

The First Sin

GENESIS 3:1-6

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Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
June 21, 2020



****COVID-19 SPLIT SERVICE****

It is good to be with you this morning! As we have done over the past few months, we are starting again this morning with God's plan of salvation. Jesus died for our sins, he was buried, and he was raised up on the third day. In response, we are invited to believe the good news, we are commanded to turn away from sin, we confess Jesus as being the Son of God, and then we must allow ourselves to be buried with Christ in baptism, for the forgiveness of sins. As we are raised up, we are born into God's family, and the Christian life begins.

And once again, we have some examples up here! About a week ago, we got a report from Daniel Frerot, a gospel preacher in Strasbourg, France. We worshiped with the church in Strasbourg a little over ten years ago, and Daniel and his wife are doing a great work over there. The picture on the top is a picture of Marc being baptized. So, we rejoice with Marc and the church in Strasbourg. The pictures on the bottom are from a friend of mine who preaches in Texas, and the pictures are of Paul, who was baptized just a few days ago. So, we rejoice with these men, and we are using these pictures as examples: What they have done this week, you can do this morning! We have a baptistery downstairs, and if you are ready to obey the good news in your life today, or if you have any questions or concerns, please talk to either me or John after today's service, and we would be more than happy to open the word of God with you and to find some answers.

This morning I'd like for us to start a brief series of lessons on a chapter in the Bible that I have never preached on. I've been thinking about this for a while, that we need to study it. But this week, when I started digging into the text, I realized right away that I have never preached a single sermon from this chapter. And this was a surprise to me. I am referring to Genesis 3. I would invite you, then, to be turning with me this morning to Genesis 3, to what is truly a crucial chapter in terms of understanding the entire Bible.

Genesis, of course, is a book of beginnings. In Chapter 1, we have the creation. In Chapter 2 we have a more detailed account of what happens on Day 6 with God creating man and putting him in the perfect environment. Immediately, though, Adam realizes he is alone, God creates Eve, and Genesis 2 ends with Adam and Eve together in the garden, with no shame, in a perfect environment.

However, when we get to Chapter 3, we come to a series of firsts, including the first appearance of Satan. We aren't told where Satan comes from at this point, but he arrives as an adversary, turning the creation against the Creator; he is driving a wedge. This morning, then, I'm hoping we can learn something from the FIRST SIN; next week I want us to examine the CONSEQUENCES of the first sin; and then the following week I hope we can look at GOD'S PROMISE, in what is actually the first allusion to Jesus as the Savior.

By the way, you might notice that I'm using a picture of a PINEAPPLE this morning. Since today is Father's Day, I am doing this in honor of my dad who says that pineapple is the "accursed fruit." He is not a fan of pineapple. And I know: Pineapple doesn't grow on a tree. And I know: The forbidden fruit is often pictured as an apple, but for today, we are picturing a pineapple.

As we learn something today from the first sin, let's look together at Genesis 3:1-6,

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

- I. **As we look at the inspired word of God this morning, and as we look at the first sin and what leads up to it, I want us to notice in the first three verses here that Satan comes in and is basically SOWING SEEDS OF DOUBT – HE'S ENCOURAGING CONFUSION, HE'S PROMOTING UNCERTAINTY.**

Of course, we look back at Genesis 2:16-17, and God's instructions are very clear, very simple, and actually very positive. In this perfect environment, God gives Adam one rule, ***"From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."*** Notice, this one rule starts with a tremendous blessing, ***"From any tree of the garden you may eat freely."*** But there is a restriction: There's one tree they are not allowed to eat. He identifies the tree, and then he explains what will happen if they eat it. Very simple: You can eat anything, except for this, or else! This cannot be misunderstood!

So now we come to Genesis 3:1, Satan shows up, and Satan starts with a question. He doesn't go to the man (to whom God had originally given the command), but he goes to the woman (who had apparently only heard this command through her husband), and Satan starts with a question. He doesn't deny the existence of God, he doesn't directly contradict what God has said at this point, but he sows the seeds of doubt, ***"Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"*** And, of course, the answer is "No!" God has not said that. But Satan wants Eve to start questioning what she knows to be true. He wants Eve to start seeing God as unreasonable. Perhaps he wants her to question her husband's interpretation of the command.

And unfortunately, Eve starts falling into the trap. Instead of shutting this down, she continues the conversation. And in response, Eve now misquotes God. And as she does, she leaves out the part that God has graciously allowed them to eat from ***"any"*** tree in the garden, she leaves out the part about eating ***"freely"*** from every

other tree, and then she adds the restriction of not even ***“touching”*** the tree (God never said that). So, Eve herself has now taken away from and added to God’s original command. She leaves out the abundance of God’s grace, and she makes God more strict than he really is.

And obviously, we see where this is going. But we need to realize: It often happens the same way today! Satan will sow a seed of doubt, and before long we start misquoting the word of God. And before long, if we are not careful, as the word is misquoted and repeated, we start to wonder. We start to doubt. And perhaps we start to think that God is more severe than he really is. Perhaps we start to think that God is mean or unreasonable. This what Satan is doing here. He is sowing seeds of doubt.

And so, instead of focusing on the blessing of living in a perfect environment with unlimited food and no sickness or death, Satan gets Eve to start thinking about the one thing she cannot have. Satan is starting to portray God as being mean, and he’s starting to put Eve into the position of judging God, instead of seeing God as a generous provider. He’s inviting Eve to make a decision about what God has said. He’s inviting Eve to decide whether God’s command is reasonable. And isn’t this a challenge we have today? God has blessed us in so many ways, and yet isn’t it easy to start questioning what God has said, and maybe to start focusing on what we can’t have? Yes, I have an awesome husband or wife, but there are all these other people out there! Surely, God wants me to be happy. Yes, I have a good job and a house, but I won’t be truly happy until I have just a little bit more. And on and on. It starts with that seed of doubt. At this point, Eve is no longer thanking God for the endless variety of trees she CAN have, but she is now focused on what she can NOT have.

