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Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL
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God's Voice Calls To Us From the Garden

Genesis 3:1-21

INI

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and from His Son Jesus Christ, who is the Word and Voice of God, sending us His Spirit today. Amen

Genesis 3:1–21

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

¹² Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

¹³ And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the Lord God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,

You are cursed more than all cattle,

*And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.*

¹⁵ *And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”*

¹⁶ *To the woman He said:
“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire shall be for your husband,
And he shall rule over you.”*

¹⁷ *Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten
from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:*

*“Cursed is the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.*

¹⁸ *Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.*

¹⁹ *In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you are,
And to dust you shall return.”*

²⁰ *And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.*

²¹ *Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

God’s Voice Calls To Us From the Garden

1. The voice of God: echoes with sounds of “very good”
2. The voice of God: muddled by Satan’s invading question
3. The voice of God: calling out, “where are you?”
4. The voice of God: made clear in a promise

In Jesus name, dear fellow children of God,

1. The voice of God: echoes with sounds of “very good”

We cannot take up Genesis 3, without first recounting work of God which sets the scene in Genesis 1 and 2.

“Indeed it was very good.” Each day, the voice of God sounded forth from the Garden: “good.” God said “Let there be...” and God saw that it was good. It was beautiful. It was perfect. Before sin, man lived in perfect harmony with God. Scripture calls this place: “Eden,” meaning “delight” or “paradise.” When all was said and done, God saw everything that He had made, and His voice cried out: “very good.”

That world was very good. There were no flaws in God’s creative work. Man was perfect and the blessings of the world in which man lived were perfect.

Here are there we hear it. Here and there we hear this faint echo of “good.” In a multi-colored sunset which dazzles the sky with the brushstrokes of God. In the quaint forest setting, where we walk, all around us the sounds – a babbling brook, a sinning song bird, the talking of trees. We hear it as we sit down to a home made meal and we look around and see those faces, family, God’s gifts gathering us together in prayer. Spring is right around the corner and more and more those echoes God’s Garden Goodness sound forth: “very good.”

2. The voice of God: muddled by Satan’s invading question

God had planted a tree – a tree which possessed the potential for man to choose what is good or choose what is evil. The command was clear. God’s voice was crystal clear – “in the day that you eat of it, you will die.” But that voice would be invaded. It was an invasion of something different, something wrong. It wasn’t good, it was evil. The question which Satan poses is invasive. It invades God’s clear command, it clouds the air with false promises of something better.

“Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” Is this what He really said?

The definition of temptation is: to entice or entrap by a process of inquiry, deception, or lure. Eve begins to wonder. She wonders just what God did say. God said we couldn’t eat of it, but did He say we could not touch it? Something is growing within her, an invasion of something that does not belong. Suddenly she sees this fruit in a new way. This was not just a fruit for sustenance and enjoyment, of which there were many others. Now the voice of Satan had led her to change her perception and see this fruit as something she wanted, something she needed, something that could give her a higher spiritual experience than what God was offering. No longer was the voice of God enough for her. It had been confused and clouded with questions.

Jesus speaks to the religious leaders who have become deaf to the voice of God, saying – *John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

She is lost in a wilderness of lies. In a wilderness where the voice of God is muddled. All she knows is what feels right – “it is good for food ... it is desirable to look at ... it is desirable to make one wise” – What is God keeping from her? He’s holding back, there is something better for her; here, in this fruit, is something good which God has not given her. Has God really said not to eat? And why? Why has He not told us why? And where is her husband? Why does he not come to her rescue? He too knows what God has said. Rather than being a leader and rebuking her actions, he just goes along with it all. She takes and he takes. And they both sin.

James 1:15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

The same sort of question invades our world, our lives, our hearts every day. Has God really said? Is He holding out on you? Why has He not given you an answer? We wonder, what exactly has God said. We see a fruit that is good for food – the necessity of this or that sin in my life; we see a fruit that is pleasant to look at – we figure that it will be ok just to look, just to ponder the idea; and we see a fruit that is desirable to make one wise. We begin to wonder. We think there is something better for us; something good that will come from sin. We think there is no other way – this is the way God made me ... this is the way God made my life. Suddenly the clear voice of God is muddled and we give in to temptation. Desire gives birth to sin, and if not dealt with, will lead us into the wilderness of Satan’s invasive question, until God’s voice becomes so faint and muddled that we can no longer recognize God’s own call to us.

3. The voice of God: calling out, “Where are you?”

Have you ever had a child do something wrong and think they can hide it from you. Things get quiet; too quiet. The children who are usually making so much noise you can’t think, are now suddenly no where to be seen. And there on the kitchen floor is a broken jar and sugar all over the floor. They hide.

God in serene goodness, does not come out thundering in a voice of wrath and anger. He knows what has happened. He knows where Adam and Eve are. But in a calm and direct voice, He calls to them. His voice echoes from the Garden: “where are you?”

Where have you gone? What has happened to this world, so very good and this voice so very clear and inviting. Why will you not come?

