

*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. <sup>9</sup> But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

*<sup>10</sup> He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*

*<sup>11</sup> And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"*

*<sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."*

*<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"*

*The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

*<sup>14</sup> 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.*

*<sup>15</sup> 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." (Genesis 3:8-15)*

### What Came Out of That Garden?

We finally got our garden in. We've been wanting to do it for weeks, but it's just been so busy. But finally, all the seeds are planted and the fence is up. I know it's silly, but the day after we planted those seeds, I couldn't resist walking out there to see what was happening. Obviously, no seed comes up that fast. But almost every day since it went in, I've looked. Now, plants are coming up and they all promise to enrich our table this summer. How true will that promise be? Every year is different. Last year, we did great with beans and pickles. Our corn was the best it had ever been, until the squirrels or raccoons ate it all. Potatoes and sweet potatoes did great but the zucchini were a big disappointment. Part of planting a garden is waiting to see what fruits you're going to get. Thousands of years ago, God planted a garden, too. In terms of physical fruits and vegetables, I'm sure it was amazing. But there were other fruits that came out of that garden. The fruit of what happened in that Garden of Eden affects lives every single day. Our Old Testament lesson for today focuses our attention on those fruits, both good and bad. **What came out of that garden?**

#### I.

The lesson begins in the middle of the story. In the previous chapter, God planted the Garden of Eden and put Adam there to work it. God planted the Tree of Life to give eternal life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to give Adam and Eve the opportunity to worship him by obeying his command not to eat of it. This chapter began with the devil coming in the form of a serpent and tempting Eve. He awakened a sinful desire in her heart for what God had forbidden. She ate some of the forbidden fruit. She gave some to Adam who apparently was standing right there while the devil confused and deceived her and said nothing. He ate, too. Then the fruits came, all the terrible fruits that we live with and wrestle with and suffer with. **What came out of that garden? The fruits of the fall into sin.**

Our reading picks up the story late in the day of that fall. Adam and Eve had realized that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together in a desperate attempt to cover themselves. As the evening breeze came, God walked in the garden. What did Adam and Eve do? They hid. Before God even said anything, shame took over. Have you ever felt shame? How often do you come to church naked? We don't do that because we feel the same shame that Adam and Eve felt. That shame showed itself in hiding. Have you tried to hide when you've done something you shouldn't? Have you ever passed a note in class and then quick looked

up to see if the teacher saw you? Have you ever tried to hide your sin from your wife or your husband? From your boss? From the police car sitting by the side of the road? Shame comes from our sin. It's not exactly the same thing as guilt. Guilt means that I've committed a crime and I deserve to be punished. When I feel guilty, I know that's true. Believe it or not, guilt has a positive purpose. God sends it to make us realize that we've sinned and we need to deal with it. Shame is the devil's way of getting us to avoid dealing with it. It preserves all the horror in our hearts, all the terrible feeling that we can't get rid of. But it hides from God and from the people we've sinned against. It hides from authority figures and people who would disapprove. Shame is all about me, and how I don't want anyone else to see and know what I have done.

Adam and Eve felt shame and they hid. But God didn't leave it there. He knew, of course, exactly where they were and exactly what they had done. He knew the moment the sinful desire was born in their hearts. They had sinned and they deserved his wrath and punishment. But he didn't come to send them to hell. He came to reclaim them. He did want to hear their confession because forgiveness means nothing without the realization that I have sinned. But God came to forgive them. So he played along with their childish charade. He called to them: **"Where are you?"** He gave Adam the opportunity to confess.

But Adam didn't take it. He said, **"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."** Not one word about what he had done. Not one word about sin and punishment. It's been my experience as a pastor that conversations often start about one thing when they're really about something else. Why are you upset? Because I don't have this project done. But that's not what I'm really upset about. I'm upset because I spent hours playing video games or watching TV or puttering around in the garage and now I have no chance of getting it done. I know it's my fault but I am ashamed of that so I talk about something else.

In the Garden of Eden, God already knew about our human efforts to avoid topics we don't want to talk about. So he asked, **"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"** Then Adam displayed another characteristic that we see over and over again: he blamed someone else. It was Eve's fault. Really, God, it was your fault. The woman *you put here*, she gave me some of the fruit and I ate. Eve did the same thing. The serpent deceived me and I ate. It's not my fault, God. How often don't we hear that? How often don't we do that? "It's not my fault!" That's the default setting of our sinful human hearts. We'll throw our children or our spouse or our best friend under a bus rather than take responsibility ourselves. We've been doing it since the Garden of Eden and that fruit is still here today.

