

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – June 12th, 2016 – St. John’s Burlington

Today we thinking about God as the loving Father of the human race. Parents here: how do you react when your kids disobey you? Do you let it go and say nothing about it? Do you fly off the handle? Somewhere in between? Today we see how God reacted when his children, Adam and Eve, disobeyed him. We heard about it in our first lesson from Genesis chapter 3.

Now God has given Adam and Eve the whole world. He gave them a wonderful place to live. He gave them each other for companionship. He gave them all the trees in the garden for food. God said, “All this is yours. Only one thing is off limits. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat from this tree you will surely die.”

In your home, you give your kids all kinds of blessings. Plenty of food to eat, plenty of toys to play with. But in every home there are things that are off limits. You might tell your little kids, “Don’t go into that cupboard. There are cleaning supplies in there. Yucky. They are bad for you.” Or you might tell your kids, “No TV watching right now. Too much TV is bad for you.” You tell your kids that certain things are off limits and you’re are not doing it to be mean, you are doing it because certain things would be bad for them.

It’s the same thing with us and God. He has given us so many blessings in our lives. But certain things are off limits. God says “Do not cut someone else down with your words. Do not commit adultery. Do not get drunk. Do not gossip.” Those things are off limits and they are off limits because they would be bad for us. They would make our lives worse not better. But then the devil comes and says, “You won’t have a full and complete and happy life unless you do these things that are off limits. God is denying you happiness. He’s denying you a full and complete life.”

That’s what he said to Eve: **“Now the serpent [the devil had taken the form of a serpent] was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden.’” (Genesis 3:1)** Satan is trying to drive a wedge between Eve and God. “Really? God really said that? That is such an unfair rule. There’s no good reason for it.”

And at first Eve starts out really well, she corrects Satan, “God didn’t say we couldn’t eat from any tree. He’s given us all these wonderful trees to eat from. But he did say don’t eat from this one. If you eat from this one you will surely die.” But Satan keeps trying to drive the wedge between Eve and God. He calls God a liar: **“You will not surely die.”** And here’s what really drives the wedge between Eve and God: God is trying to keep something from you. **“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil.”** What really drove the wedge between Eve and God was the thought that God is keeping something from me. By making this tree off limits he’s keeping something good from me. And this is really what drives the wedge between us and God. By commanding me not to do this, he’s keeping some happiness away from me. When the truth is that the way to the happiest life is by keeping God’s commandments. Was Eve’s life better before or after she broke God’s commandment. Before! Her life only got worse after she broke God’s commandment. Just like a parent says things are off limits for the good of the child. God says things are off limits for our good.

But both Adam and Eve eat the fruit and how does God react to the disobedience of his children? He could have flown off the handle. “Look at everything I’ve done for you! I gave you one simple rule and you couldn’t keep it!” But God didn’t do that. Instead he goes looking for his children.

“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 in the garden. But the LORD God called to them man, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 1:8) God goes looking for his lost children and calls for them. And that’s what God has done for us the times that we have gone astray. It reminds you of Jesus’ parable:

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” (Luke 15:4-7)

God goes looking for his lost children and calls out to them, “Where are you?” That’s grace. Luther in his commentary on Genesis says that it’s grace that God said anything to them. He could have never talked to them again. He could have wiped them out and started over. Another thing that could have happened is that they could have died as soon as they ate the fruit. God said, “If you eat this you will surely die.” They could have died right away. So it’s grace that they didn’t die right away but that they got to live a long earthly life before they eventually died.

But first they got to hear God give them the promise of forgiveness and the promise of a Savior. God goes and finds Adam and Eve. You who are parents know that one of the most difficult things in life is raising children, especially when they are disobedient. How does God handle his disobedient children? God deals with his disobedient children using law and gospel.

“Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” (Genesis 3:11) That’s law. Law is when God shows us our guilt and confronts us with our sin. Confronted with his sin Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the serpent. But Adam and Eve blaming other people was really masking their guilt and so God gives them the first ever gospel promise. Law is when God shows us our sin. Gospel is when he shows us our Savior and this is the first ever Gospel promise. God says this to the Satan but it’s really a gospel promise meant for Adam and Eve. He says Satan **“I will put enmity between you and the woman.”** Enmity is hostility. You can see the word enemy in the word enmity. God says he’s going to put the enmity back where it belongs: between Eve and Satan. You see Satan had driven a wedge between Eve and God. Satan had put enmity between Eve and God and God says I’m going to put the enmity back where it belongs between Eve and Satan instead of between Eve and God. When God worked faith in our hearts he transferred us from Satan’s side back over to his side.

And then God says, **“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 3:15)**

Jesus won the victory over Satan and sin when he died on the cross. Adam and Eve sinned that day, and you and I have repeated their sin in our own lives, but when Jesus died on the cross he took away Adam and Eve’s sin and your and mine too. His heel was struck. He died. But Satan’s head was crushed. That day human kind lost the battle to Satan, but Jesus won the war.

Even though we rebelled against God he remained our loving Father. In our gospel lesson it says, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”**

I often think Adam and Eve felt crushed that day. They lost paradise not only for themselves but every single person in the world. It must have made them sick to their stomach. If you ever think that you’re having a bad day, you’re not having a bad day compared to the day Adam and Eve had. When they woke up they were in a perfect world in a perfect existence and when they went to bed it was all lost. But I often think about the fact that what we will have in heaven will be even better than what Adam and Eve had in paradise. In the resurrection our bodies will be patterned after Jesus’ glorious resurrection body. And so when I get to heaven I think I’m going to go over to Adam and Eve and say, “Yeah it was bad that day, but look what God has done.” He is the loving Father of the human race. Amen.