

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, February 26, 2023. The First Sunday in Lent.

Text: Genesis 2 and 3

In our lessons for this first weekend in Lent, we have stories of temptation and the free gift of grace we receive in Jesus Christ through the cross.

First temptation. In Genesis 2 and 3 we encounter the story of original sin in the Garden of Eden.

One of the first Bible stories I ever remember being read in the home was the creation stories in Genesis 1, 2, and 3. My dad pulled out the family Bible at grandmas and started reading. I was captivated by the stories of creation and the choices of the first humans.

In our first lesson today from Genesis, The Lord God took the man and put him in the

Garden of Eden to till it and keep it. To till it doesn't really capture the full meaning of the Hebrew here. It could be translated "to work or serve" the ground. Serving the ground has more of a lasting stewardship feel to me, than a limitless use of the ground.

Then God set the boundaries for the first human. You may freely eat of every tree in the garden, including the tree of life; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall die." Sounds pretty clear.

That's a lot of trees to choose from for the human. The Lord God gives a lot of freedom to the human within the garden and options for food. God gives independence and trust to the human. God leaves room for humans to make decisions.

But as we know sometimes our decisions get us in trouble.

The human is invited to trust in God. This text reminds me of parenting. Parents give rules and boundaries to their kids because they love them and want to protect them. We want to preserve our kids from pain and from making mistakes. And yet mistakes are a

fact of life. James 3:2 says, “For all of us make many mistakes”. As our youngest learned in kindergarten, mistakes help us grow, Dad.

In the meantime, God recognizes that the man is lonely. I like the fact that God sees and cares for the lonely in our midst. So God wants to form for him a helper as his partner. After trying several animals, God forms the woman out of the rib of man. The two become one and we are told that they were naked and not ashamed.

Then the crafty serpent appears and tempts the humans. The serpent says to the woman, “You will surely not die”. Which is actually correct. They didn’t die a physical death right then and there. But death could mean a breakdown in relationships to God, each other, and the created order.

After giving into temptation, the woman took some fruit and ate. She gave some to her husband and he ate. Their eyes were opened and noticed they were naked. Then they made clothing for themselves. For some reason the woman gets the blame. But when she gave the fruit, the man put up no resistance; he raises no questions; he simply and silently took his turn.

Then God comes to them in human form, walking around the garden, and the man and woman hid. God asks, “Where are you?” “Did you eat from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” Then the man blames the woman. She gave it to me. Then the woman blamed the serpent, “The serpent tricked me.” Can you see how quickly things get out of hand? One sin leads to another.

As with all bad choices, there are consequences. The serpent is cursed, the woman will experience pain in childbearing, and the man’s job of working the earth will become more difficult. With weeds and thorns, man will have to expend more energy to gain a living from the soil.

But did you notice that God did not abandon the humans after they sinned. God hung around. God talked with them. God even made clothing for them before sending them out of the Garden. A sign of grace.

We all face temptation daily. You know what yours is. Sin for Lutherans is our inability to fear, love, and trust God above all things. We turn away from God and turn in on ourselves, seeking our own will first and using the gifts of God's creation to gratify our own desires. We are rebellious by nature.

But as our Romans lesson says, thanks be to God for the free gift of grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. Even with sin in the world, we are put in a right relationship with God through Jesus' work on the cross.

When you fall to temptation, when you sin, when you blame others for your problems, know that there is grace for you. Simply having a broken heart over what you have done or left undone is an open door to forgiveness. That is what the cross is for. Communion also brings the promise of forgiveness in worship.

We all sin and fall short of the glory of God daily. But God became human and journeyed with us. Jesus faced temptation too and overcame it through his faith and the word. In our baptism, like God clothed Adam and Eve after they messed up, we are clothed in Christ Jesus and washed by his blood.

How do you plan to use the free gift of grace? How will you respond this Lenten season? Amen