

Sermon: 2020/03/01 (1st Sunday in Lent) - Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; &, Matthew 4:1-11_BTR

[Invite children to the front. Glossy, red apple; rubber snake, candy-bar & kitchen-knife.]

The Bible describes a couple - called, Adam and Eve - who lived in a garden *full* of flourishing fruit trees.

Everything that they needed was *easily* obtainable - God had provided it *all*.

But He had also made something in the garden, which was *just* for Him: there was a *single* tree - out of all the *thousands and thousands* - at the very center of the garden.

A tree of special knowledge.

And He asked them to respect this *one* rule.

Well, [place rubber snake on shoulder] the serpent came and convinced the couple to ignore what God had said, and they started to eat from the tree [bite apple], which disappointed God very deeply.

And we face the same dilemma:

Even though most of us here are *extremely* lucky, and already enjoy much, *much* more than the bare necessities for a dignified life - thanks to the generosity of God - we find ourselves wanting even more, *including* things that actually no good for us: [knife, matches, etc.].

Let's pray:

Father God, ..., in Jesus' name, amen.

[Dismiss children.]

You know, it *really* doesn't matter whether you think the early chapters of *Genesis* form a historical record or not.

Many, *many* serious biblical scholars - *evangelical ones at that*, who *sincerely* regard the Holy Scriptures as a definitive, unique, *inspired*, authoritative text - as I do - are quite, *quite* content to see its very earliest narratives - such as this morning's - those to do with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel - as *fables*.

"Fables" that, despite not containing records of events in time and space, nevertheless express *undeniable* objective truths about facts of reality.

And one of those "undeniable objective truths about [the] facts of reality" - *foundational to everything* else that will follow in the Old Testament, *and* the New, is this:

that *to be alive* - to exist in this creation - *is* to face temptation.

Isn't that your experience?

Of yourself and every other person?

We have such *voracious* appetites!

We are like walking, bottomless pits - *holes* - and we shovel and shovel and shovel, food, sex, drink, Disney+, HBO, compliments, flattery, love, concern, "likes," "shares" - and yet we *never* fill up.

Not completely; only for *fleeting* moments of bliss.

Down, down all those things go - we consume and consume - providing no real, lasting sense that the "pit" inside of us is getting any shallower - filled up; indeed, perhaps even the reverse?

Our appetites are like some an old, deep well or crevasse into which you throw a stone, listening for the strike, but it just disappears into the dizzying darkness.

Thus, in our (slightly) abbreviated story today, "Adam," having been placed in a beautiful, manicured garden at a time when the world was still savage and wild, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'; a beautiful, manicured garden that God *Himself* had prepared - so it must've been a real Chelsea Flower show trophy-winner(!) - one that gets all the ribbons - despite finding himself there, quite, quite undeservedly - and isn't that a perfect metaphor for the Gospel? - still finds himself unsatisfied.

The picturesque landscape begins to lose its charms - in Adam's opinion, at least; the magnificent surroundings stop *exerting* their *initial* appeal, and Adam looks for a *new* distraction - and then comes along a naked woman called Eve, with a *delicious* seeming piece of fruit.

This moment is *sooo(!)* iconic, *sooo(!)* famous - and has been, *literally*, for millennia, that I'm surprised that the old saying is "Beware Greeks bearing gifts".

Surely, *far* more apt, would be: "Beware naked chicks with fresh produce."

Right?

Something is amiss.

Like Heidi Klum dating Seal.

Or Melania and Donald.

When's the "penny going to drop"?

And it does, of course.

And, so it goes, certainly in Saint Paul's estimation, that not only is the first human couple - if that's what they are - *doomed*, by this mistake, but *all* of us with them.

And we do "all" share that same brokenness.

Who hasn't arrived on vacation somewhere stunning and tropical, only to wake up the next day feeling bored?

You've travelled half way around the world - and spent a fortune to do so, yet you *still* find yourself on Twitter; on Facebook in the hotel room.

But let's scrutinise our text more thoroughly.

Yes, at a very quick, "surface reading" of the passage in front of us, one could conclude that Adam and Eve are *merely* "archetypes." And that that is the sum of their significance.

But look closer at the Epistle extract, and you do see the Apostle saying something *more* substantive; more...mysterious.

It isn't just that we *resemble* Adam and Eve as sinners, Saint Paul informs us that we're sinners *because* of them: I quote - '...because of the one man's trespass... one's man trespass *led* to condemnation for all'.

This is about *causality*, not just similarity.

And does that seem fair to you?

Why am I to be condemned for something *Adam* did?

Well, if nothing else, his condemnable nature is unavoidably the one I find in myself, inherited by both nature and nurture from at least my immediate family if not from thousands of generations of strangers before them too.

And the problem, thought I mayn't have started it - this inherited pattern of sinfulness, strictly speaking, is that I *certainly* contribute to it.

It is the *very* thing I am; it is my humanity.

But Jesus, we see, in *Romans*, offers us a "replacement."

A 'righteous' new creation to be.

We won't *become* all that this promises to be until after the "Last Day," but we can begin to live *into* the reality of what it will be.

And we "live into it" by, as Jesus demonstrates in His wilderness wanderings, resisting those things that exacerbate what it is I wish to leave behind.

In other words, let me encourage you this Lent to ask about those things you (choose to) "consume":

Does that thing you're desiring make you more like Adam; *creaturely* and animalistic, or does it assist you to reflect the Lord?

Let's take a moment to reflect.

