

St Brandon's, Sermon for 10th June 2018

Genesis 3:8-15, 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1, Mark 3:20 - end

Adam & Eve's dilemma

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Today's sermon is going to be a bit different, because that's how it came to me. But it also feels okay for it to be a bit different today because we have an opportunity for exploring the word further in a 30 minute sermon discussion after coffee, do come along.

This sermon is going to be in a mode that's somewhere between a story and a dream, and in a dream-like way it may migrate to different places and times and perspectives. Don't worry about that, like a dream, this is to be experienced rather than understood; if it doesn't entirely make sense - never mind. You might want to relax and shut your eyes, if you start to doze off - never mind!

Let us pray: *Father, let your spirit walk around and through us, and lead us to you, through faith in your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen*

The smell of honeysuckle hung heavily on the still, warm air. Somewhere, a bird whistled and chirruped, a small fieldmouse barely rustled the grass as it ran across Adam's path. He licked his sticky lips, the taste still in his mouth, and looked across to Eve.

She was staring at him in a way he'd not seen before. They knew things about themselves they'd not known before, uncomfortable things they didn't quite comprehend but nonetheless had come to them as they ate, and the serpent smirked.

A chill wind sprung up and Adam realised it was time for their Father to come looking for them.

A confusion of emotions flooded him: fear, and shame, and denial: they'd eaten the fruit that was forbidden, it could not be un-eaten, there was no route back to before.

Eve was ahead of him, she had already melted into the trees, experts at playing hide and seek, this was in earnest, as she flattened herself into the rough embrace of a tree trunk, its arms wide above her.

With an apprehensive heart, their Father came walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze.

He longed to hear the light laughter and patter of running feet that was his due at this hour; for his Eve and his Adam to crash into his arms with merry laughing and jostling; for him to sweep them up in his strong arms and tell them they were his heart's delight before they showed him their grazed knees and the scrapes of the day for him to apply his balm of soothing words and wisdom.

Everything they needed, it was his joy to give them.

But this evening, as his feet collected the early dew, his heart was heavy with the knowledge that Eve and Adam had chosen to believe the evil serpent and now were destined to keep choosing.

“Where are you?” he whispered into the wind, which sought out Adam and Eve and, drawing them closer, revealed them to their Father.

“I heard the sound of you in the garden”, blundered Adam, “and I was afraid of how you will view me now, what you will see in me; so I hid”

“Who told you that I would see you any differently to how I have always seen you? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

At this question, the fruit in Adams’ stomach turned and he saw he had a choice.

He no longer thought only of the simple truth, but of a new and different possibility.

The possibility of lying.

He rolled the denial around his mouth, trying the size of it and opted to slide it sideways and make Eve carry his guilt for him.

“The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit from the tree, and I ate”.

At this, their Father knew that death had entered them, just as he predicted when he’d told them

“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.”

And so he asked the woman, just as one day, he would ask her son Cain, “What have you done?”

In the size of the question, her eyes were opened once more and she saw the evil serpent for what he was,
“The serpent tricked me, and I ate”.

The Father looked at his children and loved them.
And he looked at the tree of life and knew that for fallen humanity, an instant fix of the gift of life for ever without pain or cost would be of no ultimate worth.
So he cursed the serpent, and the soil, covered his children’s shame with clothing and sent them on a long journey.

Much later, it occurred to Adam and Eve, off and on, to wonder how it all happened.

Why had it not occurred to them to say sorry?

They rarely discussed it now, most of life was a fight to get sufficient, yet it always was sufficient, and the sunlight from the garden was always in their memories and encouraged them on the darkest days.

The worst of it was not the hard ground and the terrors of the birthing pangs, they passed.

The worst of it was that they could never quite trust the other. Something of the serpent’s venom had entered them and they were haunted by suspicions about whether the other was all they maintained.

And the more they watched the other, the more they seemed to see that inflamed their suspicions.

They found they questioned the motives of supposed friends, straining to decide if they intended good, or were evil dressed as good. For now they had knowledge of good and evil and presumed it was their task to wield it like a scythe,

reaping prejudice and judgement, wondering if life was good, if they were good, if they were loved.

They had to be careful, they had to weigh and measure ... it was an exhausting burden that they carried everywhere they went.

Then came the day, when sojourning in the area of Galilee, that they came upon a great crowd gathered around an extraordinary man.

And as they wormed closer, they heard he was talking about division.

About a house that is divided against itself being unable to stand.

And he turned and looked at them, into them, and they felt him exposing to themselves the great warring between good and evil in their hearts.

Still holding them with his eyes, he began to talk about the serpent Satan, and how he has tied him up, bound him fast, and is releasing all those the serpent has afflicted.

That he is forgiving and retrieving all those who have strayed providing they are ready to trust in his authority and the power that is the holy wind.

And as he said this, they saw the likeness in his eyes to their Father, and felt the same wind which had sought them out before, ruffling their hair and caressing them.

And they knew in a quite different part of them that they had come home.

And they heard this compelling, shining man who looked like their Father say to them,

“Here are my mother and brother. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

And all that the man and woman had taken into themselves from the forbidden tree of knowledge they put down at the feet of their Father, said they were so, so sorry, and kissed the scars their tears had made in the dust on their Father’s feet.

The Epilogue:

Who are Adam and Eve?

You and me.

We are caught up in the eternal cycle of leaving and returning to God as the good and not so good in each of us tries to get control.

But if we allow God to do the judging, if we break the cycle of being stuck in a world we divide into the good guys and the bad guys and let God know and worry about that, we are freed up to be, live and love.

Each time we fall, and eat of the wrong fruit, we can know again the need and blessing of coming back, and can move a little closer to our Father each time.

We are, therefore, blessed by both the falling and returning.

As Paul put it “So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure”.