

CcUMC

"Free Gift"

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Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-7, Rom. 5:12-19

THEME: The Gift of the Cross

In each of the three years of lectionary readings for Lent, Old Testament readings rehearse ancient Israel's historical relationship with God. In Year A, the first reading relates the creation of man, Adam's sin and the fall. The reading from the letters relates Paul's contrast between the first Adam and, Christ, the second Adam.

The gospel readings for years A, B and C of the lectionary all share the temptation of Christ as recounted by Matt., Mark and Luke.

As we have shared about the Devil's three attempts to tempt Jesus in 2008, it seemed appropriate to look at temptation from the perspective of the first Adam today.

The Bible says, "..all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23) We all need God's provision for salvation.

I. ADAM DESIRED TO BE LIKE GOD

- A. The creature desired equality with the Creator... for when they saw the Tree was to be desired, that its fruit would make one wise and they would become “as gods,” they ate.
- B. Interesting that someone would believe they could become divine by the ordinary act of eating.
- C. So the first sin was to question God’s Word concerning *The Judgement*. Adam and Eve believed the serpent who said, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God...” (3:4-5).
- D. They believe a lesser creature, a serpent, over the instruction of Almighty God. People still do that today... they believe someone else’s interpretation of God’s Word instead of God’s Word itself.
- E. People, including Biblical Scholars, cast doubt about the Bible on every scale:
 - 1. Some say Adam is a myth, but the Bible traces the lineage of Christ to him.

2. Scientists say Noah's flood was a local event, but the great flood is in the history of many civilizations and archaeology.
 3. Historians claim the Exodus of Israel was impossible through the Red Sea, but cannot account for the defeat of an army of Egypt by unarmed slaves.
 4. Biblical critics say the miracles of Jesus are physically impossible, but cannot explain why the people would follow him or the radical transformation of the world because of his death/resurrection.
 5. The second Adam, Jesus Christ saw the fulfillment of God's Word concerning every prophecy of the Messiah.
- F. The Bible says of Jesus, "*not counting equality with God a thing to be grasped, Christ emptied or humbled himself, taking the form of a slave...became obedient to death...even a cross!*" (Ph.2:6-8)

II. THE FIRST ADAM DISOBEYED GOD

- A. God gave man life (dirt with breath in it)

- B. He set him in paradise (all needs met, no disease, predators or death); “not enough” (*Repeat: R*)
- C. God gave him a mate (“bone of my bones”) *R*
- D. The Divine Creator walked with them. *R*
- E. They had freedom (all this, just don’t..) *R*
- F. They had work (not a curse but purpose)
- G. ADAM, HAVE ALL THIS, just do not... *R*
- H. As Derek Kidner wrote, “they chose their own impressions over God’s instruction.”¹
They set their goals over God’s offer of life with Him that would have gone on forever. Death was not a factor in Eden.

III. ADAM’S DECISION: DEATH TO US ALL

- A. Most of us never see the far-reaching effects of our sins until after the fact.
- B. Few of us stop to consider, what may be some of the results of my actions / words?
- C. The majority of us wish we could undo something in our past that resulted in the pain and suffering of others.
- D. The affects of their Sin was immediate:

¹ Derek Kidner, Genesis, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary, p. 68.

1. Their eyes were opened
 2. They were ashamed (tried to cover up, fig leaves?? How pathetic!)
 3. Fear came on them
 4. They hid
 5. Each refused to repent (blamed another)
 6. God came looking for them (still does)
 7. The consequences of sin came upon them (more than God's curse); *The Judgement* is real!
- E. The consequence of the original sin has affected us all, to be sure; but in truth,
- F. We have all sinned & thereby participate in the sins of Adam, according to Paul.
- G. But death came to Adam, and we all get to participate in death because we all sin.

ILLUST. *“When Albert Einstein published his theory of relativity, it is said there were only twelve men who were intelligent enough to understand its implications. Forty years later the number had risen to millions as the horror of Hiroshima unfolded.*

Relatively few could see great significance in $E=mc^2$ but even fewer failed to understand that through one man the race had been ushered into the atomic age...

There was no going back and there were no exceptions, because in Einstein atomic reality had come upon all men. When a man introduces something new into human experience, the race will always be left to live with the consequences. So when sin entered the life of a man, it also entered the experience of a race as yet unborn.”²

H. One of the first Bible verses my daughter learned, Numbers 32:23, *“Be sure you sins will find you out.”*

IV. CHRIST’S DEATH: LIFE TO BELIEVER

Frederick Buechner, in his work, *Listening to Your Life*³, wrote this observation through the insight of modern medicine.

² D. Stuart Briscoe, *The Communicator’s Commentary: Romans*, p. 121.

³ Harper San Francisco, 1992.

"After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God came strolling through the cool of the day and asked them two questions: 'Where are you?' and 'What is this that you have done?'"

Psychotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and the like have been asking the same ones ever since.

"Where are you?" lays bare the present. They are in hiding, that's where they are. What is it they want to hide? From whom do they want to hide it? Why are they so unhappy with things as they are that they are trying to conceal it from the world by hiding, and from themselves by covering their nakedness with aprons?

"What is this that you have done?" lays bare the past. What did they do to get this way? What did they hope would happen by doing it? What did they fear would happen? What did the serpent do? What was it that made them so ashamed?

(continued)

"God is described as cursing them then, but in view of his actions at the end of the story and right on through the end of the New Testament, it seems less a matter of vindictively inflicting them with the consequences than of honestly confronting them with the consequences. Because of who they are and what they have done, this is the result. There is no undoing it. There is no going back to the garden.

"But then comes the end of the story where God with his own hands makes them garments of skins and clothes them. It is the most moving part of the story. They can't go back, but they can go forward clothed in a new way-- clothed, that is, not in the sense of having their old defenses again behind which to hide who they are and what they have done but in the sense of having a new understanding of who they are and new strength to draw on for what lies before them to do now.

"Many therapists wouldn't touch biblical teachings with a ten-foot pole, but in their own way, and at their best, they are often following them."

- A. The Apostle Paul says, "One man's sin brought death upon us all.."
- B. And [in contrast], if the consequence is so great to us all, **THEN** the result of the Second Adam's grace through the cross is of even **GREATER EFFECT!** What Christ did has a more far-reaching affect to all who believe, who call upon his name.
- C. We cry out to God in our sinful state and broken lives, "Where are You?" Before the cry has left our minds or lips, we know God is here. God has been waiting to hear our confession, our call upon His name. We have been hiding from Him.
- D. God says, "What have you done?" and we know, He knows. Our sins are not hidden from Him. We may have been in the dark, but God is light and "in Him there is no darkness at all."

- E. And God pronounces the consequence: You have sinned and the penalty is death; but in your stead my Son will pay the price for you. Christ, the Messiah, Jesus “*will save His people from the sins.*” (Matthew 1:21).
- F. And we ask, “God, what have you done?” God says, “By my grace I have paid the price, have set you free from sin and death, and made a covenant to be Your God and King.” “I have ordained this from the foundations of the world and have been reconciling you to myself through Christ Jesus, my Son.”
- G. God says, “Sin is costly... It will always cause me pain and cause you to die inside.” “Be Holy, because I am Holy.”
- H. Adam took and ate to his and our pain.
- I. God, in Christ the second Adam, now says, “Take and eat... this is my body given for you that you may live, forever, with Me.”

Amen.