

Pastor's Message  
September 13, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hope you are all doing well!!

The Food Pantry Distribution will be held on our parking lot on Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup> from 1 until 3. With the start of the school year, we are also losing some of volunteers who have been invaluable with the distribution this spring and summer. If you would be able to help to load shopping bags full of food and cartons of canned goods into cars, please let me know and I will pass your name on to our Food Pantry Coordinator.

Crystal, who is the woman who collects the "Tabs for Cancer" will be stopping by the church on Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 to pickup our donation. If you have tabs to donate bring them to church. Most likely there will be no one there to receive your donation, so just leave them on the bench by the front door. I will gather them and make sure that Crystal gets them.

Our next communion service will be on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

God's Peace!

Pastor Denise

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Genesis 2:4b -7, 15-25, 3:1-8

A reading from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis.

5-7 At the time God made Earth and Heaven, before any grasses or shrubs had sprouted from the ground—God hadn't yet sent rain on Earth, nor was there anyone around to work the ground (the whole Earth was watered by underground springs)

God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!

15 God took the Man and set him down in the Garden of Eden to work the ground and keep it in order.

16-17 God commanded the Man, "You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. Don't eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you're dead."

18-20 God said, "It's not good for the Man to be alone; I'll make him a helper, a companion." So God formed from the dirt of the

ground all the animals of the field and all the birds of the air.

He brought them to the Man to see what he would name them.

Whatever the Man called each living creature, that was its name.

The Man named the cattle, named the birds of the air, named the wild animals; but he didn't find a suitable companion.

21-22 God put the Man into a deep sleep. As he slept he removed one of his ribs and replaced it with flesh. God then used the rib that he had taken from the Man to make Woman and presented her to the Man.

23-25 The Man said, "Finally! Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!

Name her Woman

for she was made from Man."

Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh.

The two of them, the Man and

his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame.

**3** The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal God had made. He spoke to the Woman: “Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?”

**2-3** The Woman said to the serpent, “Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It’s only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘Don’t eat from it; don’t even touch it or you’ll die.’”

**4-5** The serpent told the Woman, “You won’t die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you’ll see what’s really going on. You’ll be just like God, knowing

everything, ranging all the way from good to evil.”

**6** When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realized what she would get out of it—she’d know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate.

**7** Immediately the two of them did “see what’s really going on”—they saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

**8** When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden. They were hiding from God.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

AMEN

Let us pray:

Lord God, grand architect of the universe,

Your design of creation is unflawed. Yet we continue to litter your creation with defects and imperfections. Show us how not to destroy, but to create, not to demean, but to uplift, not to hate, but to love, so that your creation may be made perfect once again.

AMEN

We are back to the beginning as we start year three of the narrative lectionary. This year the Old Testament texts, which we will hear and reflect on leading up to Christmas are focused on God's promises and God's persistence to work in, through and among God's people to make those promises a reality.

So, this morning we start in the beginning, with what one might say is truly the story of the ultimate GOOD OLD DAYS, the story of creation, the story of life in the garden of Eden.

There are two creation stories in the Bible, the first from the first

chapter of Genesis; which tells us of God's creative work in the frame of seven days, which is probably is more well known than the creation story as told in Chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis, which is the creation story we will be reflecting on this morning.

We find in the second creation story a more earthy story and a more hands on story that not only connects the creation of humanity to the very substance of the earth, as man is formed from the dust of the earth to be the caretaker of the earth. But also describes God's action in creation, as God took the dirt and molded and shaped it and then breathed into it's nostrils to bring it to life.

The image I always get when I hear this text is of God on a beach somewhere making an elaborate sand sculpture and then like giving his sand sculpture CPR, God breathes into it and it became a living, breathing, walking and talking human being.

God names this being Adam since he has been formed from the

adamah, which is the Hebrew word for dirt. So God has actually named this being “of the dirt” and God tells this being that his role in this creation is to tend to God’s garden. So at this point in the story, God has created the human to live in the garden, to till it and keep it, and to be nourished and sustained by the fruit that the garden will produce.

As God observed his beloved creature living and working alone in the garden, God said, “It’s not good for the Man to be alone; I’ll make him a helper, a companion.”

So God again gathered dirt into God’s hands and God formed from the dirt of the ground all the animals of the field and all the birds of the air.

He brought them to the Man and gave the Man the responsibility of naming all of the living creatures and so The Man named the cattle, named the birds of the air, and named the wild animals; but the Lord God realized that although these creatures enriched the Man’s life, none of them provided Adam the kind of companionship that the Lord God realized that Adam needed.

