

Rev. David R. Solum  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent  
February 29 & March 1, 2020  
Immanuel Lutheran, Michigan City  
Genesis 3:1-21  
Romans 5:12-19  
Matthew 4:1-11

There are a lot of people out there who would laugh at us for believing such silly myths like the temptation of Adam and Eve. Who would've thought of such nonsense as to bring death into the world through eating a piece of fruit? Some of you might even be a little embarrassed to admit believing it to others. I still say that it's easier to believe than the monkey science of human evolution.

But it all comes down to whether we believe God's Word is God's Word. Do you respect God's Word and will you submit to it or would you rather have a more attractive knowledge which will give you respect? That was the temptation of Eve. "Did God really say?" the devil asked. The devil gave Eve confusion about God's Word and made her question it and come up with an uneasy answer. "Well, God did say we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, and you shall not touch it, or you will die." Once the devil got her to question the Word, he flat out contradicted it. "You will not surely die." And He offered something that looked better than God's command. "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." And since the fruit was attractive and coveted for making a person wise, she ate it. So you see, it was not merely about eating a fruit, but about denying God, who gives us life, and wanting something more attractive.

Most people are more interested in sophisticated knowledge, knowledge that's praiseworthy and makes you look smart, knowledge that makes you successful. But Bible stories feel like child's play. Parents can fall into that trap sometimes. Think about how much time we spend on our kids' reading, mathematics, and science. We agonize over getting them in the perfect school. We want them in all the right activities to help their team skills, athleticism, artistic abilities, and give them something to put on their college resume someday. We spend all this time training them as students for careers, but how much time is spent in God's Word? How much time do we talking about Christian vocation with them? And, of course, a good education and career are good things which we can use for the glory of God, but they aren't necessary for Christian life. True saving, sanctifying, and eternal life comes only from the Gospel. We should rather have our children not go to college, hold down a minimum wage job, yet have faith in God's Word and avoid temptation, than have them become brain surgeons but have no faith. Whatever we make first priority and invest the most in, is our god.

Eve had it all. She had the perfect husband. She had health, beauty, and strength. She never had any want or need. She had the image of God with all its glory and she had God's Word. But Eve wanted a higher knowledge than God's command. She wanted to know good and evil. She wanted to be like God in His wisdom. By the way, Adam did too. He was sitting there right next to Eve, allowing all of this to transpire. Instead of shielding his wife from the devil and defending God's Word, he was silent. He cowardly allowed Eve to try the fruit first and then when it seemed safe, he took a bite. Ironically, when Adam and Eve won this additional knowledge, they lost every other good for humanity. We now cannot observe the creation, have dominion of it, and use it for the glory of God as we could've. We retained human reason, but it

is severely flawed with sin. And we are born striving for knowledge without the knowledge of God.

-Which leads to all kinds of problems. That's why the world has competing creation stories to ours. Much of the science is done assuming that God has never intervened in creation and that everything has a naturalistic explanation. Of course many conclusions will be flawed with such kinds of science! As the proverb says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Not only so, but we live in an age of such uncertainty. Who would've thought 25 years ago that the internet would actually more access to false information than true? We thought it would bring a renaissance of knowledge to everyone, but instead we need sites like Snopes to filter through lots of lies and conspiracy theories and even Snopes is not always trustworthy. And look at news agencies and politicians all giving contradicting truths. Which are we to believe? Can any be trusted?

Knowledge without God is darkness. We will never be able to sort things out without Him. And we'll live with the same flaws and sins which ultimately end in death. What good is all the knowledge in the world, when you are enslaved to sin and death? God's Word, on the other hand, shines with the truth of our human condition and the salvation which comes through Jesus Christ. Without Genesis 3, we would not know our helpless, sorry state, and without the Gospel of Jesus, we would have no hope of redemption. But with the two we can understand that the world is fallen, yet redeemed; under a curse, yet sanctified. And we can better understand our purpose in the world and the world's purpose for us and use our created gifts to serve our

neighbor. And we can have certainty in our hope of the life to come, in which there will be no more deception and suffering.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned...But if death reigned through the one man, Adam, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ?

Since Adam failed miserably for the whole human race, God's Son Jesus Christ came down and became man to defeat our tempter and restore the life we lost. Like before, Satan attacked straightaway the Word of God. "Command these stones to become loaves of bread. Let's see your Word in action! Prove yourself!" But although Christ had rained down bread from heaven for Israel in the wilderness, He refused to twist God's command for His own purposes. And he responded with the Scripture, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." So the devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and wanted to test the truth of God's Word. "Doesn't Scripture say, 'He will command His angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone'?" But Jesus responded again with Scripture, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." Then the devil took Jesus to a high mountain and promised all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if Jesus would fall down and worship him. Thus Satan revealed his true intention in it all: that he would be worshipped as god. Whenever we obey his lies instead of God's truth, we make the devil our god. But Jesus again responded with Holy Scripture and rebuked Satan.

Jesus continued to fight against the lies of Satan, the Pharisees, and others. He preached boldly the truth, even though it would be so scandalous that it led to His crucifixion and death. But in perfectly obeying God's commandments, Jesus offered His holy life to undue the curse and chain the old liar, the devil, to hell. And He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to rule over all things by His Word of power.

Christ spoke over you and you were reborn in the image of God. He put His Word in your heart and gave you saving faith. It is now your power to resist Satan and use all your created gifts and knowledge to serve your neighbor and bring God's gracious favor to them. You can terrorize the powers of hell with it when they begin to threaten you. You can stand on it with hope and confidence when the rest of the world doesn't know what to believe. It shields you from evil and grants you the power of heaven and all its angels to minister to you in time of need. It guides and guards your steps until you reach eternal life.

Christ is restoring what was lost in the fall and even gives you one better than Adam and Eve had. You have the Word made flesh, God incarnate, to save you and defend you. He will not sit idly by while you are tempted. He will not cower to the devil. Christ has crushed the serpent's head with His cross. He will absolve you so that the accuser can't bring condemnation. He will speak over the bread and the wine so that His body and blood would undo the curse of your sinful flesh. He will make you, by the power of the Holy Spirit, renewed in His image and likeness until He returns and His angels bear you up from this wilderness to Himself in heaven. Amen.