

“What if...Adam and Eve didn't eat from the tree?”

Our main focus story for this What if...? Question of this morning's worship service is that of Adam and Eve eating from the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. This story is traditionally referenced as the time when we had “original sin.” The first time that we as human beings, who were created and blessed by God, were given control of the land and the animals. This was the time that free-will ended up hurting our species with the idea of original sin.

This church doctrine idea is one that says that we are now born sinful and need to be cleansed which, for many, is the reason for baptizing babies, to cleanse them of that original sin. For others, this might be the first time that we as human beings sinned, but although we are sinful people by nature, others believe that we are not born sinful, but just make mistakes.

This Bible lesson is an interesting one for us to look at if we ask ourselves the question of what happened if Adam and Eve didn't eat of the tree. One of the things that may be changed in our lifestyles could be that we would all be walking around without any clothes on.

Scripture tells us that Adam and Eve didn't know that they were naked until they ate from the tree. This part of the story doesn't necessarily make it so that we now need to buy clothing, but it is a little bit deeper than that. Adam and Eve

didn't recognize the idea of shame. So, if Adam and Eve didn't eat from the tree, we may not all be naked, but we may not recognize shame.

This is an important topic to take some time with because as we talked last week about "What if...God was one of us" and took a look at God in human form, we also need to talk about how in our own images of God and being made who we are, we should not be ashamed of ourselves.

To confess something to you all this morning; I have a surprisingly high voice for a male individual. If you have ever talked to me on the phone; that is when it is particularly difficult to distinguish who I am. I have actually argued with someone when I worked in an office setting about what my name was. The person on the other line actually argued that my name was not Gary. That I must be female. As part of my confession, I admit that I have struggled with this throughout my life. But as I stand before you today in a very public profession which requires a lot of speaking and a lot of phone calls, I have learned that I don't need, nor should I be ashamed of my voice.

My talents for singing as a high-notes tenor allow me to share my high voice with those around me and to not be ashamed of who I am.

What is it about your life or your being that makes you ashamed. We all have things that we struggle with. Body image is very difficult in today's society, because if you are not the pretty one or the handsome one or the one without acne

or other physical appearance issues, then society may not notice you as much as if you were the most beautiful person in the room.

There are other things that we can be ashamed about including things from our past. What might you have done in your life that you are not proud of. We all have those moments. We all have those stories of the person that we dated or the job that we took or the decisions that we made that might make us ashamed, but maybe....we wouldn't have this problem of feeling ashamed if...Adam and Eve didn't eat from the tree.

Adam and Eve were tricked as people of God by the snake who is usually interpreted to mean the Devil by many scholars and theologians. This snake was cunning and tricky. He was tempting Eve with this delightful snack that would allow her to have all knowledge.

First, Adam and Eve did not receive all knowledge. They really only recognized their nakedness, but there is more to this part of the story. God told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree because they would die. There are many people in our society who take chances knowing that this decision could get them killed, but it is for the good of others. Maybe we wouldn't be as willing to take chances if Adam and Eve first didn't disobey God about eating from the tree.

As I was writing this sermon I saw the news that all 12 soccer players and their coach were rescued from the Thailand cave. Without taking chances and

knowing that they could die (and tragically one did), the divers and rescuers did not think twice about doing what they had to do to travel underwater, through small spaces, in dark caves, to rescue those boys (and that was even once they found them).

Without taking chances, we may not have some of the technology that we do today. I don't mean things like computers and smart phones, but things like electricity or the light bulb or the telephone. Now, not all things are good. People have taken chances with chemicals and science and have gotten themselves hurt or killed, or worse yet, the ability to kill others; but without Adam and Eve taking chances....and they did disobey God, which I don't want to skip over, some things may not have happened in our history.

Without taking chances, we wouldn't have the faith that we do. Without people like Paul who traveled across Egypt to spread the Good News, the stories may have been lost. Without people like those who have died professing their faith in various parts of the world knowing that they could and would be killed for what they believe, we wouldn't have these stories of the saints that were martyred because of what they believed.

What else we may learn from their eating of the tree is that they were tempted. They were tempted by the Devil to do something wrong. We are tempted in our lives, sometimes every day. It can be with little simple things like, I

really shouldn't eat that last donut, but if I don't, it may go bad; or it can be as harmful as committing a crime.

If Adam and Eve didn't eat from the tree, maybe we wouldn't have temptation. Maybe we would all go on living our lives as if we don't have to make choices because there wouldn't be consequences. Or, worse, maybe the devil, or the snake would continue to be plaguing human kind still today. Adam and Eve were the first to fall and be sinful, but they were tempted by that snake. We are still tempted by various things throughout our daily lives, but it doesn't seem as difficult to say no when we don't have, as some scholars believe, to talk directly to the Devil him or her-self.

I also struggle with this story because it puts both men and women in a difficult relationship. The man is said to have been created first. Then Adam gave a rib so that Eve may be created. I love that part of the story. It really shows what we do in relationships when we give of ourselves for the good of others. Sometimes, literally. What I don't like is the part of the story where the man blames the woman for giving him the apple.

The man does not take responsibility for his own actions. He is blaming the woman, actually he is blaming God for giving him the woman, for eating from the tree. When God asks Eve why she ate, then she blames the snake for tricking her.

Without this story in our history, we may not have the problem of blame. Adam blamed God for giving him Eve. Adam blamed Eve for giving him the apple. Eve blamed the snake for tricking her. We are living in a culture today where women still are not treated equally and it saddens me about this. I don't blame this scripture for giving men the ability to blame women, but I think that we could learn from this passage.

We do like to blame others for things. Children, especially brothers and/or sisters, like to blame the other one for the mess in the playroom or the ripped pages of a book. Adults like to blame others in the corporate world. This boss may blame their financial department which will blame their research and development department which will blame their manufacturing department which will blame their part-time unpaid college intern for the deadline being missed. It can be a vicious cycle when we blame others and I don't know that we wouldn't blame others if...Adam and Eve didn't eat from the tree, but I know that it is something in our society that we need to work on.

There is a lot in a passage like this for this morning. We cannot change the story, but we can see how things might be different if the story were different. We can also take this as an opportunity to learn from this story and see that even though shamefulness and temptation and blaming all came out of this story, we can see these as things to learn from.

Don't be ashamed of who you are because if your most unique traits, might be one of your best gifts to share with others. Don't blame others for something that you might have done. Take responsibility for your actions and learn from them. We are not perfect. We are sinful people who make mistakes, but own that fact and learn. We cannot give into the temptations of life. This one can be difficult, but we know that God is stronger than the temptations. Even though God was disappointed in Adam and Eve for giving into the temptations of the snake, he didn't destroy or kill them. God still loved them. God still forgave them. God *DID* still punish them and make them leave, but God also showed them love.

“What if...Adam and Eve didn't eat from the tree?” God's love would still be shown in our lives and those who have gone before us and those who will come after us. This *IS* the Good News. Amen.