

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, September 18, 2011**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)  
Hymns: 42, 145:1, 369, 384, 149.  
Lessons: Genesis 3:1-24, 1 Peter 5:5b-11, John 8:34-47.  
Sermon Text: Genesis 3:1-24.  
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

You recently heard that everything that God created was very good. So why is there evil in the world? We see and hear about rebellion against God everywhere. Well, this rebellion started when one of God's angels rebelled against God. Since he realized he was powerless to harm God, he decided to take innocent hostages. Genesis 3 tells the tragic story of how this evil angel managed to get God's children away from him.

The day God's first children turned away from him, in an attitude of unbelief and of defiance, has to be the saddest day in history. This chapter of Scripture gives us the only answer to the question:

**WHY IS THERE EVIL IN THE WORLD?**

- 1. Satan tempted Eve with lies, deception, and empty promises.**
- 2. Eve and Adam succumbed to these temptations.**

Now since the snake was one of God's creatures, its craftiness dare not be viewed as an evil quality. This intelligent animal was the one Satan chose to use as his instrument to drive a wedge between God and his children. The Book of Revelation also speaks of Satan as a serpent: "*The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*" Revelation 12:9. "*He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan.*" Revelation 20:2. Of course we know that snakes can't really talk. So this is obviously something other than the snake itself talking

"*Did God really say?*" The question sounds innocent enough doesn't it? 'Eve, are you sure you got that right? Is it possible that a loving God would deny his highest creatures the pleasure of eating any kind of fruit in the Garden?' But Satan's question was not an innocent one. His purpose was to raise doubts in Eve's mind – doubts as to exactly what God had said as well as doubts about the fairness of God's forbidding eating of fruit from that one tree.

The first thing we notice about Satan is that he works with a disguise. He pretended to be interested in Eve's well-being. He didn't say to her, and he doesn't say to us: 'come on and sin' but what he does say is: 'let me help you to live a happier, more exciting life. Surely God wants you to be happy.' Why did he put this beautiful fruit on the tree if you weren't supposed to eat it? God wants you to live life to the fullest.

"*The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 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.'"*" In Eve's response we can detect the very beginnings of mankind's fall into sin. She knew that snakes can't talk. She also knew that animals have no sense of right and wrong. She should have recognized immediately that an evil spirit was involved here. And yet she entered into a discussion of God's Word and God's goodness with a snake. His insinuation that God was not being truthful to her is one she should immediately have rejected. This was going to be an expensive conversation for which she would end up paying a terrible price.

"*'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'*" If Eve might have imagined this

to be a harmless conversation these next words of Satan must surely have shown her otherwise. First he denied the reality of the punishment God had threatened, calling God's truthfulness into question. And then he called God's love into question. He put God's prohibition in an ugly light. He pictured God, the giver of all good gifts, as selfish and envious, rather than unbelievably gracious and generous. Satan is saying 'God has forbidden you to eat the fruit only because he knows eating it would endow you with a secret knowledge, the knowledge that you can live without God. God doesn't want you to discover the tremendous potential that lies in your human reason. Instead he wants to keep you ignorant.'

Satan offered Eve two alternatives, both of which should have been unacceptable to her: either God had not forbidden her to eat the fruit, or he was not the loving God he pretended to be.

Here is the basic lie of Satan: God and his will are not really good. God has known all along that eating the fruit will make you his equals and he doesn't want that.

However, God had been unbelievably generous to Adam and Eve. But Satan tried to convince them that there was one thing he had not given them: equality with himself. God had designed them to live under him, not alongside him. Satan dangled this before Eve's eyes, knowing that there were no earthly gifts he could offer her which God had not already given his beloved children. Satan had planted two poisonous seeds in Eve's heart. First he persuaded her not to take God too seriously. Secondly he planted major doubts about God's goodness. Then in essence, he stepped back and waited.

