

## Genesis 3 Sermon - The Fall.

### Reading - Ch3v1-13

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' 2 The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 3 but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; 5 for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,[a] knowing good and evil.' 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. 8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' 10 He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' 11 He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' 12 The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.'

#### Introduction.

Stories matter a great deal, not just as entertainment or escape, but because they allow us make sense of who we are. A few months ago there was a study of Britain's favourite books. Harry Potter took 6 of the top 10 places, which is quite something. The DaVinci Code came in at number two which is genuinely concerning. But number one? Can you guess? The Lion, the which and the wardrobe.

But there are these other stories - these more foundational stories which shape our understanding of ourselves and perhaps there is none more significant than this. Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge, the serpent.

#### We call this the Fall.

This is true mythology - It is a Theodicy - an explanation of evil and suffering. It is a story about how the world came to be as it is and a way of understanding why God allows bad things to happen.

#### Context

Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden of Eden - which means abundance. They are in a perfect relationship with God, creation and one another. But at the heart of the Garden is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What does that represent? Difficult to say, It is the Pandora's box, the things it would be better not to know. We keep some knowledge from children to sheltered from the difficult aspects of life. There are parts of life that God would protect you from, but that he cannot remove without diminishing your humanity. Knowledge is power and can be used for good and evil.

**v1 The serpent tempts** - later identified with Satan but not here. Crafty is an interesting word. Cunning. He raises questions. But of course they are devious questions. Not with good intent. v4 "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God." And herein lies the nature of rebellion. The temptation to usurp God.

v3 *You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.* Why ring fence the rule like that? The solution to lawbreaking is not stricter rules, it is trust in the lawmaker.

v6. Why Eve? She wasn't present when the rule was given. But note v6 - Adam was with her. If her failure was transgression, his was omission.

#### v7 The consequence of eating the tree.

It wasn't what you might think. There was no darkened skies or crash of thunder. Just a slow dawning of knowledge. And the first thing they knew was shame. They felt guilt. They were fearful of getting caught. And that is an almost universal human condition.

#### The foundational experience of humanity is shame.

It is amazing how shameful people are. Children, anyone meeting a vicar. Healthy human beings will struggle with shame. Note there is not something especially wrong with you, you are no different to anyone else. You are going to struggle with shame all your life. And you can't help but see the parallel with children, who start off so innocent and you don't want it to come to an end.

The other more significant consequence is a breakdown of those three relationships we talked last week.

- 1) **Breakdown of relationship with God.** v8-11. Fear. They hid. There is a right fear of God and a wrong fear of God. They were afraid because of what they had done. Guilt is not created by God, or by the church - we feel guilty. they assume an angry Vengeful god. Adam **Blames God** "the woman you put here with me". We are morally and emotionally alienated from God. That pain and alienation defines our human experience.
- 2) **Breakdown of relationship with Creation.** v23 They become exiles. Death comes into the world. Death takes the form of decay - it is at work in us from the beginning. As Paul puts it 'Creation is in bondage to decay' Work becomes toil. v17 'cursed is the ground because of you'. You will plant crops and thorns and thistles will grow up instead
- 3) **Breakdown of relationship with others.** Shame and guilt conflict and blame do immeasurable damage to our relationships. Relationships - should be the foundation of community, start to go bad. v16 The relationship which was about love and service becomes about rules and duty.

#### Conclusion

It is a tragic story, and poignant because we see the origins of all our own ills in it. We need to tell this story rather than pretend we still live in Eden. Comfort to those who suffer these consequences. Our understanding of our human experience should reflect this story.

Some good news? Not much, but perhaps to say - the image of God and the goodness of creation are not lost completely. And we catch glimpses of that still. Innocence and beauty in the world point to what we have lost. There are moments when it still seems that we glimpse Eden. And one day that will be the case again when creation is restored.

And second, there is a moment in v21 where God provides covering for them, from the skin of an animal, and that might just be a pointer to another covering for sin through sacrifice that will be the beginning of the redemption of all things.