

THE TRAIL THROUGH THE TREES
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

GEN 3:1-21
MAR 5, 2017

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." ¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.

Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

¹⁷ 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;

¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ 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."

²⁰ The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

From time our children we little, we have enjoyed
going on walks with them in the woods.
One thing we noticed was little short cuts & side paths,
often steep & already showing signs of erosion,
sometimes leading to dangerous spots.
which we taught them were not a trail
so we called them "naughty trails."
In text Adam & Eve go down slippery slope of a naughty trail
past the tree of temptation but how God
comes to them again through the tree of the cross.

THE DEVIL LEADS DOWN A DECEPTIVE PATH
SIN DESTROYS THE WAY OF LIFE GOD HAS GIVEN
JESUS IS THE WAY THAT BRINGS US BACK TO GOD

THE DEVIL LEADS DOWN A DECEPTIVE PATH

Many have heard me before talk about how this is
classic example of steps Devil uses to lead to temptation.
It starts with doubt, "Did God actually say?"

And Eve doesn't accurately know what God really said
to Adam in previous chapter. More was added to it.

One of them didn't know their memory work correctly,
unlike Jesus who resists temptation by accurately quoting
what is written in God's powerful word.

So the way is clear for the next step: Deception.

God's loving way of keeping them from death is made out
to be selfish way to keep them from knowledge.

Temptation is always something bad made to look good.

And notice how, as with Jesus, what the Devil offers
is something she already has:

the image of God, including knowledge of good.

What she doesn't have is knowledge of evil.

This is like saying wouldn't you like to know what it is like
to be sick with hangover, have broken bone, be shot?

But she falls for it and takes the next step: Desire.

She sees it as a delight and to be desired.

Now our sinful nature has all sorts of feelings & urges,
but beware of what desires you own & let take root.

Even when they do, we are not animals who have to do
everything we feel but can resist and control desires.

But the slippery slope is getting steeper.

Next comes the decision to do it and then the deed.
Then, as one thing leads to another, Adam is led to do it.
This is common too, doing wrong doesn't like being alone
but has to drag someone else down with it.
This is not the end of the trail the Devil wants to lead us down.
Now it turns the corner to the real trap: Despair.
As soon as the devil tricks us into what is wrong,
he turns around to accuse us and make us ashamed
in order to convince us we are now trapped
and God doesn't love us anymore, which is more lies.
But Adam & Eve fall for it. They hide from God. Who changed?
They even try to use leaves to hide from themselves.
One of the Devil's favorite tricks is false shame,
feeling ashamed even when there is no real blame,
or feeling shame because of what someone else does,
like when teens are embarrassed to be seen with parents.
Trying to do something to hide their own guilt
is like trying to clean self with dirty hands.
All this is because Devil's ultimate goal is separating us
from God who loves us no matter what.
God can always forgive us, but Devil wants us to forget this.

SIN DESTROYS THE WAY OF LIFE GOD HAS GIVEN

Sin ruins relationships. It ruined relationship of Adam & Eve.
They were made to be loving supporters of each other
but they turn on each other and start pointing fingers.
No one likes to feel ashamed, so shame turns to blame.
Adam says is her fault & God's fault for giving her to him.
Now, the loving submission God intends for marriage
is distorted into unfulfilled desires by the woman
and attempts to dominate by the man.
Now having children which is to be a joy and a blessing
becomes a literal pain.
Now, Adam's work, which was fulfilling satisfaction
is a frustrating chore,
Because when they are broken, the crack spreads to
everything they are connected to and all nature is ruined.
Worst of all, sin ruins their relationship with God,
the source of life itself.
God warned that they day they eat from that tree
they will surely die. And God never lies.

So the end of the trail of temptation
is always disaster, destruction, death and eternal damnation.
All because of one little taste of fruit?
no, because there is no such thing as a little sin.
There is only resting in God's arms or wriggling away.
In eating that fruit, they have decided & declared
that God is not to be trusted and so he is not to be obeyed
and not to be loved. They turned their backs on him.
And so those made from dust in which God breathed life,
begin to suffocate and to crumble back into dust.
Without God, they are nothing but the dirtiest of dirt.
This is not because sin makes God turn against us,
but because it always makes us turn against God.
Our shame makes us hurt and hide from his holiness
so we avoid worship and his word. Sweet is now bitter.
Our love for him turns into fear
and fear always turns into hatred.
So what is God going to do about it?
Give up on the whole beautiful creation he has made
and just throw up his hands and walk away?
Not on your life.
God planned our salvation even before our creation.

JESUS IS THE WAY THAT BRINGS US BACK TO GOD

Even before Adam starts hiding, God comes seeking.
Even before Adam and Eve know their own evil,
God knows their weakness and brokenness.
So he comes not with a cold, stormy blast,
but with the cool breeze of his refreshing spirit.
Not with angry accusations of what he knows is true
but with questions to lead the ones who doubted God
to doubt now their own choices.
Where are you? Look at where you have ended up.
What have you done? Look at how you did it to yourself.
God comes not to stomp on them but to walk with them.
This is why Jesus was born as a helpless human,
because God comes to bring us back from the
naughty trail we are on by walking with us.
He does this by holding together the broken relationship
of man and woman and their children to give new life again,
to finally bring the son who was the promised seed

who mortally wounds the head of the serpent
with his wounded heel, nailed to the cross.
He does this not just by shedding the blood of an animal
to make clothing to cover the ashamed Adam & Eve
in a more lasting way than their futile leaves,
but by shedding the blood of Jesus on the cross
to cover our shame with his righteousness forever.
He walks with us to the tree of the cross,
to the end result of temptation, which is death & damnation,
in order to walk it back with us,
giving us what we need every step of the way
on the path of temptation,
This is why Jesus began his ministry by being tempted
in the wilderness in the same way Israel was in the desert
but taking the right turns each time,
and so to perfectly obey in the place of all those who fail
to fear, love and trust God above all things.
Now he gives us his true word, now written down in the Bible,
to keep us from doubting or being deceived.
He gives us the Holy Spirit who gives us good desires
and guides us to right decisions.
Even when we do wrong, he keeps us from despair
by promising his love and continued forgiveness.
He does this for us the same as he did for Adam & Eve,
by giving us faith in his promises.
Did Adam & Eve die the day they ate the fruit? Yes.
But also, through first gospel promise,
the promise of the seed that defeats the devil,
they came back to life again.
This is what God wants to do as soon as we sin as well.

THE DEVIL LEADS DOWN A DECEPTIVE PATH
from doubt to deception, desire, wrong decision, evil deed
and then around the blind corner to despair.

SIN DESTROYS THE WAY OF LIFE GOD HAS GIVEN
it ruins relationships with all we are to love
it brings pain, frustration, fear and hiding from God.
so it ends in destruction, death and damnation.

JESUS IS THE WAY THAT BRINGS US BACK TO GOD
He as gently come to walk with us through suffering & death
& to lead us back through faith & forgiveness to paradise.