

Introduction

- Great being off on **holiday!**
 - great being away from responsibilities - for a while!
 - even though we can't leave them behind for ever... **and hopefully wouldn't want to!**
- **Genesis 2 ends:**
 - and sometimes we forget this bit in our haste to get on and find out what happened in the Fall, when it all went horribly wrong
 - with the man and woman full of **a proper self-esteem, confident in their own bodies and personalities, comfortable with themselves and their world**
- *Don't you want to be like that?*
- For many of us, the stresses and strains of our lives and relationships rarely allow us to feel that level of assurance and confidence
- What was it that enabled them to be securely at peace with themselves?
 - **implicit** in the passage is the fact that they were **choosing wisely in the responsibilities God had given them:**
- *Have a look at **three** of those responsibilities now...*

Responsibilities to God

- You've probably heard that the Eskimos have hundreds of words for snow... (not actually sure how true that is!!)
- But perhaps less well known is that the Hebrew language has several different words for God - each one carrying a slightly different force or nuance.
- In chapter one of Genesis, the name used is **"Elohim"**:
 - speaks of utterly powerful and remote Creator - flinging stars into space, creating vastness of the universe...
- But in chapter two, the name used is **"Yahweh"**:
 - name associated with the **covenant of intimate relationship and blessing;**
 - a faithful God, who is intent on relating to his people, blessing them, shielding and directing them.
- It is the name of one so close to his children that one can picture them **"walking in the garden"** alongside him (3:8).
- A name, a word, that in many ways evokes parenthood:
 - and as a parent, God is determined that his children will grow;
 - yet they (and we) will only do that by making **CHOICES** out of love for God
- **They needed to mature out of innocence into freely chosen goodness:**
 - and the boundaries set by God were there to allow them to do so...
 - there was something there that they could choose to obey or not...
 - a responsibility to take on or lay to one side.
- They (initially at least) took that responsibility on, and knew the security of identity and inner peace v.25 speaks of.
 - *"The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame"*

Responsibilities to the earth

- I remember being on holiday at Center Parcs at some point in the past; extensively wooded, chalets in amongst the trees... and signs up everywhere saying **"extreme risk of forest fire"** - don't throw away cigarette ends, don't light fires, don't let your BBQ throw out sparks...
- **For the maximum enjoyment, certain responsibilities were implied to look after the place:**
 - for our safety and enjoyment, as well as that of others.
- That same principle applies on the larger scale - since the holiday example is just a small reflection of the much larger responsibility given to all humanity to look after the earth.
- The earth was given to us for our pleasure, our enjoyment, our sustenance:

- but there were obligations too.
- The humans were to work in the garden, although that work was intended to be joyful and fulfilling rather than mere 9-5 drudge and hardship.
- They were also tasked with the responsibility of protecting (rather than exploiting) the wildlife (v.15 - "take care of it" - all of it).
- Adam and Eve took those responsibilities to the earth on-board, and found that fulfilment and security God desired for them.
 - so we - work hard, recycle, use less packaging, wise purchase of heating systems or cars, concern for fair trade and justice....

Responsibilities to each other

- All the way through Genesis 1, we hear repeated:
 - "God saw that the light was good... And God saw that it (seas & land) was good... And God saw that it (vegetation) was good... And God saw that it (day/night) was good... And God saw that it (sea creatures) was good... And God saw that it (land animals) was good. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good!!"
- It was good... with one exception!
 - what was the one thing declared less than perfect in the whole of creation?
 - human isolation!
- The fact that the man was alone, without friend, helper, companion - this was not good (2:18).
- In woman God gives a helper, neither superior nor inferior but equal:
 - (the Hebrew word for helper used here is most often used of God as helper for Israel elsewhere in the Bible)
- The man can't go it alone.
- Still today we can't do it all ourselves - we were built to work in partnership with others, whether that is as part of a department at work, in a marriage relationship, even simply as neighbours standing together in a community...
 - sense of partnership many felt during the last war, either on the home front, or probably most acutely in the squads or small units flung together, forced to rely and depend on one another, pull together.
- That partnership is how God intended us to operate!
 - still can - marriage; holiday club team; eldership working together, Bodybuilders leaders, shared project taken on by any group, serving at International Cafe, getting involved in the Fintry Church Week...
- (2:25) "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."
 - as they sought to take on their responsibilities, to God, to his earth and to each other, so they found that security and peaceful purpose we instinctively yearn for.
- **May God grant us his strength to learn to take up the responsibilities he has given us.**

Possible Concluding Prayer / Benediction

- May God the Father, Creator and source of all goodness, pour his blessing on all things created, for his glory and for the welfare of all peoples;
- May God the Son, Redeemer and Saviour of the world, restore in us the will and desire to follow his ways of justice and commitment;
- May God the Holy Spirit, enabling and empowering, encourage and support us as we work to make this a world which sustains all.
- To Father, Son and Spirit be praise for ever and ever. Amen.