

March 01, 2020 [Purple]
First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Psalm 32 (UMH 766)

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

[NRSV] *The New Revised Standard Version*, copyright 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.
16 And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;
17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

The First Sin and Its Punishment

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?'
2 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 middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die."'
4 But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not 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 loincloths for themselves.

Psalm 32

The Joy of Forgiveness

Of David. A Maskil.

- 1 Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- 2 Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

- 3 While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
- 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
Selah

- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord',
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
Selah

- 6 Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.
- 7 You are a hiding-place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.
Selah

- 8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- 9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.

- 10 Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.
- 11 Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Romans 5:12–19

Adam and Christ

12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned— 13sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. 14Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

15 But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. 16And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgement following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. 17If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

18 Therefore 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. 19For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Matthew 4:1–11

The Temptation of Jesus

4Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' 4But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." '

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." '

7Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." '

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; 9and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' 10Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." '

11Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

03/01/2020 First Sunday in Lent - Readers' Theater: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS AT THE CROSS: SATAN

ARTISTIC ELEMENTS

The traditional color for today is: Purple, however, I am using "character" colors to represent each Sunday. The worship center may be draped in purple, if you wish.

[The large rough wooden cross is placed in the front of the chancel/worship area. Place burlap at the base to cover the stand.]

FABRIC:

Purple cloth may be draped over the worship center. It should come to the floor but not be "puddled."

CANDLES:

Two candles may be placed on the worship center on either side of an open Bible.

OTHER:

Place an open Bible in the center of the worship table.

[The large rough wooden cross is placed in the front of the chancel/worship area. Place burlap at the base to cover the stand. Have the same person read the part of Jesus each week. It should be someone with a good speaking voice. Each person who encounters Jesus will be wearing/carrying a length of cloth. When their encounter with Jesus is complete, they place the cloth over the arm of the cross and leave.]

Today: "Satan" encounters Jesus. He will have a drape of black cloth over his shoulder, which he will place over the arm of the cross when the "temptation" is complete. Then he departs.]

Narrator:

When Jesus had been baptized, he went to the wilderness to fast and pray. He fasted and prayed for forty days and forty nights and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and spoke to him.

Satan:

So you say you are the Son of God! You have been here a long time. You look hungry. How about a little bread? If you are the Son of God, you can command these stones here to become loaves of bread. Go ahead. Do it. It's OK. It's just a little bread, not a great feast. You will feel better when you have a little food in your stomach. Go ahead.

Jesus:

It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Satan:

Quoting scripture, huh? Well, if that's the way you want it. Stay hungry.

Narrator:

Then Satan took him to the holy city and placed him on the highest point of the Temple so that he could see all of Jerusalem.

Satan:

Well if you don't want bread, maybe there is something you do want--assurance. Son of God, throw yourself down from this high point, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you" and "On their hands they will bear you up so that you will not even dash your foot against a stone." How's that for quoting scripture?

Jesus:

Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Narrator:

Again Satan took him up to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

Satan:

How about it, Jesus? Want a little power and wealth? Look at this! This is all mine to give. I have control over it all, and I can give it to whomever I choose. I choose to give it to you, and all you have to do is to bow down and worship me. Nothing fancy, just a little spiritual commitment; you can have it all. Think of all you could do with this wealth. You would never have to worry; you could take care of millions of people. After all that's what you want to do, right? Just bow down and worship me.

Jesus:

Get away from me, Satan. For it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

[Satan takes the black cloth from his shoulder and places it over the arm of the cross. He pats the cross and then walks away.]

Narrator:

And Satan shook his head, and walked away for a time. And God's angels came and took care of Jesus.

LENT 1 REFLECTION : Seeds Need a Rich Environment [03-01]

SEED PAPER [KNOWING]

A seed that lacks appropriate soil may sprout, but will quickly wither and die. Even in the best soil, without water and nutrients, growth will be limited. Without sun and cultivation, plants will decay and spoil. Seeds require a rich, healthy environment in which to grow.

Within this paper heart are wildflower seeds. Just like your own heart, this heart holds a multitude of possibilities. But just like your own heart, if you fail to take the actions needed for growth, nothing of any consequence will happen! Growth remains nothing more than a possibility.

This applies to the environment in which we grow as Christian disciples. There must be an ongoing flow of comfort and security, challenge and inspiration, learning and service. Without such an environment, discipleship growth is stunted, stagnant, or worse, dead. We create an environment for our spiritual formation through prayer, study, worship, fellowship, and service.

The lessons of the seed help us see Lent, not as a time of sacrifice and denial, but as a time of preparation and anticipation — preparation for the work to which God calls us and anticipation of the fullness of life that God promises.

Based in part on a Lenten Reflection by Rev. Dan R. Dick, a former staff member of the Discipleship Ministries, with further insights by Rev. Heidi R. Chamberlain, pastor of Malone: Centenary UMC during Lent 2020.