Obviously, in hindsight, Eve should have shut this down immediately; but instead, she falls for it; she joins in the conversation. She’s now open to the possibility that she might have the ability to pass judgment on what God has said.

II. And this leads us to what comes next in this process – now that Satan has the woman thinking that God’s law is perhaps unreasonable, now that she’s doubting, Satan now has to deal with the consequences, so at this point, SATAN STRAIGHT UP LIES TO THE WOMAN, “You surely will not die!”

Once she doubts the Lord God, she’s now open to God being wrong. And this is where Satan steps in and just deletes the consequences. He questions the Lord’s motives, but the point is: Satan lies! And by lying, Satan is now accusing God of lying. So, not only will eating this fruit not kill you, but it will open your eyes, it will give you knowledge. This sin, then, instead of being dangerous, will actually be good for you.

Don’t we see Satan doing the same thing today? God has warned us about some things for our own good, but the world steps in lies to us. What is evil is now good, and what God says will hurt us is now good for us. We think about alcohol. God has given some straightforward warnings about the danger of drunkenness, but the world does a pretty good job of denying the consequences, ***“You surely will not die.”*** God has given some straightforward warnings about the danger of intimacy outside a God approved marriage, but again, the world denies the consequences, ***“You surely will not die.”*** The world says, “God just doesn’t want you to have fun.”

III. So, now that Eve has perhaps started to doubt God, and now that she has Satan giving her another way of looking at this (being able to sin without consequences), this is where the TEMPTATION kicks in.

Maybe the serpent is right, and so she starts looking at the tree. She starts “ogling” the tree. I looked up “ogling” this morning, and it is defined as, “to stare at in a lecherous manner.” That’s what Eve was doing! Now remember: She can eat anything in the garden, and in fact, we find in Genesis 2:9 that, ***“Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food.”*** So, it’s not as if she doesn’t have options here, but now she is focused on the one thing she cannot have, and the way she looks at it now, she sees (in her own mind, in verse 6) that this tree is ***“good for food”*** and that it is ***“a delight to the eyes.”*** She’s looking at what she cannot have. And now, from the serpent, she has new information, the idea that ***“the tree was desirable to make one wise,”*** and so she takes the fruit and she eats it. She crosses the line.

Looking back on it, obviously, not looking would have helped! However, once she started looking at this tree as a possibility, once she is fascinated, she justifies it. We might say that her heart convinces her mind. She knows what God had said, but it’s too late. She makes a moral decision based on her feelings instead of based on what God has said. There is a progression: She sees, she takes, and then not content to sin on her own, she also gives some fruit to her husband, and he sins. Instead of being a spiritual leader in the family, Adam follows. Later, in 1 Timothy 2, Paul makes the point that Eve is deceived but Adam sins willingly. Eve is tricked, but Adam says, “Yes, dear.”

Conclusion:

As we close, let’s answer the “So what?” question. What does this passage really mean for us today?

First of all, we have a huge reminder here to TRUST THE WORD OF GOD. Remember, this whole thing started with Satan asking, ***“Indeed, has God said...?”*** If Eve had known the word, if she had trusted the word, if she had respected the word, none of this would have happened. In the same way, if I know what God has said in his word, that’s the first step in not falling for something like this. Several times in the gospel accounts, Jesus confronts the religious leaders with the question, ***“Have you not read?”*** So, first of all, we need to trust the word of God. We need to read it, we need to know it, and we certainly don’t need to be arguing with it.

Secondly, I would also point out just briefly that IT IS NOT A SIN TO BE TEMPTED. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13, ***“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man.”*** We’ve seen this morning that temptation is nothing new, and we’ve also seen that temptation itself is not the same as sin. There is a difference between being tempted to sin and actually sinning. And I say this, because sometimes we get discouraged, especially if we’re always battling something. To feel the pull of sin is (unfortunately) normal. But, let’s not get discouraged. And let’s remember that even Jesus was tempted. The Son of God felt the pull of sin. And we are all tempted in different ways. What might be tempting to me might not be tempting to you, and what you struggle with I might not struggle with. And this goes for everything from alcohol to same sex attraction, from lying to hurting people with the things we say. All of us are tempted.

And this leads us to the third and final answer to the “So what?” question, and that is: SIN IS A CHOICE. In other words, Satan has his limitations. He can’t force us to sin. He can deceive, he can tempt, he can influence, but the choice concerning whether we actually sin is completely up to us. In fact, the rest of 1 Corinthians 10:13 says that, ***“...God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the***

temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.” We have a promise from God that we will never be in a situation where the only choice is to sin. There will always be a way of escape, because sin is a choice.

And again, if you have chosen sin at any point in the past, if you are choosing sin right now, we still have the ability to choose to turn back to God. We can choose to believe, and repent, and confess, and to be baptized. If we can help, please let us know. If you are listening on the phone, give me a call at 608-224-0274.

Before John leads us in the prayers for the Lord’s Supper, let’s close this lesson with a prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

We praise you today for creating us with the ability to choose. We are thankful for your word. We are thankful for both the warnings and the promises in the Bible. You understand what we cannot, and so we look to you for guidance on how to live.

Thank you for allowing us to be together. Thank you for allowing the rest of us to participate in other ways. We pray that you will bless our congregation. We pray that all of us would have the wisdom and courage to represent you well here in the Madison area.

Thank you for Jesus. We come to you today in his name, by his authority.

Lord, come quickly. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com