

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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First Sunday in Advent, November 28, 2010

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 65:1-4, 55:1, 369, 61, 65:6.

Lessons: Genesis 2:15 – 3:-24, 2 Timothy 2:5-15, Matthew 1:18-23.

Sermon Text: Genesis 3:14-16.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I just can't imagine a world without sin. But Eve and her husband Adam had it all. Everything was perfect, and all they had to do was to maintain the garden.

When we talk about the first sin and mankind's fall into sin, we usually look at and focus on Satan, who tempted Eve to sin. In this Advent season, we will look at some humans who looked forward to the first coming of Jesus Christ. Today let's see what Scripture has to say about Eve, the first one who sinned. We have to remember the perfection she enjoyed along with her husband in the Garden of Eden. Everything God had created was "very good". There was no sin. There was no death. They had everything they could need. They were free to eat almost anything in the garden. *"And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" Genesis 2:16-17.*

Then Eve and Adam lost it all. Today let's look at

EVE

- 1. As a sinner she suffered the consequences of sin.**
- 2. As a believer she looked for the coming of the Savior**

In our Old Testament lesson today you heard the history of Eve, the first woman, from her creation up to the point of God banishing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, which had been perfect until sin came into the world.

The Word of God doesn't tell us a lot directly about Eve. We learn that she was literally created from Adam's rib, that she was tempted by Satan and gave in to Satan's temptations, doubting God, not trusting God, not believing what God had commanded. She gave some of the forbidden fruit to her husband who also gave in to Satan's temptation.

Scripture teaches us that Satan in the form of a serpent, a snake, *"said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" v. 1.* He intends to put doubt into her mind. We might say that listening to him was the first sin. *"The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.'" v. 2.* The devil had implied that God's command referred to every tree, to all trees of the garden. The woman continues: *"but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" The devil intended to shake the woman's trust in God, to create doubts in her heart concerning the truth of God's word. He succeeded because the woman allowed herself to be drawn into an argument with the devil, not only stating that God had forbidden them to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, but adding also: And do not even touch it, or they would surely die. This exaggeration of God's command seems to show us that the woman felt God's command to be harsh and severe, that her love toward God, her trust in God had been undermined. That was the beginning of her sin, the setting aside of God's Word and command, because doubt, unbelief, is the root of all sin. The devil was alert to take advantage of her weakening: *"'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman."**

As another result of sin, death came into the world, even death for Adam and Eve, although her death is not mentioned in Genesis 5:1-5: ***"This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them 'man.'" When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.*** That's the fate of all mankind: death. So the devil lied, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan goes on: ***"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*** Not satisfied with having awakened doubt in the woman's heart, the Tempter now boldly denies the truth of the divine threat and casts suspicion upon the genuineness of God's divine love: You most assuredly will not die. He insinuates that God is a jealous tyrant, withholding from man some of the advantages to which he was entitled, by means of an empty threat. Instead of becoming subject to death, so the devil asserts, the man and his wife would have their eyes opened for a greater and better understanding of both good and evil. A lie! Or, if you want to argue, it is a half-truth, which is completely not a truth, but a lie. Up until that time, Adam and Eve had known only good. By sinning, they also came to know evil, which certainly was not a good thing! Like untold numbers of tempters since that time, the devil suggested that they would then be able to choose the good and follow it always, while they would certainly shun that which was wicked. But this condition is not brought about by the transgression of God's commands, for such a course, as in this instance, results in driving the fear, and the love, and the trust in God away, and making the carnal mind enmity toward God

In our Old Testament lesson you heard that Eve had special burdens to bear. ***"To the woman [God] said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.'"*** But just as Scripture is very brief in recording very little about many humans in the Bible, so we know very little of her daily life, her struggles and hopes, her troubles and her faith.

We realize, of course, that all mankind is sinful. We read in Genesis 6:5 ***"that every inclination of the thoughts of [mankind's] heart was only evil all the time."***

In chapter 4 of Genesis, after Adam and Eve were forced out of the once-perfect Garden of Eden we read ***"Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.'" Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.*** Genesis 4:1-2.

We can be sure that both parents had high hopes for their children. When we examine the Hebrew words of Eve's statement upon the birth of her first-born son, Cain, which means "possession", we realize that she is saying literally: I have gotten a man, Jehovah, "I have gotten a man, the Lord." Those words show that she believed that the Lord had come down to earth, that this first-born son was the promised Messiah who would crush the head of Satan. She believed that God had sent the Savior to redeem them from all their sins.

But that first-born son ended up being a murderer, and we read that he was banished. So not only was Eve's first son a murderer who killed her second son, he was banished and that would mean that she probably never saw him again. What a burden for a mother, who could look at her own sins as the cause for the sorrow that had come upon her. While God forgives sins, we sometimes must carry in our bodies, hearts, and minds the results of those sins all our lives. But when Satan comes to torture you with the memories of your sins, you can remind him that Jesus conquered Satan when he rose from the dead. You can rejoice with those beautiful words from 1 Corinthians 15:55-57: ***"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** (King James Version)

Eve's sins can be a warning and a reminder for all of us. God speaks of the role of a godly woman when he tells us in 1 Timothy 2:8-15: ***"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority***

over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." God here speaks of his natural order of creation, not at this point speaking of the sin of Eve.

Paul elsewhere speaks of the serpent deceiving Eve, and warns all Christians with the picture that he wants Christians to come to God like "a pure virgin" (2 Corinthians 11:2). Of course, we can approach God only because he has washed us clean in the blood of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ. We read in 2 Corinthians 11:2-4 *"I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough."* Don't be deceived! Just as Eve was deceived, there are temptations around us every day trying to deceive us. We must remember, as the hymnwriter tells us "That Satan, who has marked his prey, Is plotting to deceive me. This foe with hidden snares May seize me unawares If e'er I fail to watch and pray." (The Lutheran Hymnal, 413:1)

But we need another word of caution here. Eve sinned first, but men – males – dare not look at themselves and think that they're sinless, or that they would be OK if not for Eve, the first woman. Adam willingly sinned along with his wife. And that's human nature. Sin always looks so tempting, so pleasant. And you remember that Adam tried to blame his wife, and his wife tried to blame the serpent.

The first Messianic prophecy had been given after the first sins, and faith in this prophecy lived in the heart of Eve. She was wrong when she believed this first-born son of hers to be the promised Messiah. She showed that her confidence was in the one who was to be her descendant, the one who was to crush the head of the serpent, the devil, but she was wrong in thinking that God had immediately, when she wanted it, sent the Savior. Adam and Eve were the first sinners, but also the first believers, the beginning of the Church of God on earth. All believers walk in the footsteps of Eve's faith. Her second son, whose name Abel, meaning vanity, indicates that she was feeling the vanity of this earthly life and she hoped all the more eagerly for salvation. By the time Abel was born, had she seen sin in her first-born? That would seem most logical, knowing human nature, and the nature of children.

So although Eve thought that God had already sent the promised Savior, she probably had no clue that several thousand years would pass before God, in his right time, would give mankind the promised Savior. We read in Galatians 4:4-5 *"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."* The Savior didn't come when humans first needed him. He came in God's good time. Many hard times had to come upon the children of men – even upon the chosen tribe that would produce the Savior from their bloodlines.

But we rejoice that God DID send the Savior, even though it took thousands of years and dozens of generations. That Savior was born to a woman, just as were Eve's sons. In his love, God sent that redeemer to save US from our sins. For that we rejoice this Advent season. Amen.