

# **Sermon Text for June 7, 2015**

*by Rev. Robert K. Bronkema*

Romans 5:12-17, Genesis 3:1-21

“Getting up after the fall”

I don't know if you have been following the saga of the Duggar family... It is not a happy story but has made headlines because they are a bit of a celebrity family with 19 kids with their own TV show. One of the boys it was discovered was molesting a number of the daughters when they were very young and it just came out now. The latest reaction was one of the family not really following a contrite line of reasoning, but rather they cast blame on those looking to persecute them for their Christian belief, and now casting blame on those illegally leaking the information of the molestation.

We have all fallen into that trap of doing something against God's will, getting caught or getting punished and then looking for excuses or looking for someone else to blame for what we did. We find that happening with our children, how we look for excuses for why they don't live up to what we hope for them to live up to.

It is so human, since the creation of man and woman to blame someone for things that happen in life. Adam did it and he started it off. But ultimately blame only seems to keep us down when we fall. It only serves to prevent us from getting back up and moving on and moving closer to the Lord. Let's look at Genesis 3 and see how we were almost kept by blame, from getting up after the fall.

If you want to know how to get up after a fall, it is usually helpful to figure out how you actually fell in the first place. Today we have just read the classic Scripture from Genesis that tells us about the fall of humanity, the day that sin entered the world and became a part of us. I came across some quotes that speak to evil and sin and how we are participants in the fall, listen:

We've all heard in the Lord's prayer: Lead me not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. What about Rita Mae Brown who said: Lead me not into temptation. I can find the way myself. Elbert Hubbard said “Men are not punished for their sins but by them.” The classic we know from Alexander Pope “To err is human, to forgive divine” but what about Mae West who said To err is human – but it feels divine.

We have been on an exciting journey through creation. God is finished creating, and now God has given us an opportunity to live out our own life in relationship with

Him. Up to now we have had a story of trust and obedience, today in chapter three it sounds more like crime and punishment.

We begin the chapter with Eve, good old Eve, who unjustly has been blamed for what happens in this story. Did you ever notice that after the whole conversation she takes the apple and gives it to the man who was right there beside her. What was he doing during the whole conversation that took place. She is confronted by the serpent who asks her questions about God. This is the very first theological debate that has ever been recorded. But guess who won? The serpent calls into question the commandment that God gave to the man and the woman. What Eve ends up doing is practicing theology instead of plain and simple obedience. How often do we find ourselves not wanting to obey the word of God and trying to theologize away instead of obeying. Eve was able to rationalize her actions because after all the tree was good for food, it was pretty, and it made you smart. Basically the tree was charming and the snake was charming so it appealed to her. The sin that was committed is one that continues to be committed today day in and day out. We find ways in which to skirt God's commandments if they suit our needs or allow us to pursue our desires and what we understand to be the way of things.

It has been said that Adam and Eve in their disobedience traded the truth for charm. What a dangerous notion. We are surrounded every day by appealing, charming possibilities that look good and feel good so they must be good, right? Over time we have been charmed by society as Adam and Eve were charmed by the very charming or crafty snake to the point where we think we can make up our own morality. Who needs the truth, drab dull centuries old truth when we can make up our own and live by it and call it morality? We can not trade truth for charm because truth is eternal.

It is always interesting to me how those who would argue that this modern way of worship is not legitimate because it is new and superficial and based upon our emotions. But then when faced with a new and diametrically opposite way of life from the historic teaching of the church it is not a problem, because our experience tells us otherwise. I hate to be nebulous on this point, but I think you know what I mean.

Why is it that moral thinking is not as highly valued as rational thinking? This is what happened to Eve. She was able to think herself out of obedience to God. Why is it that an abstinent teenager is considered naïve while one who practices "safe-sex" is mature and well adjusted? Adjusted to what is our question. Since the fall we have

chosen, all of us, to disobey God by allowing the truth to be superseded by the charm of being able to think up and create our own morality, our own theology, our own ways of life which supersede God's commands because they make sense to us. When we are told that we can be like God, make our own rules, that is too tempting. Let us never forget as Emerson once said, character exceeds intelligence in a person.

Once humanity sins we switch to one of the most beautiful and peaceful scenes in all of Scripture. We find God walking in the garden enjoying the evening breeze. Can't you just picture that? Even in the face of this beautiful scene we know that God is aware of the disobedience. God calls out into the peaceful evening air: "Where are you?" What a piercing, appropriate question. "Where are you?" One of the most panicked feelings that a parent can have is when they feel that their child is lost. Nothing else matters, the question of where are you fills the air and the parents soul. Oh, we've never lost any of the kids but there have been times when we asked each other where's Rachel or Naomi, and there is that sick feeling. You know what it's like. Like a father who is calling to a child who has run away or is not to be found God calls out "Where are you?"

Adam answers God. His answer is classic. I heard the sound of you, I was afraid, I was naked, I hid myself. In their sin they immediately focused on themselves. In sin we tend to want to look out for number one and nothing else really matters. Adam reflects this selfish tendency. But instead, trust in God means being able to turn from the I of Adam to the Thou of God.

Adam doesn't stay with that strategy very long because he then goes from trying to protect himself and his disobedience to turning to blame. You realize that there are not too many people around when all of this is taking place. Adam states the woman that you gave to me, she gave the fruit to me. Adam seems to cover all the bases by blaming everyone including God. The woman that you gave to me. She in turn tries to blame the snake.

How classically human, and how you and me. We try to blame the changing times and the society and the culture for how we fall short. But in the long run we know that we have nobody to blame but ourselves. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God does in fact punish Adam and Eve for their sin. They were banned from the garden. You can imagine Eve looking at Adam as they are leaving the garden and saying, you know my dear, we live in an age of transition.

I was going to end the Scripture today at verse 20. But then I found a remnant of joy and hope in this account. I wanted to provide some hope for how we can get up once we have fallen.

How do we turn our lives around when sin has been such a present and heavy part of our lives? We find God in verse 21 stooping down, recreating, giving them again, a second chance. What did God do in verse 21? And the Lord God made garments of skin and clothed them. He told them listen, you've had a bad start, but get up, pull yourself together, pull up your britches, wipe your nose, and move on in communion with me. Doesn't it remind you of the adulterous woman caught in the act of adultery? Nobody threw a stone at her, Jesus helps her up and tells us to go on and sin no more.

In Romans we see that it is Christ who lifts us out of our sinful lives. It is Christ who loves us so that even our disobedience to God is forgiven. If sin came into this world and affected all of us because of one man, don't you think that Jesus by becoming one of us has made us right before God so much more than Adam could ever have made us wrong?

Sin came into this world through Adam, but grace and forgiveness through Christ. You see there is no security apart from the reality of God. Even as sinners God clothes us with his righteousness just as he clothed Adam and Eve with his own hands. Through Christ we are able to turn the I of Adam to the Thou of God. Rejoice that we are able to get up after the fall because of God's love for us in Christ. Amen.