

July 4, 2021 The Fall Genesis 2:25-3:19

Dearly Beloved;

I want to say thank you for your prayers for Barbara and I during this period in which she begins the recovery from her surgery. At the end of this new week, the staples will be removed from her surgical wound. She had her first physio appointment this past week and was greatly encouraged by her therapist. At this time she has a good range of movement given the surgery and the mechanical knee. She does her exercises three times a day. Her pain has subsided to that related to the tightness of the new joint, and the discovery that she has a limited range of motion. The exercises and physio are supposed to increase that range of motion. We continue to ask for your prayers for both of us. We are both very tired.

I drove passed our Quinte Mall on Friday and was amazed at the traffic on Bell, and the number of cars in the East Mall parking lot. It felt like a very long time since I had seen so many cars in one place. Please continue to be careful about masking, social distancing and interactions with those who are not part of your household.

With that we will turn to the Scriptures as it is our faith in God and our love for one another that binds us together. To those who have joined with us via, The Sermon From The Dining Room Table, we thank you for the privilege of sharing with you, and remind you to be careful, and caring in the days to come.

The Book of Genesis is about the beginning. It provides those of us who believe in the Lord God Almighty, who saves us through faith in Jesus Christ HIS Son, and seek the experience and guidance of the Holy Spirit, with an answer to all those questions that end with the clause where did that come from? God created matter, all the kinds of matter. In doing so, HE created time, which for us means we have a sense of before and after, with the present in between the two. He created the planet Earth in the midst of a universe of worlds, planets, stars and moons. He created the belt of atmosphere around our world, thin as it is, sufficient to support life. HE created the animals on land, the fish in the water, and the birds who sweep through the air. He created air and water and light. And HE created us. He created a Garden, a mega farm so that we had a place to call home, and food to sustain us. It was perfect. Adam and Eve were good. Life was trouble free.

The Book of Genesis tells us how that changed, and why it changed. And at least part of the answer to that question, is that God loved us so much, HE did not make us mindless, nor did HE make us without a will of our own. He made us in HIS image. We were always given the chance to say yes, and therefore the chance to say no. There are no strings attached to our wrists. We are not puppets. While it is true we are also subject to the choices of others concerning us, (some choose not to be our friends) our destiny tends to fall into our own hands because we always have the power to make a different choice. That is how the Bible explains the presence and the beginning of evil. Our kind made the choice to sin.

I read to you beginning with the last verse of what we call chapter 2 of the Book of Genesis. “The man and his wife were naked, and they felt no shame.” Shame. I wanted to make sure I got this right. So I turned to the Oxford Dictionary to get the accurate meaning of the word. You might wonder why I would do that. First of all, the Oxford Dictionary is recognized as a singular resource if you want to know what words mean. Secondly, it is a secular source. It is not a theological book. It simply defines what words mean based on the way we use them. Notice that: the way WE use them. So here goes. The Oxford Dictionary’s 1st meaning of the word shame: “FEELING OF HUMILIATION EXCITED BY CONSCIOUSNESS OF (ESPECIALLY OUR OWN) GUILT OR SHORTCOMING.” Actually, I should not stop there because the Oxford goes on to add, “HAVING MADE ONESELF OR BEEN MADE RIDICULOUS, OR OF HAVING OFFENDED AGAINST PROPRIETY, MODESTY, OR DECENCY.”

There is a lot there to chew on. When God takes HIS stroll through the Garden and cannot find Adam, what is Adam doing? He is hiding. Hiding from God! Who sees everything, made everything, knows everything...including what is going on in Adam’s heart and mind. I mention Adam’s heart because of precisely this: there is a pile of emotion. Humiliation is rife with emotion. And of course I mention his mind, because Adam knows what he has done. He would like in that moment to have Harry Potter’s cloak of invisibility so that God could never see him again. And yes Adam has made himself ridiculous in his fallen nature, in his sin. Regardless of what Adam says, he

knows, he is guilty...he has offended his God, his Creator. And like Humpty Dumpty, all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot help him to put himself together again.

If Paradise exists, and it does, Jesus said so to that thief who was dying at HIS side. "Today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) Who in that thief's place would say, "No thank you." Surely that would be ridiculous. And Adam had Paradise. It was his home address. And he traded it for something that today costs less than a hamburger. The shame of sin bites deep into our lives. It twists us and it tortures us. God's question to Adam was not what did you do? It was who told you, you were naked? Nakedness was Adam's professed cause of shame. And then comes the really heavy question. "Have you eaten from the tree, I commanded you not to eat from?" Sin is always about doing the one thing we knew we were not supposed to do. I may be the preacher, the minister here, but I am in that same boat as you are. I knew my sins were involved disobedience before I committed them.

Dear old Adam's second line of defense, notice that, he is trying to justify his actions. He says, "the woman you put here with me,...she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it." He blames God for making the woman, for giving her to him. She took it from the branch, and I ate it. Yes I did." There is a serpent in the picture. When God asks the woman what she has done, she blames the serpent. Adam and Eve are a pair. We can always find someone else to blame for the wrong we have done, the sin we have committed. And Genesis deals with that

age old fear we have of snakes, telling us that that is where the enmity between the serpent and mankind has its source. God also promises the serpent will bruise the heel of her offspring, but her offspring will crush the serpent's head.

Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of Christ*, opens in another garden, Gethsemane. You have the visual of the serpent slithering toward Jesus in his agony of prayer, and as the scene fades to black you hear the crushing of the serpent's head, and the arrest, that leads to the trials, that lead to the crucifixion begin to unfold. Even as the Garden is lost, we are given the promise of how paradise will be regained. ONE born of a woman, will bear the sin away. Such is the saving grace of the God who loves us.

There are those who like to play games about the superiority of men over women. I want to say two things about that. It simply cannot be justified when one reads Genesis. Choices were made and sin entered the picture. Subjecting ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus we find there ought not to be anyone's claim of superiority. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ." (Galatians 3:28) Love, especially the love of God, does not have boundaries. The grace of God is for one and for all. And therefore sin's solution as that thief discovered is found not by making or working, but by asking..."remember me, when you come into your kingdom." We need to want to receive forgiveness, enough to ask for it, of God, who as the awaiting

Father, waits for us to do come to our senses and seek HIS mercy.

Let us pray

Lord help us to remember that our sin, and the sin of others, are the major causes of some of our difficulties. Help us to remember that sin is one of the major causes of the difficulties in our world, and the stresses between nations and peoples. Heal us we pray by leading us to turn to you for grace and mercy. Grant that we may discover in Jesus the healing and hope which we need. Make us agents of mercy in our relationships with others. Amen