All of that shame and blaming show us one more poisoned fruit that we eat of every day of our lives: Adam and Eve knew what sin was. They could've known that in a theoretical sense before the fall. They could've talked about sin the way we talk about what it would be like to walk on the moon. We can imagine leaping high above the surface and landing thirty feet away. But we don't really know what that would be like. Now Adam and Eve knew what guilt really feels like. They knew what shame really does to you. They knew the desperate fear of God's punishment and the need to blame even the person you love most in this world rather than face that punishment. They knew like we know what it is to be a sinner.

In the verses that come after our reading, they were going to know what sin does to us here: the pain and the sorrow that life was now going to hold for them, just like it does for us. They were going to learn to know death personally and intimately as they watched it claim their firstborn son, and waited for it to claim them, too. They were going to learn of God's curse and the death and hell that he imposes on all sin. They knew what we know. We know it all because of what happened there that day.

## II.

But all those terrible, poisoned fruits, are not the only things that came out of what happened there that day. God didn't let the sun go down on the fall into sin before he brought us the way out of all that sin does to us. There in the Garden of Eden, God gave us the first promise of a Savior. **What came out of that garden? The fruits of God's grace.**

God said to the serpent, to the devil in physical form, **"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."** What is enmity? It means being someone's enemy. God was going to make Eve into the devil's enemy. Now wasn't Eve already the devil's enemy? In one sense, yes. The devil had done more harm to her than any other person ever could. He had robbed her of a perfect life in the Garden of Eden. He had condemned her to anguish in childbirth and pain and sorrow of every kind. And he had killed her. She was going to die because of what he had done to her. In that sense, he was her worst enemy ever. But in another sense, he wasn't. She was now a

sinner whose heart belonged to the devil. She was his slave, chained on his side. But God promised to set her free. God promised to make her the devil's enemy again. If she wasn't on the devil's side anymore, whose side would she be on? God's. God was promising to move her back to his side.

God said, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman.”** God was going to move Eve back over to his side and he was going to move all of us too. He would do that through her offspring, through her Seed to use the Hebrew word here. The Seed of Woman is his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the woman's descendant. He's a real human being who came down to live here on earth to save us all from slavery to the devil and our own sin. Only he could do that, because unlike Adam and Eve, there never was a time when we weren't sinners. We've been sinners since the day we were conceived. We belonged to the devil already in our mothers' wombs. We were born God's enemies and all those fruits of sin in our lives just demonstrate that truth. But Jesus came and moved us back to God's side.

How did he do that? God said, **“He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”** What happens when you crush a snake's head? It dies, right? Now, the devil is a fallen angel. He doesn't have a physical body that can die. But Jesus came to destroy the devil's work of killing us and dragging us down to hell. When he provided eternal life for all people, he crushed the snake's head. But in the process, the serpent struck his heel. What happens when a poisonous snake strikes you? You die. The Seed of the Woman would come and destroy all that the devil does to us but he would die in the process. Did you see what God did there? Thousands of years before the cross, God spoke of his Son coming in human flesh and dying to set us free from sin and death and the devil. Now, there were lots of details God still needed to reveal. But Christ came to set us free. We're free from all the times we sinned and blamed others and made excuses for our sins. We're free from hell. We're free from death. If Jesus comes back first, we aren't even going to die. But even if we do, when we close our eyes here, we'll open them in heaven, where no pain or sorrow will ever touch us again.

We're free from the power of sin. It doesn't own us any more, even though we still have to wrestle with it. It's true, we know all too well what it's like to be a sinner, but now we also know what it's like to be forgiven and restored to God's family and loved. We don't have to feel shame anymore. We don't have to worry about God seeing what we've done, because all our guilt is washed away. God looks at us and sees Jesus and says that we have never sinned. While we do still struggle with what other people think of our sins, in Christ, we have the power to openly confess to each other and to ask for forgiveness from one another. That actually heals those terrible feelings that shame locks into our hearts.

In Christ, we don't need to blame others or make excuses for our sin. We simply cling to his forgiveness. That forgiveness gives us new power to wage war against the devil and to strive to live for God. Yes, we still feel the temptation to hide and blame others and make excuses, but God made us new and the new man inside strives against that behavior. Jesus lives in our hearts and fights alongside him. So in Christ, we live a new and different life, a life that truly does give glory to God. All that is the rich, sweet fruit of what God did in the garden.

I don't know how our vegetable garden will do this year. We've had a lot of rain and a lot of sun so far, so it's looking good. We've already had more strawberries than I think we've ever had. But all that could change tomorrow. God's fruits will never change. God has given us life instead of death, hope instead of despair, a new life in Christ instead slavery to the devil. In Jesus, all the fruits of sin die and the poison is taken away. One day soon, we'll even be able to see that with our own eyes when we see Jesus. Enjoy those fruits now and forever. Amen.