamation marks. I was surprised to learn he almost never uses them. Others in journalism have told me the same thing. I told this to my Tuesday morning covenant group and one of the guys, who is a dentist by profession, said he learned in dental school get a patient with anxiety to talk. If they talk, maybe they will start thinking & become less anxious. Another in my group said, *"Exclamation marks are like walls; question marks are like open doors."* Rudyard Kipling: *"I have 6 faithful serving men who taught me all I knew. Their names are "What, where, when, how, why & who."*

Learn to ask questions. In the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture/Tradition/Reason & Experience), reason asks Q. All scientific & technological advancements have been made bc people have asked Q. Someone inquired & electricity, penicillin, & malted milk balls were discovered/created. I ask more Q & use less E marks. I realize how little I know. I look through a knothole.

The story of the Bible = God's creation was good, BUT we rebelled & sin entered the world. BUT, God is on a mission to redeem those who are lost. We see it best in Jesus. We want people to re-connect with Him. /God's question to redeem. A few have responded to my plea to watch a movie/film called "Mully." Far more inspirational than "The Tiger King."

Nairobi, Kenya has over 100,000 orphans. 20% won't live to see 5th Birthday. Charles Mully (I'll call him by his last name), not an orphan, but had an alcoholic father who drank every day. His father could not keep a job & took out his anger on M's mother. They lived in a small hut. One morning when M was a little boy, he woke up to find his parents & brothers had disappeared. They didn't tell him they were leaving. All alone. His uncle refused to help. Little boy survived by begging & stealing. Became a street boy full of hatred. Hated his life. Had no purpose. Thought of ending his life. Someone invited him to a prayer meeting. A preacher spoke of forgiveness & hope. Preacher said all things are possible w God. Like a conversion experience. Walked 3 1/2 days to Nairobi. Knew no one, had no job or money. A woman from India gave him a menial job. Worked hard & had a great attitude. Like Joseph, his life started to improve. Promoted to manager of a company the woman's husband owned. One thing led to another. Met Esther. Married & had 8 children. M started driving taxi. Became entrepreneur. Got a fleet of taxis, bought a tire company, machine shop, insurance company then oil/gas. Went national in Kenya & then international. Became a millionaire. Like J, whatever he did prospered. Went from very bottom to highest point. 2 things happened that changed his life. 1st: got a letter from dad asking him to come to his village bc he needed help. His dad owed villagers so much \$ they were going to beat him. M arrived, heard the story & said to do whatever they wanted to his dad. They beat him in front of him. M finally paid them to stop beating him. Drove back to Nairobi. Some street boys asked for \$ to protect his car while he went to a meeting. He refused to pay the extortion. His car was gone when he returned. As he rode public transportation, he was haunted by those street boys. He had been one of those himself. He saw himself in them. Went back to work but was tormented by their memory. One day, couldn't work. Went for a drive. Drove for hours, stopped car & started crying in car, questioning God: "Why have U done this to me?" At the end of a 4-hour struggle w Lord, like Jacob who wrestled w God, M had a new mission in life. No longer to make money. Told Lord, "God, use me." When he said "Yes," God gave M greatest joy in his heart. Told his family of decision to never work for \$, & would sell everything & start

helping the poor & street children. F thought he was crazy. Went & rescued 3 orphans from street & brought them to his house. Having 3 orphans upsetting to family, but 3 turned into dozens & dozens & dozens. Esther, heroic She took care of them. She washed their clothes, bathed, fed, gave medicine. M never said enough kids were enough. Always room for a suffering child. Family, friends, church thought he was crazy. Lost friends. Church told him to stop bringing orphans to their nice church so he had to choose the children or the church. He didn't stop so they kicked him out. Since no longer working, started running out of money. Didn't know what they would do. Began to pray. Out of nowhere, a lady arrived w a truck full of food. The truckload of food lasted long time. The children became more & more responsive & obedient. He taught the children responsibility & skills. Started growing their own food. Really became a family. Mully goes and looks for orphans and picks them up and bring them to his home and gives them a new identity and opportunity. When this movie was released, M had rescued over 12,000 street children. He says it's not his work but that God has called in to do it like God, Moses. You must watch this 82 minute story. There is so much more to it. It's 82 minutes. Indeed, God can do the impossible. God has a purpose for all of us.

God created everything good. But we rebelled. All of us. But God is on a mission, just like Mully, to go find those who are lost and without a Helper. We ALL need help. *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Romans 6:23