

Sermon Text for August 8, 2021

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Romans 5:12-14, Genesis 3:1-13

“The story of Adam and Eve”

We always leave up the decorations for VBS just so that you are able to somewhat experience what took place over this past week. It was truly amazing, and it was especially so because of what we have all been through in this past year and a half. To have close to 100 kids and 50 volunteers celebrate the love of Jesus together is powerful. It is truly VBS in all of its glory. There are so many stories that we could tell of kids who were open to the Gospel of Jesus Christ especially on the day that we spoke about the resurrection.

On Thursday I got a phone call from the church and there was a young woman who was here to see me. I had never met her so I came right over. She was very emotional and she said that she had done so much wrong and bad in her life that she didn't know how to start over again, she felt like she needed to apologize to the world. So I asked her who were some people and she mentioned a name of someone that I knew, so I called him and he came over and she apologized to him and then took a step to start over again in her life.

It is so easy for me, and I am guilty of this, I know, to just underline and highlight the good news. VBS was amazing and everything is perfect and back to normal again, when in the midst of our life today we find ourselves in the midst of sin that needs to be addressed and handled. We can't just give the good news without first addressing the presence of sin and the need for redemption.

Today we are looking at the story of Adam and Eve, and frankly we see that it is a story of sin and its repercussions. Sin manifests itself as a choice on our part to disobey God rather than to obey God. We don't always talk about sin behind this pulpit, but today we can't avoid it because Adam and Eve were not able to avoid it, wouldn't that have been nice? Things would have been very different if they had. Let's read our story for today.

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Our first reading for today may have seemed a bit confusing and convoluted. There is a term that is used in theological circles and that is the term original sin. It is a term that is used especially in this story of Adam and Eve a story that is commonly referred to as “The fall”. Here is my favorite depiction of the fall, it is by Michelangelo and it is in the Sistine chapel in one of

the rooms leading up to the chapel itself. Our modern understanding of the fall and specifically of original sin comes from vs.12 of what we read in Romans 5. Listen to it again.

Believe it or not this is a highly controversial verse and theologians from Augustine to Hyppo to Luther and Calvin each had a take on what this verse means and specifically what this verse means in light of what we call original sin. Some take the stance that we are actually born in sin and with sin a part of our nature. But Calvin and others argued that if we are made and created and born in the image of God then sin cannot be a part of our original nature, but rather it has to be present somehow else.

Calvin said that there is a hereditary part of our nature that has a propensity for sin. That means that we are born with an inevitable drive to sin, and yet our nature is not sinful from birth. So we are not born sinful, but rather we are born with a propensity for sin. Like a crack baby or a child born from a mom who is an alcoholic, our body desires and our mind learns to desire that which is destructive over and against that which is of God.

Each one of us is born with a propensity for sin and that sin will manifest itself differently in all of us. Some of us struggle with greed, some with pride, some with uncontrolled sexual passion, some with an inability to tell the truth. What that leads to is what we find in vs.12 that all will sin and fall short of the glory of God (3:23), and the price of that sin is death (6:23) as we read in vs.14.

Paul himself uses this story of Adam and Eve that we are looking at today, to describe a theme that runs throughout the Bible and runs into the 21st century that centers around our sin. What this theme is found in the story of Adam and Eve. God provides all that we need and we are never satisfied with what God has provided. Because of our dissatisfaction we sin and disobey God in order to fulfill our desires which ultimately lead to destruction.

Let's look at the story of Adam and Eve. Wouldn't it be nice if life were what it was like for Adam and Eve in the garden, I mean they had it good. It was one day after another of a continual VBS. At 6 in the evening when the cool evening breeze kicked up, because remember the garden of Eden is thought to be somewhere in Iraq and it is really hot there, but at 6 the music started and they both got to go on a walk with God. It was a good life, it was the type of life that God wanted for us, but for us it just wasn't good enough, there had to be more.

We are introduced to the serpent in the first verse that we read in this story. The serpent is described as being crafty, which in Hebrew can simply mean smart, intelligent. Notice what is not mentioned about the serpent anywhere in this Scripture. As you read through this you did

not hear any mention of sin. Isn't it ironic that the story that gives us the theory of original sin doesn't even mention sin? There is also no mention of the devil in this story at all. We always assume that the serpent is the devil or satan, but nowhere in this story is that attributed to him. It is just a really smart animal. There is also no mention of an apple. What is described is simply as fruit that looked really yummy. I know, all of your childhood memories gone out the window. Kind of like when you learned that the wise men never really visited the stable, but rather saw Jesus in a house.

What we do know is that the serpent in his conversation is laying the foundation of the deception. He begins by sowing doubt by asking a question to the woman. You can't eat any fruit? No, we can eat all the fruit that we want, except for that one, we can't even touch that one or else we will die. Yeah, that's not going to happen, God is a great guy, you know gives you all this fruit to eat, but that one, well, if you eat that one then you will be just like him. He doesn't want to give up that status of being, well, God, knowing that you can be just like him.

That's how sin manifests itself today as well. There is always a bit of truth to lead us to a place where we think we want to end up either in our personal lives or in other aspects of our lives. Conspiracy theories always begin with a grain of truth but then it takes you to the ridiculous which is able to be believed because of that grain of truth that sowed itself in your mind and leaves you with a touch of doubt.

You can make a mistake and it isn't a sin. You can add numbers incorrectly and that is a mistake, but it isn't a sin. But you may also listen to the devil for advice or go to a medium which is a mistake, but it is also a sin because it is disobeying God. What Adam and Eve did was a mistake, a simple mistake, but it was sin. Once they sinned they tried to cover it up and normalize it and pretend that it wasn't that big of a deal, let's just cover things up a bit and maybe God won't notice.

Mistakes can kill people, even if they aren't sin. Washing the chickens. That wasn't a sin, but it could have had an impact on people.

But we try to normalize the sin that takes place around us and pretend that it wasn't that big of a deal. It was like any other day that tourists would come and visit as our democracy hangs in the balance. It is just one peek at pornography as our marriage finds itself on the brink. It is just a few dollars that I deserve anyway as our job is at risk. Whatever excuses we come up with to justify our sin, whatever fig leaves we might find to sew together to try to make things

right are never enough. When we disobey God we sin and that sin will lead not only to death but also to the destruction of that which God has gifted to us, our life, our family.

Both Adam and Eve when God comes into the garden for his daily walk hide and fear manifests itself for the first time in Scripture. When Adam answers and says I was afraid, it is the same response that both Abraham gives when approached by God, and also Isaac when he is approached by God. All those who cannot trust the goodness of God and submit to his wise passion.

The problem isn't that Adam and Eve sought freedom, but rather that they sought autonomous freedom. We doubt God's providence and control so we create false narratives that put in place our own desires. When it comes to light what we have done, and it will come to light, then our next step is to blame others for our sin. The woman that you gave me. The serpent made me do it. It is not difficult to obey God if we would just put our desires in the hands of God. We read in Deuteronomy 30:11 when Moses is explaining God's commandments here is what he says:

Brothers and sisters, sin should never be trivialized, no matter how it manifests itself. It is a big deal because it is what separates us from God. It is because of our sin, not Adam's, that we are in need of a Savior, a Savior who was without sin, and yet was crucified for our sin. While we are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ, our sin still has repercussions. May God bless us and keep us as we look to live our lives following the loving commandments of our Savior. Amen.