

1st Sunday in Lent
March 5, 2017

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Mount Olive Lutheran Church

Theme: Hide and Seek
Text: **Genesis 3:1-15**

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴ “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all the livestock

and all the wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity

between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he will crush your head,

and you will strike his heel.”

The Word of God we will focus on this morning is the 1st Lesson from Genesis chapter 3. Let’s begin with prayer:

*Lord Jesus, crush for me the serpent's head
That, set free from doubt and dread,
I may cling to you in faith,
Safely kept through life and death. Amen.*
(Christian Worship 28 vs. 5)

This past Wednesday we began what is known in the Christian church as the season of Lent. Did you know that Lent is just a shortened version of an Old English word that means “Spring-time”? I found that a little ironic as I walked through half a foot of snow to church on Ash Wednesday... But the purpose of this season of the church year really has nothing to do with the season of the calendar year... rather it's during this time that the Christian church ponders the suffering and death of Jesus and marvels at what he was willing to endure to remove the punishment of hell we deserve through his death on the cross where he took our place under God's wrath. We focus on this especially in our mid-week services (Wednesday's at 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. - - Supper beginning at 4:30... sorry, had to get the plug in...).

But during this season of the Church year, we also take time, on each weekend, to remember some of the ways Jesus lived a perfect life in our place, earning for us a perfect track record before God when it comes to defeating the devil's temptations. We see a great example of this today in the Gospel where Jesus turned back the temptations of the devil with God's Word and perfectly resisted the lies of Satan... lies that we fall for every day.

In our sermon this morning we're going to look at the Bible's account of the first people who ever fell for the devil's lies... our first parents, Adam and Eve... the first people God created, and sadly, the first people who fell into sin. But as we look at this list of sad and sinful “firsts” we'll also get to hear the very first gospel promise God ever made, a promise which makes all the difference in our own battles with sin and temptation.

Our sermon text picks up right after the account of creation. God had made a perfect world filled with beauty and wonder. And in the middle of this paradise he placed Adam and Eve, the first humans, creatures that were created to live in perfect joy and fellowship with God. But the perfection didn't last. One of God's holy angels, used the free will God had given to rebel against God and seek glory and power for himself apart from God. But he was of course no match for God... and so he lost his position in heaven and was condemned.

And now Satan was bent on destroying the crown of God's creation and bringing them under the same condemnation. He appeared in the form of a snake, and went to find Adam and Eve... and it's here that our sermon text picks up the account:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1).

We know this was no ordinary serpent... this was Satan himself. And as we look at his approach to tempting Eve here we'll see two basic temptations that he uses... temptations that he

continues to use in every generation, even with us today. Take a look at this first verse. Do you see his approach? First he tries to get Eve to doubt God's Word. **"Did God really say...?"** For Eve, he questioned whether or not God had told them they could not eat from any tree in the garden of Eden. This was of course a deception already, a twisting of God's Word... and Eve, initially, answered it very well.

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" (Genesis 3:2-3).

God never told them they could not eat from any of the trees, in fact, he had given them all the tree to eat from... all but one. Eve rightly knew that God had reserved one tree for them to steer clear of. This tree of the knowledge of good and evil would be the way Adam and Eve could worship and honor God. They happily obeyed his will and showed their trust in him and his Word by avoiding this tree.

But that was the very thing Satan wanted them to doubt... And so after questioning God's Word he now turns up the heat and flat out calls God a liar. **"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** (Genesis 3:4-5). And so what began as an attempt to get Eve to doubt God's Word, now shifted into an attempt to get Eve to doubt God's goodness. These are the two approaches Satan used on Eve and still uses on us today. If Satan can get us to doubt God's Word, or doubt God's goodness, he can get us to sin. And sadly, that's exactly what happened to Eve.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (Genesis 3:6).

Good... pleasing... desirable... that's what Satan made sin and unbelief look like to Eve. And she fell for it... she fell into sin. And Adam, who was there with her, silent when he should have been speaking up all along, fell right along with her. And the result of the fall was exactly what God had told them it would be. They died. No, not physically, not right away anyways, but spiritually they were dead. They did not trust God. And we see this unbelief on display as they now find they are ashamed of their bodies and cover them up. We see this as they hide from God when he comes looking for them. Doubt, shame, fear... this is what their relationship with God and each other had turned into.

