How was this past week for you? I hope good. We’ve had some beautiful weather here these last few days. Not too hot. Low humidity. Blue skies. Sunshine. But earlier in the week there was more of that heat and humidity of a Virginia summer! And how about the heavy rains and thunderstorms on Wednesday afternoon—right about rush hour! That was fun, wasn’t it? In fact, I don’t know about where you were at earlier in the week, but it seemed like the evening rush hours…Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday…were tough! Usually there’s somewhat of a let-up on the traffic around here in the summer—with school being out—but not this year!

Thinking about sitting in traffic…being stuck in traffic…it makes me think of frustration. I don’t why…call me crazy! It just does! I don’t know, maybe you like sitting on a steaming hot, black, asphalt surface with thousands of cars, all with their engines running—stopped—not going anywhere! And it’s 98 degrees outside—with humidity! Sounds like a great time, doesn’t it?

Frustration. Are you feeling some frustration in your life right now? Today? This past week? In your life, in general?

- Maybe it’s frustration over something—or a whole bunch of things—that aren’t going the way you’d like them to.
- Maybe it’s frustration over something you did that was wrong—that wasn’t right—and you’re frustrated with yourself for doing that.
- Maybe you’re frustrated by the situation that you’re in right now. Maybe you had something to do with getting into that situation—maybe you didn’t. But you’re frustrated…you’re really bothered by it.

And you wonder…

- Why does life have to be like this? Why do the people of this world have to be like this! Why am I like this?
- Are things ever going to change? Is there ever going to be any relief from this frustration? Is there any hope?

Life. Questions about life. Wonderings about “hope” as we live life.

As you’ve heard me say already today, today’s message is part of our “Summers in Genesis” message series. The portion of Genesis before us today—Genesis chapter 3—has a lot to say to us about life: about why things “are the way they are” in life…and about the hope that we have—right now—as we live life; real, true, sure, honest-to-goodness, hope!

So…let’s get into Genesis chapter 3. And as we do so, I think you’ll see that today’s message title, “Temptation, Sin, Consequences, and Hope” is really just a simple outline taken from what’s in Genesis chapter 3.

Genesis chapter 3 is the account of the first sin by God’s perfect creation, humankind. The account begins with telling us about temptation to that first sin; and thereby, we can learn about temptation—and what to watch out for regarding temptation to sin.

Genesis chapter 3 begins, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. (Interesting word that’s used to describe the serpent here—crafty. The devil’s sneaky. He’s sly. He’s
tricky. He’s a con-artist. He can’t be trusted. We have an example of that…) He (the devil) said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

In the devil’s trickiness, he baits Eve into doubting God’s Word. He says, “Did God really say you couldn’t eat from any tree in the garden?” What the devil is doing is he’s trying to get Eve to think, “Hmm…you know, God wasn’t very clear on that, was he? Was it any tree that we can’t eat from? Was it one certain tree that we can’t eat from? Exactly what was that…” And what, God doesn’t have Adam and Eve’s best interest in mind? He wants them to go hungry? The devil says God told them not to eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden. He’s working to get Eve to doubt the clear Word of God. He tempts you and me to do the same today.

Eve responds to the devil: “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

To which the devil responds: “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Note how, in temptation, the teachings of God are twisted. The devil takes what God had said about not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and he says, “If you eat fruit from this tree you won’t die! Your heart won’t immediately stop pumping blood and your brain activity won’t instantly stop! In fact, you’ll become like God…knowing good and evil!” Who wouldn’t want to be like God, right? Interesting thing about this is that, at this point, Adam and Eve were already like God! Remember they were created in God’s image! But the devil is trying to plant that seed of doubt in Eve’s mind… “God could be wrong, you know?”

God knows the difference between “good” and “evil.” The Bible says God is totally good; perfect; holy. That’s his essence. That’s who God is. Evil is the opposite of God, God’s goodness, and everything that God is about. The trickery comes in here in that the devil doesn’t tell Eve that she will know evil by experience. God has never experienced evil…in that he’s never “done sin.” Eve, however, would experience evil in just a few moments.

What happens in temptation is that we are tempted to doubt the clear Word of God. We are tempted to twist what that Word of God really means. And, temptation often lures us to think that by following the temptation and going through with the sin, we will be better off. We will benefit, somehow…in some way. Genesis 3:6 says, “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom…” It’s interesting how temptation looks so good…so “tempting” we say. Eve thought she would benefit by going through with this temptation and eating the fruit. She would benefit by doing this. That’s a nasty lure of temptation…that we’ll be better off by going ahead and doing it.

Genesis says Eve took some of the fruit from The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she ate it, and she gave some to her husband, Adam—who, the Bible says, was just standing there. He wasn’t doing anything. He wasn’t doing what he should have been doing as a kind of Ephesians 5 type husband that we looked at last week…who loves his wife like Christ loved the Church.

And so…Adam and Eve sinned.

