

Amazing Grace in God's Garden

●* **Fatal attraction** (vv.8-10)

●* **Playing the blame game** (vv.11-13)

† **Conquering love** (vv.14,15)

In the name of Jesus, the Seed of the woman who crushed the serpent's head, God's forgiven children:

“On Saturday, June 25, 1530, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Dr. Christian Beyer stood, walked toward the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles V, and began reading the Augsburg Confession in a loud and distinct voice. Though the open windows a hushed crowd outside in the courtyard hung on his every word, as did the two hundred or so people gathered in the hall. Beside Dr. Beyer stood Dr. Gregory Brück, holding a copy of the Augsburg Confession in Latin. The German princes around them stood up to indicate their support for the Confession. The emperor motioned for them to sit down.

“When Dr. Beyer finished reading, Dr. Brück took the German copy of the Confession from him, handed both copies to the emperor, and said, ‘Most gracious Emperor, this is a Confession that will even prevail against the gates of hell, with the grace and help of God.’”¹ And we might add today on this 476th anniversary of that reading that this Confession will stand against all those in America and the world who still disagree with the Holy Scriptures. It's one thing to sing, “Amazing Grace,” and quite another to see with joyful eyes this truly awesome **Amazing Grace in God's Garden**. It's bad news first in...

●* **Fatal attraction** (vv.8-10)

Most Americans treat this like a movie, **Fatal attraction** for entertainment. But what Hollywood misses on the silver screen, God wants us to see clearly, not by digging underneath these words or by adding our own interpretations. In our Lutheran heritage we let Scripture interpret Scripture to see how truly **Fatal** this **attraction** was. It's not just about forbidden fruit. Instead of living under God as our Almighty and gracious Creator, we like our first parents want to be equal to Him. This He will not allow.

Back up the film a bit and look at the way we were. Before Adam and Eve fell to their **Fatal attraction**, they were enjoying the perfect image of God in which He created them male and female. In every way they were holy like God. Adam's brain was firing on all cylinders when God helped him discover the meaning of loneliness by naming all the animals. Holy like God in his intellect, Adam not only got all the names right, but he realized there was no “*suitable helper*,” no corresponding partner just right for him. The God-induced “*deep sleep*” that settled on him then, was God's time for the first surgery. As one of the rabbis in the Hebrew Talmud rightly put it, God made the woman “out of a man's rib. Not from his feet to be walked on. Not from his head to be superior, but from the side to be equal. Under the arm to be protected, and next to the heart to be loved.”² Their differing roles were no trouble in the image of God because they were totally devoted to God and each other instead of self.

But after their **Fatal attraction** to sin just hearing God's voice in the Garden of Eden sent them scurrying like bugs for cover. God's usual visit in the cool of the day now feels like a S.W.A.T. team. Man's holy intellect is destroyed. Hiding in the bushes! His holy emotions are replaced by crushing guilt that feels shame in the natural nakedness so innocent only moments before. Satan's promise of sin made them like God in a way that could only destroy them eternally. Dead in transgressions and sin, our **Fatal attraction** still separates us from God from the moment of conception. We cannot help ourselves.

¹ *CONCORDIA – THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS – A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*. Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, Missouri, 2005, p. 47.

² Emailed from a congregational member 6/08/2006.

☼ **Playing the blame game (vv.11-13)**

More depressing separation follows between the man and his wife **Playing the blame game**. God knows the answers to His own simple questions; He's just trying to get the man and woman to confess what they have done. But guilt and fear get in the way. Anyone feel that way today?

How many of us don't try to hide from God not so much when trouble strikes but sometimes when great blessings come our way? We know we do not deserve them. It's often the goodness of God that makes us feel the most guilty – like Peter with the great catch of fish that made him say to Jesus, “**Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**” (Luke 5:8 KJV) Likewise, a new car or new house especially if you were worried about getting them will make you feel how undeserving you are.

But sometimes we just cannot hide from our frustration. Who's the first person a husband thinks of when he's upset about something? His wife may have nothing to do with it, yet she's the first to catch the heat of his blame. Still today, how often do you actually hear a woman admit, “I'm wrong”? She may not be as prone to blame her husband, but by nature she's no better at confessing to God her guilt or admitting it to others. He blames her, she blames something else – and ultimately we are all **Playing the blame game** with God as the big target of our complaints even for giving us too big a gift. “Oh, Adam, can you hear what you're saying? Do you really want to complain about that gorgeous woman God created to live at your side and in your heart? Do you really want to blame her and God?”

✝ **Conquering love (vv.14,15)**

The only one who wanted to laugh at all this was Satan. He took control of the cunning serpent in order to destroy God's perfect paradise with sin and death. That fallen angel rebelled and took his demon forces with him. They abandoned their heavenly home. Now if only he can get God to destroy those creatures of His! Failure could be written in the stars if Satan could just make God use His almighty power in burning anger and destruction.

But it was not an angry judge who came calling in the cool of the day. Did you catch that name? This is also the Savior-God coming to rescue His creatures from their self-chosen death of sin. That's why here the dear Holy Spirit says, “**The LORD God...was walking in the garden in the cool of day.**” Yes, they tried to hide from **the LORD God**, but “**the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'**” The God of free and faithful grace knows which bush is Adam's hiding place. But the real question is, “Where are you in your relationship with me?” And when Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent, and both ultimately are blaming God, it is **the LORD God** who pronounces a curse on their enemy. This is the first Gospel promise of a Savior to come. Satan thought he was conquering love by cursing God's creation with sin and death. But the LORD God cursed Satan instead by promising to send His own **Conquering love** in the Seed of the woman, her greatest Descendant, who would crush Satan's head.

When you know all this, you don't want or need to make excuses. Like the Lutheran princes who stood up to the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor with a Confession they knew would keep them in good standing with God, we confess the truth too. When Adam fell, we fell. Our **blame game** against God and each other only proves that our bony, pointing fingers deserve to be driven from the garden of God's love and destroyed forever in hell. But instead the **LORD God** sent His **Conquering love** in the Person of Jesus Christ. He carried all our guilt and sin to another tree on Calvary and there shed the only blood that could wash all our sins away. And God said it was good when He raised Jesus from the dead. In fact, He says by our baptism into Christ's resurrection that we're as good as Jesus. The Holy Spirit by Word and sacrament convinces us of complete forgiveness. God gives us joy by His kindness in Christ.

Hearing the bad news first makes us more excited to share the Good News constantly. Now we don't just sing, “Amazing Grace,” we want to live it in our lives. Who is the person who has hurt you the most? Don't try to be the judge. Instead be like the LORD God who gave His grace to you. Forgive as you've been forgiven and rejoice forever because of **Amazing Grace in God's Garden**. Amen.