

September 30, 2018
Lesson 5: God Creates; Humans Sin
Scripture: Genesis 3:8-17, 20-24

Context:

The text today jumps into what is known as The Fall. Without going into the main event that takes place at the beginning of chapter three in Genesis, the verses today show the aftermath of the decision. We learn that while God creates, humans also create and it is not always good.

A note of caution should be read when approaching this text. In previous interpretations of the text, there has sometimes been the attempt to play the blame game on whether Adam or Eve was in the wrong on their decision to eat the fruit. Too much conversation has gone on concerning if this targets the sins of males versus females. Interpretations of this text have even been used to justify oppression of women and once again show our sinful nature that seeks to desire and possess control over others. The focus is on the fact that humans sinned, and as a result, we see that play out today again and again.

The main focus on this text is knowledge and how knowledge is used. In the Old Testament, themes of wisdom and boundaries are reiterated through the Proverbs and the books of the prophets. The question this narrative and these other writings bring up is: Are there modes of knowledge that come at too high a cost?¹ It is a question that comes time and time again throughout the Bible. King David uses knowledge to move Uriah to the front of battle to get his way to Uriah's wife Bathsheba. Jacob knows his father is blind and uses the hair of goat to deceive his father into thinking he is his hairy brother Esau. This text starts that theme of not using knowledge for good, but for evil.

The other critique in this text is on that of anxiety. In our reading, we hear that Adam states they are afraid because they are naked. Why should they be afraid of being in such a state? That was how God created them. The text is not a case for nudity as sinful because the fruit made them lustful. Instead it points out more that these first human are so anxious that their seeking of discernment of everything leads them to shy away from vulnerability and suffering.² As Adam and Eve sought out freedom they traded in their dependency on God and the trust that was to be in the relationship.

The response from God is not to be so much as a punishment as it is an etiology, or explanation, of the human way of life. We learn why snakes have no legs and why the venomous snakes of the Middle East drew the ire of the people. We learn of why pregnancy is painful and even a preview of the unfortunate domination of men over women that will be unjustly prescribed and sadly defended in they years to come. The man will be cursed to till the land and struggle from not everything being given to him leading him to always be at work sometimes causing his own hell as he depends on himself. Essentially we learn that humans will suffer, sometimes at the hands of their own

¹ Walter Brueggeman, "Genesis," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (John Knox Press; Louisville, KY 1982), 51.

² *Ibid.*, 54.

decisions and desire for control. They will even taste death.

Application

What do we take away from this text that illustrates that humanity is sinful? While reading the story, one cannot help but think of the cyclical nature of sin. Humans everyday are faced with choices and some days we do not make the best choices.

There is grace in this text though. The first comes in how we deal with knowledge and what is given to us. Knowledge in and of itself is not a bad thing. It is how we use knowledge that can lead to either an improved way of being or calamity. In the case of Adam and Eve, we see them use the knowledge for evil. They hide from God in their nakedness, and to a degree, hide from themselves. We do the same thing from time to time in our lives. We use anger, pride, social status, race, and even age to make sure others know that we are in control. And it always leads to the slippery slope of using that knowledge of those things to hurt others.

The other practical application is to notice our own anxiety and how it blinds us from fruitful living. In the text, Adam and Eve are both anxious about being caught and about their nakedness. They begin to blame each other and even the snake about what happened to them. They let their anxiety fuel their behavior so that trust is completely gone.

We do not have to go too far to see that anxiety is what drives us. Think about consumerism. There are ointments that make you look younger. There are clothes that make you look more stylish. There are homes that will give you the status and happiness you desire. There are jobs that are worth more than others. There are people who need to be your friends because they are the “cool” people. The country club needs your membership because everyone in your Sunday school class is a member.

As a result, we become anxious. We begin to think about the things that do not really matter. We forget to look in the mirror and appreciate that God made our eyes a certain color and that our bodies are gifts. We forget to notice that the old shirt we’ve always had still looks nice and still has pizzazz. We forget that the best friends we have are those who love us more for our laugh and common interests than a membership at the club. We allow anxiety to run our lives and run away from all the many wonderful things God has already given us. We run away from God seeking the approval of other humans and the more negative voices that shout in our head.

So as we reflect on this text, we are called to remember to stick to Wesley’s rule of “Do no harm,” and to count our blessings. We are reminded to trust in the Lord and to always seek God in our lives. We are reminded that even though we have fallen, God gives us grace and there is nothing we can do to hide from God’s love again.

Rev. E. Hunter Pugh
Associate Pastor
First United Methodist Church
1380 W. Main St.
Dothan, AL 36301
Office (334) 793-3555 ext. 240
E-mail: hunter@fumcdothan.org

