

People of Faith - God's Story: Adam & Eve

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Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry

Chapter 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" ²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶So 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. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

This is a text about the covenant between God and humans. God created a world for creatures to live in on God's terms, not our own. This is a fact of the covenantal relationship with God. When we disobey, we assert our mis-trust of our Creator. Even so, God yet cares for us.

God's grace to you! Today we begin our sermon series "People of Faith – God's Story". God has given us God's Holy Word to be our story, the narrative we shape our lives upon. Pr Deb and myself, are taking the summer months to walk us back into Bible stories we might have learned as children in Sunday school. Returning to them now as adults, we'll see what they actually say. You might just be surprised! Likewise, our intent is to make connections to our daily lives now. How does an Old Testament story of someone like Abraham or Sarah connect to faith today? In your bulletin each week, there will be a handout. We encourage you to take those home! Answer the questions. Do a little more digging in your Bibles with the additional references. And...pray for another member of our church family.

So here we go! Today is Adam and Eve. We've now heard the whole of Chapter 3 and some pivotal verses from Chapter 2. A few questions for you...

- The animal that tempted Eve, was it the devil?
- Did Eve eat an apple?
- Do you see the word "sin" anywhere in the text?
- Who ate first? Eve or Adam?
- So why does Adam always get blamed for the "fall" from God's grace?

Walter Bruggeman says, 'No text in Genesis (or likely the entire Bible) has been more used, interpreted, and misunderstood than this text.' (Interpretation: Genesis. Walter Brueggemann. John Knox Press. Atlanta.1982. pg 41) How many of us were taught that this story is called "The Fall"? How many of us commonly understand that by Adam eating an apple, this is how evil came into the world? How many of us have been taught that Adam and Eve were real people?

Part of my excitement about this series is for we, people of God's Word, to truly take a few moments and look at God's Word as adults, to see what the text really says. For just like the questions I asked you, common understanding of this text is that there is an apple.

What we know for certain there are multiple creation stories and multiple "fall" stories from the Ancient Near East. This account is not the only account of a god (small g) creating the world. What we also know is that the Israelites who penned these stories were faithful people. They, like we, were people whose faith sought understanding.

There is no historical basis to be found for the real people Adam and Eve. One cannot read these texts as history, nor as only myth. But instead, think about Adam and Eve as a proclamation of how Creator God deals with Creation. When reading your Bible if you get stuck in a story, there are always two questions you can ask. What does the text say about God? What does it say about humans?

The primary intent of the first stories in Genesis: Adam and Eve, the Flood narrative, Abraham and Sarah....the primary intent is to tell of a relationship between Creator and Creation. The relationship is formed between creator God and the creation God made including creatures and humankind. The original writers of Genesis (for Gen 1 and 2 the Jahwist and the Priestly) were not concerned, *were not concerned* with issues of sin, death, and evil. Those abstract theological concepts came to scripture and the church much later. The Jahwist and Priestly writers wrote at different times in Old Testament history. Each of them emphasized different characteristics of God and the covenantal relationship. Today, we try to hear exactly what the words on the page say to us about Adam and Eve.

Adam and Eve....if you pull out the green insert, look again at the text from Genesis chapter two. Notice, there were two trees in the middle of the garden: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God gives the man a vocation. In verse 15, the man is to till the garden. In verse 16, God gives the man permission to eat of every tree. There must have been many, many fabulous trees of which to eat. But in verse 17, the command is to not eat of one specific tree, the tree of knowledge or one shall die. These trees were dangerous trees to be avoided.

God is setting up a relationship with humankind. The covenantal relationship is on God's terms, because God knows best. It also includes a God who cares deeply for creation and provides for it in every way possible. But there is also a prohibition. Don't eat of one specific tree!

The serpent arrives on scene to simply move the plot along. The serpent takes God's command and presents it like an option. This is a crafty serpent, opening up just enough space for the woman to consider eating of the prohibitive tree. Look at chapter 3, verse four. The real issue, the serpent reveals, is that if you eat of that fruit, you will be like God.

The woman desires knowledge and so she eats. She gives some to the man and he eats. Their eyes are opened and they know now their nakedness.

What has been harmed is the Creator/Creature relationship. The covenant is broken. A specific command has been disobeyed. Yet God comes walking near in the evening breeze anyway, because God cares for God's creation. If you remember one thing from this sermon, remember perhaps it is not a text about sin, rather a text about God struggling with God's creatures.

Because of the eating, God has a consequence for the serpent and Eve and Adam. God doesn't allow any of them to get off the hook. There is no, "she/he made me do it!" The serpent will crawl and eat dust. The woman, previously a true partner with man in the keeping of the garden, will now desire the man. In doing so, have great pain in childbirth. The man, previously allowed to till the luscious and plentiful Garden of Eden, will now work for each meal because the land will be filled with thorns and thistles.

God refuses to allow the serpent, man and woman to change the relationship. Creator God will still choose covenantal relationship, yet it will yet be on God's terms. Their punishment tells us so.

But remember what God said would happen if one ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge? They would die – that day. Has anyone died yet? What if part of this text is the true struggle God has with the man and the woman? God created them in God's own image! God has provided for them a beautiful home. Now, the relationship has changed from faithful obedience to obstinate self-assertion. (For those of you with children, remember the difference between age 1 and terrible 2?)

Yet, God also chooses to make garments of skins for Adam and Eve. God takes care of their shame and guilt. What does this say about God?

God created the world so that God's creatures would live in it on God's terms, not our own. Bruggeman again, 'The destiny of the human is to live in God's world, not a world of his/her own making.' (Ibid. Pg 40)

When we mis-trust God's commands or God's promises, then we walk out onto a shaky limb where there might be some lovely looking fruit. But God has already provided lovely fruit and furthermore knows the exact nutrition content and how much we need and all of that!

So why do we mis-trust God? We want power. We want to look good. We listen to other voices, before the voice of our creator.

I would change the character trait at the top of the green sheet. Yes, neither the woman or the man took responsibility for their own actions. But more so, they didn't trust God.

This story is often called “The Fall”. But for the original authors, who aren’t concerned with “sin”, it’s not a Fall. But it certainly is a falling out. Or a falling apart. That brothers and sisters in Christ is the Law.

Here is the Good News. God’s character didn’t allow Adam or Eve to die that day. God didn’t allow them to live on in breezy girdles made of leaves. God did keep the relationship, changed as it was. God made them clothes. God made them clothes.

What of us? It seems to me that we keep trying to live in God’s world on our own terms, instead of God’s terms. How well are we doing at our vocation of tilling and keeping the Earth Garden? How well are we doing at listening to God’s voice, before the serpents of the world?

Things to ponder...people of faith. But remember, God made them clothes. Amen.