Eve's sin was not just disobedience. Her sin was unbelief. She refused to believe what God had said about himself. Instead, she doubted his love, choosing rather to believe Satan's lie

***"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."*** Can you see the change that had taken place in the entire personality of Eve? As long as she possessed the image of God, perfection and sinlessness, she knew everything God wanted her to know. Now her intellect, her wisdom told her that the tree was good for food and desirable for making you wise. Her emotions had also been misled. Eve no longer found joy in simple obedience to her Father's word. Her will which had been in perfect harmony with God's will now led her to do what God had forbidden and to tell her husband to do the same. She had permitted Satan's lie to take possession of her mind and heart and will.

We notice also that in the fall into sin, both Adam and she abandoned their God-given roles. Eve was designed by God to be a helper for the man, and now she presumed to act as leader of the family – the spiritual leader! And Adam, designed to be the spiritual head of the family, abandoned his leadership role and listened to his wife instead of to God.

Satan's promise to Eve had turned out to be a lie. She and Adam had not become like God. In another sense however Satan's word had come true. Their eyes had been opened alright except not in a beneficial way as Satan had promised. They had previously known only good. Now they also knew evil, and it was something which now controlled them.

We have to look carefully at how Satan, the devil, tempted Eve because his methods haven't changed all that much throughout history. His basic lie is still: 'God is not good. He's withholding from you privileges that you as an individual are entitled to – the privilege, for example, of deciding for yourself what's good for you.' Peter, who had learned all too well first-hand, tells us in 1 Peter 5:8: ***"Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."***

For only one example, he wants us to imagine that we, after all, are in charge of our lives, that we are the masters of our fate, the captains of our soul.

Satan is still whispering this temptation to us: 'you will not surely die!' He has persuaded many to believe that hell does not exist or that after a person dies he simply ceases to exist, or some other such fiction. If a person is strong enough to withstand that lie, Satan will offer the lie that God will give everybody a second chance after death. And there's another variation on the theme 'you will not die' called universalism, which argues that ultimately all people will be saved and nobody will be damned.

***“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’”*** A feeling of shame was the first result Adam and Eve experienced because of their sin. There would be other results, and these became obvious when the Lord God came into the garden.

In their sin and shame Adam and Eve were not looking for God but he was looking for them. They were ashamed. Then they were afraid. They ran from God and tried to hide. God asked ‘What have you done that you should be hiding?’ Adam answered with a half-truth. It was evasive and deceptive; it doesn’t tell the whole story. ***“He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’ And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’ The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”*** Adam learned for himself the truth of Proverbs 28:13: ***“He who conceals his sins does not prosper.”***

God asks Adam, as the head of the family, a direct question. But Adam points to Eve as the instigator, as the problem. He says it’s her fault. And after all God, it must be your fault too because you gave her to me. Then of course God asks Eve and she doesn’t accept blame either. She says it’s the serpent’s fault. Both Adam and Eve were concentrating on the simple deed of eating. God was much more concerned about the sinful attitude that produced the sinful deed. After all, sin begins in the heart. ***“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”*** Mark 7:21-23

So we’ve heard about the first sin that came into the world. But remember, this is our family history. Every one of us is a son or daughter of Adam and Eve. Yes we are sinners; we admit that but that idea dare never be the end of a Christian, God-pleasing sermon. We must always hear, from the word of God, what God has done to save us from our sins.

God now turns to the serpent and announces a curse. ***“So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”’*** The snake’s method of movement was to be changed. From now on he would crawl on his belly. This unusual method of moving along the ground was to serve as a constant reminder to Adam, to Eve, and to us that this is the animal Satan used to drag the crown of God’s creation down to his level. Crawling in the dust would also symbolize Satan’s defeat and humiliation. Adam and Eve heard the words God spoke to Satan, and they were to know that although Satan had won this little victory, he would not triumph permanently.

Through the Holy Scriptures we have learned how this victory over Satan came about. It came through Jesus Christ, a descendant of Eve, who crushed the head of Satan although he himself was sacrificed on the cross to win this victory.

Evil had come into the world but God also provided a way to rescue, to redeem, to save mankind from all evil. Believing in Jesus Christ as that Savior is the way God sought to give eternal life for mankind. Faith in Jesus saves. God’s Word is clear about that: ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** Mark 16:16. And God provided his Word to give that faith: ***“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** Romans 10:17. May we share daily in that gospel message of redemption from sin! Amen.