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Lent 1A  
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### **Dirt to Dirt**

TEXT: Genesis 3:1-21

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; <sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." <sup>20</sup> The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup> And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

#### I. God Made Dirt Come to Life

Let me tell you how things were. In the beginning, there was dirt: a whole planet full of dirt. God has started with nothing and made the universe, the cosmos. He took nothing and made little strings, then he set the strings to vibrating, and they looked like quarks, and the quarks made electrons and protons and neutrons and photons and a whole bunch of others little bits and pieces we still couldn't see. But some of them lumped together, and some of them exploded into stars, and others God clumped together into planets.

He took one star and gave it nine planets and asteroids and comets. Then he focused on one planet, one not too close to the star, and not too far away, with huge planets nearby to protect it from wandering bits and pieces of dirt, and a moon to keep it from tilting too wildly, and magnetic fields to protect it from the electrons and protons and photons still flying wildly around the universe God had made. He came to that planet, and he made something new – he made life. He made a planet filled with water, in oceans below and in the air above. On the land he made plants to drink the water, and in the oceans he made fish to swim in it, and in the air birds to fly through clouds of it. Then he made animals on the land, teeny tiny animals smaller than the head of a pin and huge animals like the Brontosaurus and Tyrannosaurus Rex.

Then last of all, he picked up the dirt, and started squishing it around, playing thoughtfully with it. And God said to himself, "Let's take this dirt and make it like us, loving life and loving the universe, someone we will love, and that can love us in return." So the Lord God took the dirt and breathed the Spirit into it, and the Word spoke life and the Father rejoiced. He made the first man, and he called him A-dam, a name that means "dirt-guy" or "earth man." Then he made another different dirt person from the dirt man, and called her woman.

The Father, his Son, and their Spirit looked at the cosmos they had created, and the dirt-guy and his dirt woman playing on the dirt planet, and smiled to themselves. God was pleased, and said that all of it, every last bit of it, was very good.

## II. We Made our Life Into Dirt

The man and woman God had made out of dirt were built to last. Every cell regenerated itself perfectly, with absolutely no loss of DNA information from one copy to the next. Their minds could manipulate their whole structure to keep it in tip-top shape without even realizing they were doing it. But God wasn't finished with them. "We're going to plant a tree," God said to themselves. "A tree of life. A tree that will take their dirt bodies and make them absolutely glorious. They will not be mere dirt-people forever. One day, they will be like us. Then they'll be able to know the one thing they know nothing about right now – the thing that shall not be named. They'll eat from the Tree of Knowledge and learn about that thing. But not until they've eaten from the Tree of Life and become more than just dirt."

The cute cuddly serpent heard. Heard, and made up a plan of his own. His plan was not good. Not good at all. He knew this dirt man and dirt woman better than God did. So he found the dirt woman and got her to trust his cute, cuddly self, until she did the thing she wasn't ready to do. The thing God had told her and the dirt guy not to do – she ate from the Tree of Knowledge, and gave it to the dirt guy. And then they *knew*. They knew how to make the world a terrible place, a horrible place, an *evil* place. Their minds were made of dirt, but now they were also *dirty*. And the evil thoughts in their *dirty* dirt minds spread out throughout the universe. Creatures like the sweetly singing mosquito that sang evening symphonies for God started to bite and sting. The honey bees stopped sharing their honey, and hoarded it for themselves. The Tyrannosaurus didn't want to snore lazily next to the dirt guy anymore – he wanted to rip through his dirt body with his now pointed and sharp teeth until he – until he – hmmm, what WOULD happen to the dirt guy if he did that?

The Lord God was visiting Andromeda Galaxy when he felt the whole universe wrench out of shape. They heard the cosmos cry out to its Creator, and the Lord God sighed. They had not been able to wait. In an instant the Lord God found the dirt guy and dirt woman hiding. Hiding – they knew what shame meant, what "wrong" meant, what guilt meant. The Lord spoke to one another – "They cannot eat from the Tree of Life, or they will be doomed forever. Their evil will be frozen forever in this universe, and they nothing here will ever be right again."

The Lord knew what had to be done. The dirt man Adam and his wife Eve were exiled into a world filled with unimaginable good AND unspeakable evil. The Lord cursed the cute, cuddly serpent and made it into an ugly, horrid looking snake. The ground itself was now cursed, the Lord told the dirt people. "You were once dirt," he said, "and you will one day be dirt again. Now you will – die." In the beginning, dirt had come to life, but now man and woman had made that life taste like dirt.

But that wasn't the end of the plan.

### III. God Himself Became Dirt Like Us

Thousands of years later the Son of the Father himself became a new dirt guy. He lived and walked on the dirt planet he had created, and lived a kind of dirty life. The descendants of the first dirt man and woman thought so many terrible, dirty thoughts that it was hard to live among them. Finally, they even killed him, nailing him up on a tree, showing that they still remembered that when they ate from the Tree of Knowledge, they learned more about evil than about good. That too was part of God's plan.

### IV. So One Day our Dirt Will Rise Again

Because God still remembered the Tree of Life. He remembered his plan to make the dirt people become immortals, become like himself in every way. His plan was strange because it was so good, so perfect, and so unlike the kinds of plans that the evil dirt people were used to thinking up. He would take the Tree on which they killed him and make it a brand new Tree of Life. Everyone who looked to the Tree on which the Son of God had died as a dirt man like us would really be eating from the Tree of Life. Their dirt bodies would die, yes – but at the end of time the Lord would remake the world, and then they would live forever and ever. Then they would be able to handle the Knowledge of Good and Evil, because even though they would know what evil *was*, they would never choose to do it, ever, ever again.

That's how things are, my fellow dirt people. From dirt we were made, and to dirt we will return. But all those whom the Lord has called to look at the Tree of Life, will eat from it forever in the perfect world to come.

<sup>17</sup> The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> Yes, Adam's one sin brought condemnation upon everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness makes all people right in God's sight and gives them life. <sup>19</sup> Because one person disobeyed God, many people became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many people will be made right in God's sight.

Amen.