

Theme: And so it was

And so it was that God completed heaven and earth in all their vast array declaring them to be, “Very good.” In that goodness, God gave the man made in his image the task of naming the animals. And so it was as he named the animals that the man came to understand that even though the place God made was totally good in every way, he was alone; there wasn’t another one like him, made in God’s image. God brought woman into the world from a rib of the man and so it was that male and female were created in God’s image and these first two were united together. Appreciating this so much, the man declared them to one, down to the very core.

And so it was that in this goodness the Lord God made a Garden with trees for the woman and the man to eat of except the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when they ate of it, they would surely die. And that’s how it was. Man and woman, Adam and Eve, living in the Garden with God, coming to understand the creation he made and gave them to care for, taking walks, hanging out, talking, talking to snakes. That last part is abnormal and was then also. Adam named all the creatures and most likely didn’t converse with a single one.

And so it was that Eve came to talk with a creature more cunning than all the others in the Garden. Bear that in mind when thinking about his approach, his striking up of the conversation with the woman, “*Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’*” Of course God didn’t say that! But dismissing an obviously false premise is more easily said than done. The cunning serpent knows this. Eve saw right through it, “Of course we can eat from any tree!” What’s left on the table by being deliberately not asked about by the serpent? The consequence. It’s on Eve’s mind though, she says of the tree in the middle of the Garden, “*And you must not touch it, or you will die.*” Eve understood that God didn’t want them to eat it which involves touching it first. Her answer set the stage for the cunning deceiver to counter. “*You will not certainly die,*” he retorted. And so it was that the serpent revealed himself to be the Adversary, the one diametrically opposed to God, God’s will, and God’s people.

“You will not,” this brazen contradiction of God should have been shocking to hear! Were they reeling from it when the serpent added, “*For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*”? Not only was the fruit appetizing, but with this word of clarification from a talking snake about what God had said, well, now it’s doubly beneficial! It’s the same still, isn’t it? What creates in a person an urge strong enough for them to do something which so clearly flies in the face of what God has said? The individual and the power of suggestion. We want what we want which is reinforced by the same adversarial, yet welcome, word of, “You will be...” and then supply whatever it is for you. Happy. Relieved. Vindicated. Who knows?! He also says, “You will not...get caught, in trouble...” We know what God’s said is good for us. We know when we hear the opposite. We

also know that sometimes we don't want to resist the bogus premises of the Deceiver. We all know how strong, or more sadly, how not strong, that urge from within has to be for us to do what we've determined is better for us than what God said.

Eve ate. Adam ate. And so it was that immediate and powerful regret came to be known along with, shame, guilt, and fear. Adam and Eve, now in a panic, knew they were naked, exposed and felt for the first time vulnerable so they made clothes out of leaves to cover up. They also concealed themselves from God. For the first time, instead of being delighted at God's presence and walking with him, Adam hid in fear. God looked, not that he needed to, and found. God asked a question that strikes us as backward, "Why are you wearing clothes? Who told you you need them? Adam, what happened?" The man and the woman had fallen and lost the image of God in which they were made. Now in them it's easy to see our image. We see deflection, not admitting, but blaming others for our actions. All things sadly familiar and at which we're expert, but we see them first in Adam. In panic and fear at what would happen if he admitted it directly he said, "*The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.*" In other words, "You want an explanation God? Here it is, this is the woman's fault. You put her here, it's your fault I did this." There's nothing new under the sun. And so it was, like, yesterday for us, that all the same deflections and blames were made instead of admitting to the thing outright. "I only got drunk because they invited me out." God's not buying that excuse, so don't try to sell it to him. "I only looked because he/she wore..." What's Jesus say about that excuse? To rip your eye out! "I only gossiped because..." But what does gossip do if not destroy relationships? What does God do with us when we offer these excuses? The same thing he did way back when with Adam, he is gracious. That's why God called out to and sought them in the first place! To assure them in their fear that he loved them. With forbearance, God asked Eve for explanation, "*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*" she said. Deflection, shifting of blame, "I did it, but only because..."

And so it was that the grace of God toward sinners was revealed when his wrath came down not upon the woman and the man, but upon the serpent who asked the question, who deceived, who led away from God under the illusion of reward. "*So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, 'Cursed are you...'*" Even if the adversary and deceiver wouldn't pay homage to God, God would see to it that obeisance would be displayed. The serpent would crawl on his belly and eat dust.

What's the lasting impression from these verses? I hope it isn't, "Look how bad we messed everything up and God is angry at us." I hope it's that our Lord God in love finds people to put them right with him by grace. God needed to confront Adam and Eve about their sin and to show them how he was going to take away the fear, panic, and shame they felt in his presence – the serpent's head would be crushed. God promised that the seed of this woman would finish it. That one was born of woman, not of Eve, but a woman named Mary in a barn in Bethlehem and his

name is Jesus. He came to find and to save. And so it was, by the death of the seed of woman, the Son of Man and the Son of God, on the cross that our adversary, the deceiver, was defeated and God's grace to people was given in full, that God's saving will was accomplished. People are forgiven, declared innocent of everything because Jesus paid for it, removed the guilt, and granted his holiness. The thing which causes us to run from and hide from God, shame from our sin, is gone. Run to him! Nothing can rob us of peace and harmony with God. So it is now and so it will be forever. Amen.