

Last week we had the pleasure of watching the Children’s Program, “O Jesse Tree” produced by the children of Faith Lutheran Church. Thank you to the children and your parents who submitted the videos for me to edit together into a half-hour presentation.

The theme song of the program was a parody of “O Christmas Tree.” “O Jesse Tree—Christ’s family tree—point us the way to Jesus. God’s promise shows His love for all, and with His Son, He frees us!” The program followed Jesus’ family tree from Adam and Eve all the way to Mary, and it told the story of the coming Savior through His ancestors.

For us, genealogies may be a fun fascination, a meaningful hobby. But for the Old Testament people, genealogies were critical. THE LORD PROMISES HIS PEOPLE HE WOULD SEND OFFSPRING TO SAVE THEM. In the Bible there are about 25 different genealogies described. Each one helped point the way and clarify the path to the coming Messiah.

It all started in the Garden of Eden. I. Adam and Eve looked for the promised offspring to defeat the serpent. In order to understand this sermon, you need to understand one Hebrew word. The word offspring, Zerah, can also be translated as seed. As in, the Lord said to Adam, “**Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed, [Zerah], that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed, [Zerah], in its fruit. You shall have them for food.**” Yet there was one seed bearing fruit that they could not eat. God said to Adam, “**but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.**”” They would surely die if they ate from the fruit of that seed bearing tree.

Long story short, Adam and Eve ate from the fruit of the tree, and as a result, mankind fell. There was a Zerah problem all around, a seed problem. For man, there would be a seed problem, instead of being given magic beans that would grow of themselves, the seeds he planted would grow thorns and thistles. Farming would be difficult, it would take work and toil even just to make the simplest form of food, bread.

For woman, there would be another Zerah problem, but for her, an offspring problem. “**To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.**”” Motherhood, one of the greatest joys that a woman can experience would be marked with pain in childbearing. It would take work to bring forth that offspring, that Zerah.

But for the serpent, there was also a Zerah problem, and offspring problem. To the serpent God said, “**I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring (Zerah) and her offspring (Zerah); he shall bruise**

your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” This is known as the first Gospel, or the first good news.

The fruit containing a seed which got Adam and Eve into this mess would be solved by the seed of the woman. A seed, an offspring, a Zerah of the woman would crush the serpent’s head. But in the beginning, it was never specified which one. Every birth from Eve, the mother of all the living, and her subsequent offspring, would be a warning shot across the bow for Satan. Could this newborn be the one to defeat me?

But as time went on, the promise of the Zerah, the offspring, the seed, got more specific. Of the sons of Noah, not Ham or Japheth, but Shem. Of the sons of Abraham, not Ishmael, but Isaac. Of Isaac’s sons, not Esau, but Jacob. Of Jacob’s dozen sons, none of them but Judah. So on down the line of Jesse’s sons, none of the tall, strong, or mature sons, but a little shepherd boy, David.

That sets the stage for our Old Testament reading. Since his shepherding days, David had gone from rags to riches and our text tells us that the Lord God had given him rest from his surrounding enemies. With the threat of invasion mostly subsided, he moved to domestic matters. He wanted to build a temple for the most High God.

But as things normally go with God, the Lord turned the tables. He said to David, “I will make *you* a house!” The Lord said to David in verse 16: “**And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.**” David was talking about building God a building, but God was talking about establishing David’s household.

II. David looked for His offspring to establish God's House. The Lord promises David, “**When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring (Zerah) after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**”

As time goes on, God’s promise of the seed that would crush the serpent’s head is further specified. Perhaps David was thinking, would my son be the one who would fulfill this promise in the Garden of Eden? Would He be the one to defeat Satan once and for all?

It has been said, “We’re the hero of our own story.” That is, when we tell our life’s story, we make ourselves out to be the knight in shining armor. We like to see ourselves as the one who saved the day. We’re never at fault, someone else is.

But when God writes the story, it isn’t always so neat. Eve’s first offspring would be the world’s first murderer. Solomon, the offspring of David who would go on to build the temple was born from a mother that David acquired through an extramarital affair.

Yet God keeps good on His promises even when things don't go according to our plan. Solomon would ultimately disappoint as riches and fame would lead him astray spiritually. Solomon's offspring would also, and his offspring after him, and so on down the line.

Yet God would make good on His promise to Eve all the way back in the garden. He did not forget His promise He made to King David. The seed, the offspring, the Zerah, would shoot forth in the most unlikely place—the womb of a virgin.

III. The Lord sent the offspring to Mary's womb. When God writes the story, it doesn't necessarily go where we would expect. To a little town of Nazareth, to a maiden named Mary. The angel Gabriel had a message for her. The seed problem started at the beginning of time would find its solution in this humble peasant.

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

And so it is that we have nearly reached the end of our waiting. Christmas is but four days away. We will commemorate Jesus' birth soon. Jesus is that long awaited Zerah who will crush the serpent's head, and reverse the curse of that tree bearing Zerah, seed, in its forbidden fruit.

The Lord says of this seed, **“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him,…”** Certainly we believe that Jesus committed no sin, but the Bible says elsewhere, **“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (KJV).”** This offspring of Mary would bear our sins and be our savior as He was cursed on the cross for you. Death would not stop His kingdom as He rose again on the third day, demonstrating that His kingdom has no end.

And so you and I have a place in this kingdom as the seed, the offspring, the Zerah of this king. Not by the act of physical reproduction, but by the will of God. John writes, **“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”** Through faith, we get to be part of Jesus' family tree. We are sons and daughters of God.

Thus, your story becomes His story, and His story yours. He is coming on Christmas to redeem every twist and turn your life has taken and will take. He is the hero of your story to rescue you. Trust in Him and where He will lead.