

LENT 1

YEAR A

GENESIS 2:15-15, 3:1-7

ROMANS 5:12-19

MATTHEW 4:1-11

MARCH 4, 5, 2017

Wednesday evening after our Ash Wednesday service I was sitting at home watching the last few minutes of a basketball game when Jeremiah came in to ask me a question. It is a question many of us think about but seldom ask. Jeremiah asked me about evil and if there are evil spirits around us. I explained that there are evil spirits that invade the lives of some if not all of us. I also explained that we invite evil into our lives by the things we do. When we watch movies, television programs and videos that glorify evil things we have invited evil into our lives. It might not be that way in the beginning but if we continually invite evil into our minds and our lives evil has a way of taking over our lives. What seems to be innocent or harmless becomes evil within us. Jeremiah was even more curious and wanted to know how a movie or television show can make us do evil things. I then explained that it is not the movie or television that makes us become evil or do evil things but the message they might give us. The message might start out to be harmless but they gradually lure us away from what is good. If we continue to do things or go places that are not good and healthy for us we will eventually fall away from the good teachings of the Lord. We will have been lured away from the Lord's ways and into the evil ways of the world.

Genesis 3:1-3 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?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 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.'"

The man and the woman were in the Garden of Eden. They were there and they had daily communion with God. From every indication their relationship with God was good because we are told that God walked in the garden in the cool of

the day and spoke with the man and the woman. As we read in the Genesis text, they allowed themselves to be distracted by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were distracted by their boundary that would provide protection for them. They had the very best of God but they were not satisfied. They had what God was providing but they wanted more. God gave them everything they needed and everything they could enjoy. They were lacking nothing. They allowed themselves to be distracted by the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Instead of trusting God and believing God's word they sought to have what was not theirs. We call it coveting.

If we read or listen to people promoting healthy living, we know that eating fruit is a good thing. Eating our fruits and vegetables will help us live a healthier life yet the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was the tool that turned them away from God. The fruit of the tree was good fruit yet it was off limits for the man and the woman. The issue was the not fruit but Adam and Eve listening to a voice and a word other than God.

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

God calls you and me to lives of faith. We trust that God has provided for us. All we need to do is look back over the tough times in our lives to discover that God walks with us and that God is faithful. Christians know that God is faithful even when we are not. We know that God can be trusted to give us what we need. Even though we know of God's faithfulness we get distracted by the things going on in our lives. Those distractions cause us to stop trusting in God and we start to seek our own way. We start saying, “My will be done.” instead of “God's will be done.” We rely on our own knowledge and understanding instead of trusting in the God that created us and sustains us.

Adam and Eve saw the tree. It could be they kept looking at the tree and wanted to take the fruit. Maybe they planned their activities so that they would end up by the tree of knowledge of good and evil. If they looked at it long enough and thought about it hard enough they would eventually give into the temptation to eat of its fruit. The serpent was there to help persuade them but they did not need much persuading. They reasoned about that tree and they eventually decided they did not want to rely on faith in God. They wanted to do for themselves. They wanted to rely on their own knowledge and understanding instead of God.

God will not stand in the way when we want to turn away. God will continue to call us and asks us to come back but God will not force us. If we are intent on turning from the Lord God will let us go. God did not build a fence around the tree but gave them in the instruction about what would happen. God did not tie their hands or bind their minds. God told them the truth. The man and the woman ate of the fruit. They introduced sin and limitations into the world. Adam and Eve did not trust in the Lord and discovered that they could not do all things. They destroyed their relationship with God creating a great divide between themselves and God. Because they did not walk by faith in God they also found that human relationships were in trouble. The man and woman accused each other and they found that their lives were filled with chaos.

Matthew 4:3, 4 The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

You and I have the example of Jesus our Lord. At baptism Jesus was declared to be Son of God. Jesus was tempted by food, fame and fortune. He was tempted in every way you and I are tempted yet he remained faithful. He believed the word of God. When there were temptations Jesus went to the scriptures. When he was faced with popular opinion he prayed. Jesus walked by faith. When he was distracted by Satan Jesus preached a sermon to the

devil. You and I are tempted by many things but we know the word of God. We trust in God to protect us and to provide for our needs. We do not need to put the Lord to the test because we already know what God can do and we know what God will do. We pray for daily bread and we believe God gives it.

The issue was not bread or jumping down from the Temple. The issue was Satan's suggestion and the promise that Jesus could have an easier life if he just followed Satan's suggestions. Jesus did what Adam and Eve did not do. He remained obedient to the word and will of God. Jesus was perfectly obedient. In obedience he went to Jerusalem and to a cross. He died and rose again that we would have life. When tempted to side-step the cross Jesus prayed, "Not my will but yours be done." This must also be our prayer.

Bread is good. It smells good when it is in the oven or bred machine. It tastes good when it is freshly baked. Jesus would feed 5000 with bread and fish. There is a time and a place for eating bread but not when Satan suggests it. Satan will never look out for your best interests. Satan will never point you to Jesus or a relationship with God. The Devil always seeks to point us away from the Lord. When tempted to turn from the Lord we go to the scriptures and then we pray. We trust in the Lord our God believing that he gives everything we need. Our closer relationship with the Lord begins with our step of faith and continues as we put harmful things aside. We examine our lives and we invite the Lord Jesus to stay in our hearts where he will guide our ways according to his truth. AMEN