

March 5, 2017
 Sermon for the First Sunday in Lent
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Genesis 3:1-21

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Genesis 3:1–24 (ESV)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” ¹⁴ The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” ¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” ²⁰ The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. ²² Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Every time I read the opening chapters of Genesis, I shake my head in amazement, sometimes even shock and annoyance. It happened again this past week as I studied these chapters.

When I consider the creation of this world by the powerful Word of God, the great care and pains He took making man and woman, and His wonderful love in preparing their home—the Garden of Eden—I'm amazed and astonished at God's wonderful, gracious love for His world and us. Then I'm angered by the foolishness and stupidity of our first parents, who tossed it all away by believing the lying, tempting words of "that sneaky old snake," Satan.

Remember Tom T. Hall's song, Sneaky Snake from 1974? I found myself singing that old song while studying Genesis Chapter 3. The song talks about Sneaky Snake sneaking up behind you and drinking all your root beer. Among other things, he is always sneaking around doing little things but still it reminded me of the ultimate sneaky snake that is known by the name satan.

How could Adam and Eve have fallen for that sneaky old snake so easily? Yet, I know better than to say I wouldn't have done it, because 9 times out of 10, I would have too! And that's being generous.

Unfortunately, so would you! Satan's temptations are hard to resist. "That sneaky old snake" is a formidable foe and forceful factor in the world. He and his cunning deceive and seduce us. And this activity will continue until Christ comes again in glory.

As Christians, we can't pretend the devil doesn't tempt us. We must take him and his cunning seriously because our eternal fate and future hang in the balance!

The Subtle Serpent Seduces

The subtle serpent, Satan, effectively seduces us every time. He did it to Adam and Eve and he does it to us! **That's his nature.** The Scriptures refer to him with several descriptive names:

“Devil,” which means accuser or slanderer; and “satan,” which means adversary, enemy, or opponent.

Jesus calls him a murderer, a liar, and the father of lies: *“He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies”* (Jn 8:44b).

Luther’s Catechism reminds us that the devil was once a holy angel but then fell away from God. He and the evil angels who joined him are spirits who were created holy, but then they sinned and are forever rejected by God.

These enemies of God and humankind are cunning, powerful, and of great number. They work to destroy the works of God. Although Satan appears here in the form of a serpent, he’s the master of disguise: *“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light”* (2 Cor 11:14).

Beware! Be on guard! *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Eph 6:12).

“That sneaky old snake” still challenges and seduces.

Talking snakes? Are you serious? Who would be dumb enough to believe that? That’s just some writer’s way of explaining how this world ended up as it is now. Besides, do you REALLY believe Adam and Eve were real people and the only people in the world? That’s just a way of describing the origins of the human race. Satan doesn’t seduce today?

While the account we have in Genesis 3 may not make perfect sense to us, it is the account we have from God, and we believe it as God’s testimony. God said it; we believe it!

The tactics Satan used in the garden are still his tactics today. Satan questions God and His Word: *“Did God really say?”* “Did he? Well, yes; but does He mean it?”

The devil contradicts God’s commands: *“You will not surely die”*—at least not right away.” “God doesn’t mean that. He said it just to frighten you.”

And Satan makes promises of his own—promises that are unbelievably believable! *“your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

Sure enough—“... the eyes of both were opened,.” On top of that, they didn’t fall dead on the spot. Satan said, *“You will not surely die.”* In fact, *“Adam lived 930 years, and then he died”* (Gen 5:5, emphasis added).

The promises Satan makes to us sound as good and believable as these lies.

The Snake’s Seductions Succeed

“That sneaky old snake” spreads his rebellious seductions. Ever since he rebelled against God, he’s “hell-bent” to subvert and seduce God’s creatures.

He began with Adam and Eve. He succeeded in turning Cain against Abel. He was successful with Judah and Tamar, David and Bathsheba, Solomon, Jeroboam, Ahab and Jezebel, and hundreds of thousands of others.

He’s so successful that we are told in Ecclesiastes 7 that *“there is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins”* (Eccl 7:20).

Satan’s success is universal! In demonic pride, he considers no one off-limits. Satan even tempted Jesus as the Gospel reminds us. Remember his tactics as you study Christ’s temptation.

Does he question God and His Word? *“...If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.”*

Does he contradict God’s commands? ... *“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ ... ”* (Mt 4:6).

Does he make promises of his own? *“All these I will give you”* (Mt 4:9).

Be on guard, for Satan spreads his rebellious seductions as he attacks all Christians—including you and me. The noose of sin snares, strangles, and suffocates everyone without exception! The slithering, subtle, sneaky; suggestive, rebellious serpent seeks to seduce everyone.

So take him seriously and resist his assaults. Satan wants us to think of him as that laughable caricature—the fellow with horns, long tail, and pitchfork that no one really believes in. If no one takes him seriously, it's that much easier for him to do his deceptive work.

Look again at our text. Great expectations can lead to great shame and grief. Both Adam and Eve had great expectations as they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Their eyes would be opened. They would be wise. They would be like God, knowing good and evil, and would live happily ever after! Yes, their eyes were opened. The “wisdom” they now had made them realize how utterly foolish and senseless it was to listen to the lying, tempting words of Satan. **But that knowledge came too late!**

The Great Exchange

Created in the image of God, Adam and Eve exchanged that image for what they thought was more, but what proved to be less! Gen 2:25 tells us, *“The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”*

They had everything. What changed?

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Gen 3:7).

When they realized they became embarrassed and ashamed. They did the best they could: *“they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”*

Physical death replaced the life God had given. Although it took 930 years, Adam did die. So has everyone else except Enoch and Elijah. St. Paul reminds us of that truth in the Epistle: *“death came to all men, because all men sinned.” “The wages of sin is death”* (Rom 6:23a).

Not very comforting, is it? Not only did man die physically, but he died spiritually. The relationship between God and man was severed, splintered, and broken by sin.

Now everyone, by nature, is blind, dead, and an enemy of God—lost and doomed to hell, condemned to hear, *“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Mt 25:41).

So what can we do? Can you resist Satan’s assaults.

Can you do what Adam and Eve didn’t do?

Nope. You can’t. Neither can I. Not by ourselves.

The only way we can resist the assaults of Satan is by God’s grace.

Consider God’s gracious promise in the Introit:

“When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.” “Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.” (Ps 91:15–16, 9–10).

Listen to Paul in today’s Epistle: *“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.”* . . . “For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, 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.” (Rom 5:15, 17).

Resist Satan as Jesus did—through the power of the Word. That Word directs, sanctifies, and governs us. It worked for Jesus.

Each time Satan came to attack Him he said, *“It is written.”* It’s not enough to know the Scriptures so well that you can quote them. Anyone—including Satan—can do that!

We must know what the Scriptures say and mean for us. We must believe their message. It’s hard to resist Satan’s temptations. “That sneaky snake” is a formidable foe and forceful factor in the world. He is crafty and cunning and eill always deceive and seduce us.

The subtle serpent, Satan, successfully spreads his subversive seductions.

Take him seriously and resist his assaults.

Resist the lying, tempting words of Satan as you come to the Lord's Table to, "Take, and eat;" believe the Word's of Jesus as He says: "this is my body"; "Take, and drink; this is my blood."

By eating and drinking Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, you are assured of the forgiveness of sins, of life, and of salvation.

It is yours through faith in Jesus as your Savior.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and mind through Christ Jesus!

Amen.