They've hidden themselves from God. Things have gone quiet, too quiet, and they are trembling. They are trembling, and they must find a way out of this mess. They got themselves into this, they must get themselves out. Yes, that's it – it must be someone else's fault. Arguing, blaming, fingers being pointed – they are hiding. They are hiding from their own sin, from their own guilt, hiding behind excuses. God's voice no longer is a welcome sound. That sound which walks among them now makes them fearful. For just as God said, they ate of it, and they died.

A curse has separated man from God, so that he no longer hears the invitation of a loving God. We witness the mess all around us – the curse of sin. The invasion of evil into this world has brought a curse. And with that curse, come certain reminders. God wants us ever mindful of what has happened. For humans to go on blindly comfortable with this world and this life would leave us endless lost in the wilderness. But the voice of God cries out. In the toil of child birth – God cries out. In the the sweat and pain of daily work, the thorns and thistles of lives that have been twisted by sin, God is ever calling to us. God's voice echoes a cry from the Garden, calling us to repentance, calling us to come back, calling us to come home to that Garden where things are once again made very good. He cries out: "where are you?"

4. The voice of God: made clear in a promise

Who would pick up the pieces? While his children hide, He bends down to deal with what has happened. He bends down with a voice, with a Word, with a promise.

His voice exercises utter dominion – He says to Satan: "cursed are you." Satan, once among the chief angels of heaven, is now cast to the dust of earth. This was not just a curse for snakes, although we see the reminder there. This was a curse against all that is evil, all which crawls and lurks about us. God will have utter dominion over him. And He will do so through a voice, a Word, a promise:

*And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."*

In that promise, God picks up the pieces of broken lives. He picks up Eve and rescues her from the evil that has invaded. He calls her back to Eden. And He places a division between all evil which would be born of the devil and all good which would be born of Eve. Her offspring would be saved, protected, loved and nurtured as generations of believers would carry on in this promise. A family of believers is born in this promise, and God's voice once again calls forth clearly. He has reached down to rescue you from Satan, from the evil which is born of him. And God has done it all.

God has done it all. From our earlier Gospel reading, God sends the Seed of the Woman to faced this enemy for you. There in the wilderness, in your wilderness, a second Adam faces Satan. God's own Son leaves paradise for thorns and thistles and temptation. He becomes twisted in the curse and opens Himself to the same question that Adam and Eve wanted answered: "Has God really said?" Satan speaks from his own resources: "Has God really said that you are the Son of God? If You are, then prove it – command that these stones become bread. Has God really promised that He will protect you in every situation? Then prove it – jump off the temple and show us that God loves you and will send his angels to save you. God is holding out on you. He has said that the Messiah must suffer and die. He is asking you suffer the curse for what others have done. But there is another way. There is a better way. There is good to be gained apart from the cross, from God's command: worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world right now."

God has done it all. And He did it as us, as a man. Those temptations were just as real for Jesus as they were for Adam and Eve. But where we have gone wrong, where we have left the jar broken to run and hide, Jesus did not. And He did it in just one word – trust. He trusted the Word and nothing else. "You shall worship the Lord God," He said. And the Lord only did He serve. He relied on nothing more than God's voice, God's Word, and God's promise.

In Him, God has restored the "very good" of Eden. He has been bruised for our iniquities, He was crucified for our sins, He has risen for our forgiveness. He has risen and declared death defeated. Jesus is the Seed who has crushed the head of the serpent, so that you are now able to enter the "very good" presence of God once again.

Romans 5:18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

His voice calls from the Word. He calls out from these pages and from this inspired record to call to you, invite you into His presence once again. He has picked up the

pieces and reconstructed us in Christ. And He promises something good, something very good.

Psalm 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

He calls to us from the Garden with the hope of something good. It echoes all around, even in this cursed world. It echoes in the curse of this world. In childbirth where a mother experiences both the great curse, and a great blessing. Labor is painful, yet through it all she looks with hope to that joy of life which is about to be born. Even as believers we experience the pain; the thorns and thistles of daily work; the daily problems which stick to us. But for the believer, these will always be a call from the Garden. These are both a curse and a blessing. The labor is painful, yet through it all we look with hope to the joy which is to come. The pain is God's call to us, a call from the Garden; a call to a better place: something very good.

God calls out in your midst today, saying, "where are you?" And we answer in repentance: "right here." Right here, assembled in His presence to hear His holy voice. We are here, in this place of repentance, in lives where jars have been broken, in sins which our flesh would like hidden; here, God visits us – an assembly of sinners forgiven for Jesus sake. Here Satan's voice is silenced as His head is crushed under foot. Now, God will speak again – in ever clearer tones, He speaks words of forgiveness and life. Echoes of "very good" are all around, and they promise something very good to come for each of you.

"Indeed it was very good." And indeed it will be very good again. When all is said and done, God and you together will see everything that He had made, and our voice will join His in paradise restored to cry out: "very good."

In Jesus name, Amen.