What is “sin”? Luther’s Catechism defines “sin” as “missing the bull’s eye of God’s law by breaking one of his commandments.” This definition of “sin” actually comes from a New Testament word for sin that means “to miss the mark.” This word comes from the sport of archery. It’s the picture of an archer drawing back his bow, firing, and completely missing the bull’s eye of the target. To “miss the target” of God’s Law is to sin. Specifically, this can happen in a couple general ways. Sin is doing something which God forbids. And, sin is also not doing what God commands. In short, sin is “playing God”; “taking God’s place”; “calling the shots and telling God to go take a hike!” One sees this in Genesis 3:1-6.
If we think about it, that’s what we do when we sin. In our sin, we say to God, “God, I’m the one in charge here. I’m going to do what I want, not what you want.” We do that when we sin:

- Doctrinally—regarding the teachings of God’s Word; when we make God’s Word say what we want it to say rather than what it says…because that promotes our way of thinking or living…or because it gets better coverage in the outside world. We seem more “with it” regarding the ways of the world.
- Morally—regarding “right” and “wrong.” We want to be our own determiners of those things. We don’t want any “God” telling us what to do.
- Regarding the “law of love”—what Jesus was talking about when he said, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’” and, “‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37-39). Again, we’re not thinking about what God wants. We’re being our own “God.” We’re thinking only of ourselves. We’re being selfish. We’re not thinking of others.

So how did this all work out for Adam and Eve? What were the consequences of their eating of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Genesis tells us:

Bam!!! What seemed so alluring…so good…so pleasing to the eye…like one would benefit and be better off by eating of it…how different the reality of that sin once it was committed! Adam and Eve are horribly shocked by the consequences of their sin! (vs. 7). They experience shame (vs. 7). They’re running around trying to cover up their nakedness with fig leaves! They experience fear (vs. 8) for the first time ever! They try to hide from God (vs. 8)! Genesis says they used to hang around with God, but now they’re running away from him! Sin negatively affects their marriage (vss. 11-13). They play the first “blame game.” Adam blames Eve. Eve blames the serpent. Nobody wants to take responsibility for what’s happened. Everybody’s a victim. Genesis says childbirth is negatively affected (vs. 16). The created world is negatively affected (vss. 17-19). Life is negatively affected (vs. 19). Now there’s death in world. God was right. You sin; you’re going to die. And, the Bible tells us, you sin and die without faith in the Savior, Jesus, and you’ll be in hell forever! Adam and Eve get kicked out of and banned from paradise (vss. 22-24). The taking of the devil’s advice versus following the command of God didn’t work out so well!

Why is life frustrating? Because we have to live with the consequences of life in this sinful world. God didn’t make paradise, the Garden of Eden, frustrating. Frustration is one of the consequences of living in a far less-than-perfect world. And to be clear, it’s our fault. Yes, Adam and Eve committed the first sin. But we’ve sinned too. As human beings, sin is our fault. It’s not God’s fault.

But check out how God responds to sin in Genesis chapter 3!

When Adam and Eve are running away from God, hiding from God, because they’re experience shame over what they’ve done and fear that God’s going to punish them, what does God do? God goes after them! God pursues them! Not to punish them, but to save them; to rescue them from sin and its consequences!

Friends, that’s who God is and that’s what God does! He pursues sinners to rescue them from their sins and the consequences of their sins! That’s what God was doing when he pursued David…who had sexual relations with another man’s wife and then arranged for the death of that man. That’s what Jesus was doing when he went after Peter one morning on the shore of the Sea of Galilee after Peter had publicly rejected even knowing Jesus. That’s what God was doing went he pursued the whole New Testament church of Corinth who had some off-base teachings about all kinds of things.

Friends, that’s what God has done—and continues to do—with you and me, sinners. He pursues us! He goes after us! He reaches out to save us! To rescue us! To offer us a message of hope…real hope…true hope…certain hope…eternally lasting hope…hope that’s based in our Savior, Jesus!
That’s the kind of hope that God offered Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after the first sin. Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of a Savior from sin that we find in the Bible. In Genesis 3:15, God says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

What God says here is that there will be two divisions of people in this world—those who reject him and follow the devil…whether people realize they are doing that or not. But, in essence, they are. One is either with God or one is not with God. According to the Bible a person can’t be a “fence straddler” when it comes to God (John 3:18).

Genesis 3:15 says that an offspring will come from the woman. This offspring will be a male. Hmm? Ever heard of a woman who, without a man, had a child…and that child was a son? This is a reference to Jesus! And what does Genesis say that this “male offspring” of Eve, Jesus, will do? Genesis says he will crush the head of that ancient serpent, the tempter, the devil! Jesus will conquer him! Jesus will defeat him! Jesus will punish the devil for what he did to God’s beloved, perfect creation!

The Bible says that Jesus crushed the devil; Jesus defeated the devil…when he died on the cross. But you see, Jesus’ victory over the devil cost him something. Genesis says that the one who would crush the devil would have his heel bruised. In reality, it cost Jesus his life.

But through Jesus’ death, we gained! John chapter 3 verse 16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” It’s interesting what we, by God’s grace through faith in Jesus, gain—life! Through Jesus death we are rescued from the death that is punishment for sin! We are spiritually alive right now! We are right with God! Our sins are forgiven! We have the promise of eternal life in heaven through faith in Jesus!

Genesis chapter 3 is the account of some sad things…some disappointing things…some things we might not want to hear about—temptation to sin, the first sin, and the consequences of sin. But ultimately, Genesis 3 is that account of something very, very good…joy-filling and hope-giving! Genesis 3 tells us about our Savior, Jesus! Amen.