So, let’s just stop here for a moment. What does this story up to this point tell us about God and God’s character: First of all, God is an amazing creator. God creates out of dirt with God’s own hands, all the living beings of the Earth.

And God is not a once and done kind of creator. God creates and creates and recreates, constantly tweaking and improving God’s creation. It seems like God steps back and observes how things are going, determines what is missing or needed and then God creates some more. Not for God’s own folly, but to improve life for God’s beloved Adam.

And as God observed Adam and all of the creatures that lived with Adam in the garden, God saw that Adam needed a creature that could be a partner, a companion for Adam’s life in the garden; a creature that was comprised of the very essence of Adam. So created the Woman, not from the dirt as all the other creatures were formed, but from Adam himself, so that the very essence of the Man would be preserved, but different enough to enrich and enhance Adam’s life here in the garden.

And all was well in the garden, with Adam and his partner Eve working side by side in the place that God had created just for them. I can only image that they enjoyed one another's company and companionship. And wanted for nothing as they were doing the work the God had specifically designed for them and they were being nourished by the fruits that the garden produced.

So what does this tell us about, who God is? God is the one who comes up with a solution to a problem that we didn't even know that we had. Adam didn't go to God and tell him he was lonely and needed a partner.

But, like a great parent, God watched over Adam and realized that there was something missing and after God's first attempt with the animals that did not work out, God tried again. God did not let Adam out there without the support and the resources that he needed to live his best life.

God tried again. This was all God's doing, Adam had no wants, no worries, no fears for he knew only of the world that God had shared with him. Adam did not know not

know of the evil that existed and threatened the life that God had created for him.

Now, we know what happens next. God had told the Man that he could eat the fruit of all the trees, but one – the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil. And God told Adam if you eat from that you will die.

Well, apparently back in the Garden of Eden, not only were Adam and Eve able to talk to one another, but so were some of the animals as one day the serpent engaged in a conversation with Eve.

And the serpent, (I always wonder if the serpent had already eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree) because the serpent was more clever and knowledgeable than any of the other wild animal God had made; and the serpent said to the Woman: "Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?"

See just how sly this serpent is, kind of playing dumb, like you poor humans, God doesn't let you eat the delicious fruit from these

trees. The serpent does not even mention the Tree of Knowledge

It was the Woman who replied:

“We can eat from any of the trees in the garden, except the one in the middle of the garden because God said, ‘Don’t eat from it; don’t even touch it or you’ll die.’”

The serpent then told the Woman, “You won’t die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you’ll see what’s really going on. You’ll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil.”

Hearing the words of the serpent and seeing the delicious fruit hanging from the tree, the Woman began to doubt God, surely she would be better off knowing what God knows, and even before she grabbed for that piece of fruit, she had turned away from God. She believed that she knew what was good for her as she acted on the belief that being in the “know” was in her own self’s best interest.

And so she grabbed the fruit and she ate. And then she gave some to Adam and he ate.

And so ended their life of innocence, so ended their

theocentric world where they trusted God to take care of their every need, so ended their life that had been sheltered from evil and from the fruits of evil such as judgment, envy, guilt and shame. So, ended their life in the garden.

And so began life for God’s beloved Adam and his companion Eve that opened them up to a life of self-centeredness, greed, envy, fear, paranoia, shame, and guilt.

With their eyes open to the knowledge of good and evil, they started making decisions not based on what God had told them for they no longer whole heartedly trusted in God, but they started making decisions based on what they believed were in their own best self interest. This knowledge of good and evil made them vulnerable, as they entered a world where their own egos and their need for self-preservation became paramount.

And the consequence of their actions, was not death as we think of it, but death of their pure and untainted relationship with God and the end of the life that God

had always intended for his beloved Adam and Eve.

And as Adam and Eve are banished from the garden, so the journey begins. But, not just the journey for Adam and Eve to find their way as they carry with them the knowledge of good and evil, but the journey for all of humanity, who now to this very day struggle to put own self-centeredness in check and turn back to God.

This also began a journey for God, for God did not give up on humanity, but God began the hard work of reclaiming and restoring God's relationship to God's

beloved humanity, by working in, through, and among God's flawed children to create God's new and improved Eden here on Earth so that all God's children may one day live the life that God has always intended for us.

And so it begins, the stage has been set in the for the work of rescue and restoration that God will do in us, through us and among us as God continues to create, recreate and tweak all of God's creation to bring about God's kingdom here on earth just as it is in heaven.

AMEN



***Blessing***

May

God the Father prepare your journey,  
Jesus the Son guide your footsteps,  
The Spirit of Life strengthen your body,  
and

The Three in One watch over you,  
on every road you choose to walk.

In the name of the Father,  
and the Son and God's Holy Spirit

**Amen**