

Lent 1A 2020 SSP

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; St. Matthew 4:1-11

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Today's appointed lessons set in stark contrast the performance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the wilderness with Satan over against that of Adam and Eve in Paradise with the serpent. Let's look at them and see what they have to do with us here and now.

First of all, our Lord Jesus Christ. His trial with Satan in the wilderness begins immediately after his Baptism by John the Baptist, and he is **led by the Spirit** to face this trial. He was not led **into temptation**; he was led into the wilderness to face his trials, an infinite difference. Note that Jesus successfully resists entering into the temptations by refusing each time to put God to the test, that is, to tempt God. The devil quotes scripture at Jesus, but Jesus, also referring to Scripture, goes much deeper. He enters into simple obedience.

Simple obedience is exactly what Adam and Eve fail to do in Paradise as they are tempted by Satan. God had told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, lest they die. The devil persuaded them to disobey: "You will not die. Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God." Well, they ate the fruit; their eyes were opened; and they were ashamed and hid themselves. In the end, God in his mercy expelled them from the Garden, lest they eat from the tree of life and live forever in a state of disobedience. They would die, but you could fairly call it a mercy killing. Death at least puts an end to sin and its sorrows. We their descendants have been living like that ever since.

My dad, when he would make a blunder, would say to us, "I'm only human, you know." Yes, to err is human. What about Jesus Christ? As we see in the Gospel and hear elsewhere from the apostles, he was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. He lived in obedience. He

was called many things by his critics and foes: a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of sinners and keeper of bad company, a Sabbath and Law breaker, even a possessed madman and a blasphemer. Yet he maintained his obedience, his filial relationship, his Sonship, with God, so much that he called God his own Father. In each case he showed the accusations to be false and to proceed out of malice. So is Jesus human or not, if he was tempted as we are yet did not sin?

Actually Jesus is more human than we are, more fully and perfectly human, than Adam and Eve and all their fallen sons and daughters, including my dear dad, me and you. Here is some evidence. When you lie, or betray, or slander, or hate; when you take what is not yours, when you grab and get, when you give yourself over to greed or lust or some other inordinate affection or appetite; do you notice what happens in the aftermath? Do you feel good about yourself, fulfilled, that you are living as you were meant to live – at peace within, with God and with others? Or do you feel more like Adam and Eve felt in the aftermath of their disobedience? If you do not feel something amiss, it may show that you have a mental problem, as in lacking a conscience. I believe this all is evidence that we do not feel fulfilled when we sin; that in sin humanity is defaced and diminished. When Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man, we might also think of Jesus as the One True Human Being.

The story of Adam and Eve is not just a story about our first parents. It is our story. It ends with those sad words from God, “Where are you?” as they hide from God and turn on each other, and the consequences are a world where we find trouble and sorrow.

But so is the Gospel of Jesus Christ our story, if we will have it. It is Good News. Jesus is the New Adam. In the words of today’s epistle, “Just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.” Justification here means a right relationship – with God, with oneself and with one another. What Jesus offers us is

a fresh start by the gifts of his relationship to God and the infusion of his life into ours by means of faith and trust. The Good News is an invitation to live “in Christ.” Holy Communion is replete with this language.

My prayer for myself and for you this Lent is that we will rediscover or even discover for the first time the grace and peace and joy of faith in Christ; of a closer walk with God as we head towards Holy Week and Easter. I pray that when we get there, we will have seen more clearly what an awesome gift is on offer in Jesus Christ. May Jesus, the Victor in the wilderness, be our companion and savior all the way.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.