One of the games my kids like to play is hide and seek. And even though we've been living in the same house for almost five years they still seem to find new and inventive ways to hide from each other... Now that might be a fun game to play with your friends and family... but it is a pretty scary game when we start playing it with God.

Do you ever find yourself repeating the sins of your first parents? Do you doubt God's Word...? Do you start to wonder if he's just holding out on you...? Satan wants us to think that... he tempts us to believe that God's Word is not clear... or not worth listening to regularly... he

tempts us to disregard the parts of God's Word that confront our sin... he tempts us to think that we know better than God what will truly make us happy, bring us pleasure, keep us safe... but it's all a lie. And often when we fall for his lies we do the same thing Adam and Eve did. We hide.

We excuse or cover up our sin... we try to hide it from those around us... hoping that no one will ever know the ugly truth about who we really are. But this game of hiding doesn't work with God. He already knows all we've done... all we'll ever do... no, as Adam and Eve discovered... as we find out time and again, there is no hiding from God... this should not come as a surprise... however, what happens next in this "game" does come as a bit of a shock.

After doubting his Word, doubting his goodness, and hiding from God... God still loved them. God did not hide his face from them... God did not wipe them from the face of the earth and start over... I mean, that's what I would have done... but not God. No he sought out Adam and Eve... and he stepped right into the mess they had created.

The LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Genesis 3:9-13).

It's pretty amazing to see God's patience and grace here isn't it? God knew what they had done. He knew where they were. He knew why they were hiding. But that didn't stop him from taking the time to call them to repentance. He asked the questions not for his own benefit but for theirs. The answers they gave of course were miserable. They deflected blame to each other, to the devil, even to God... sin had done its work.

And isn't that what we find in our lives too? When I sin and a fellow Christian calls me out on it, I rarely, if ever, find my first reaction to be one of honest confession. I deflect... I try to turn the tables on them... I lie... I go into cover up mode... I make excuses... and it is all too clear that sin has done its work on me.

But wherever sin is at work on me or in me... God is at work too. We saw God's grace when he sought out Adam and Eve, questioned them, confronted them... but best of all we saw God's grace when he made them a promise. After their failure, their lies, their excuses... God does not do what we might expect... he doesn't drop the hammer and destroy them... to be sure there would be consequences for sin, just as there are today when we sin... but before he announced those he made a promise to undo the work of Satan and the sin he had brought into this world. God made the very first promise of Savior as he told our enemy the devil:

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:14-15).

And as Adam and Eve heard this good news their hearts were changed. Though they had lost perfection, they had not been lost forever. God brought them back to faith in him. He restored their hope of eternal life. He removed the enmity, the hostility, that existed between them and him and placed it where it belonged, between them and Satan. And he gave them this comfort through the promise of the One who would come from God and be born of the seed of woman... to crush Satan and his work underneath his feet.

And Satan would be no match for this champion. We saw it in the Gospel reading as Jesus held firm to God's Word in the face of Satan's temptations. But it was not just there in the wilderness where Jesus overcame temptation for us... he did it every day of his life. The Bible tells us that **[Jesus was] tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. (Hebrews 4:15).** Satan was no match for Jesus... with every victory Jesus landed another blow to Satan's head... until finally at the cross, Christ crushed our enemy once and for all, as he took the penalty of hell – eternal suffering and separation from God – he took that on himself and suffered it all in time to save us. And yes this would hurt Jesus... but it would not defeat him. In the end it would only be like a blow to his heel. He would rise from death and leave no doubt about his crushing victory over Satan. Jesus would do exactly what he came to do... exactly what God had promised Adam and Eve he would do. As Scripture tells us: **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. (1 John 3:8).**

Brothers and sisters, as you walk this Lenten season on the journey to the cross, don't lose sight of the many victories Jesus won along the way for you. See his perfect trust in the Word... his perfect record in the battle with the devil... see his perfect life lived for you and offered up in death for you... and know that this is what God sees when he looks on you now. There is no reason to hide, no reason to doubt... Christ has won the victory. May you find in him the courage to battle Satan's lies... the power to overcome them... the forgiveness when you fail... and the strength to rise again filled with unwavering hope in God and his faithful promises. Amen.