

LENT WEEK 2

March 8, 2020

READING

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?”

The woman said to the serpent, “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.’”

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

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, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”. He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

So the Lord God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you above all livestock
and all wild animals!
You will crawl on your belly
and you will eat dust
all the days of your life.
And 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.”

To the woman he said,
“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labor you will give birth to children.
Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.”

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and
ate fruit from the tree about which
I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’
Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”

Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side[e] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

REFLECTION

What a stark contrast from the previous reading. All that separates creation and calamity is one small chapter at the very beginning of the first book in the Bible. And what an odd chapter it is. It begins by stating that God rested after completing his creation. Then it tells or perhaps retells, in more detail, the creation of man followed by the garden of Eden, and finally, woman. Much like the first chapter, it is void of emotion. It is a simple telling of how it came to be. It offers again, no glimpse into why.

This chapter is an important antecedent for what is to come next. It personalizes God’s interaction with the first people a bit more. He creates Adam. Then, he creates Adam’s home - the Garden of Eden. He puts every good thing there is to eat in there, rich in resources, and

water sources that flow in all directions. It must have been incredible. Adam is put there to “work it and keep it”. But God is not satisfied in this existence for Adam; and so he brings into being another creature just like Adam - “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh”.

For me, this exposes an incredible duality that exists in these first two chapters - a God that is all powerful, all knowing, creating the universe and all its amazing complexity by calling it into being. Right alongside that, we have the personal God; the God who creates us to be with him. He could have stopped with Adam, but he was just as interested in Adam’s fulfillment as his own. Thus, Eve came to be. We were created not only for God’s enjoyment but our own enjoyment - being in relationship with him AND with one another.

With the bite of an apple, it all falls apart. Separation is introduced and it is visible on every level. From Adam and Eve separating themselves from one another by covering their nakedness to their separation from God as they hide from him in shame. Conflict, pain, discontentment and death appear. Suddenly, this perfect canvas becomes desecrated by all the darkness that we, in the here and now, are all too familiar with.

What does God do in the end? He makes them clothes and in his mercy, prevents them from making an even bigger mess by banishing them from their home. It doesn’t state this but I imagine the trinity was deeply grieved at this point. What a horrible conclusion to an incredible love story.

And yet we know, this wasn’t the end. What comes to pass is an all powerful God giving his creation what they wanted when they grasped for that apple - power to make their own history on their own terms. God doesn’t run interference for us, clearing the path of all hardship and calamity. We must live in the reality that humankind has created. But because of his great love for us, he does intercede. His original intention will not be thwarted. It is his singular focus to draw us back into relationship with him.

REMINDER

The purpose of God’s existence is not to ensure our earthly comfort. Somehow we’ve perpetuated this notion that what is meant by “God is good” is “God kept me from hardship, heartache, failure, disappointment, and every other difficult circumstance and emotion under the sun”. The evidence for this lies in our response when any of the above does befall us “How can God be good?”. God didn’t stop Eve. But when all was said and done, he clothed her. And then he set into motion his plan for overcoming the mistakes that had been made that were not of his own doing. That, for me, is the definition of good.

PRAYER

God, you are with each one of us as we journey through this life. Gently remind us that our lives are not our own - they are yours. Help us not be scared of that but to remember, you are the definition of good. Therefore, whatever comes our way, you are with us...going ahead of us, beside us, behind us, all around us. As you are glorified through our lives, help us to know with all our being, that we will also be most alive and fulfilled in that place as well.