

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*March 1, 2020 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

In Chapter 1, on the sixth day God created humanity both male and female (1:26-31). Chapter 2 expands that story to focus first on the creation of man and then woman (2:7-22). In this story, man is originally made to be the caretaker/gardener of Eden. It is only after God saw that man needed a helper and equal companion "comparable to him" that God created woman. As the grounds keepers, they could eat any plant they wanted (note they were vegetarians 2:16-17) except for the tree of knowledge. At this time of innocence and "shalom" which means wholeness, there was no need to discern between good and evil for all things were created good and lived in harmony except for the snake. It was the snake that introduced evil through temptation. By placing the desire to take the forbidden fruit, evil entered the heart. This desire then spread to other aspects of their life including sexuality and the realization of nakedness. Rabbis have often seen this story as representing the transition of a child to and adult through puberty. Before this transition, there is no desire until it is awakened through biological change.

## **Commentary on Romans 5:12–19** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

Paul is making much more of a legal argument than an ethical argument in these passages which explains the emphasis on obedience and disobedience. While temptation deals much more with desire and the denial of desire, obedience is in accordance with some command either verbal or written such as a law. In the previous section, Paul states that "we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son". This reconciliation is only needed if something was done to break the relationship. Paul defines sin as the willful disobedience to God's will committed first by Adam. This disobedience became clear when the law was given. Sin, revealed by the law, carries a sentence of death in legal terms according to Paul's view of the covenant. Since this sentence was passed on Adam and all his descendants, then a pardon from that sentence could be given to one person and all their descendants. That one person, however, must be first be innocent and remain perfectly in God's will. This one person is Jesus Christ and, through the act of adoption, we become his descendants.

## **Commentary on Matthew 4:1–11** (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

One the first Sunday of Lent, the church is called to remember that even Jesus went through trials and temptations. Jesus faced not only trials of the flesh for he was famished but also trials of the ego. One Lutheran scholar suggested that the order Matthew places these temptations which differs from Luke is to reflect the temptations of Israel in the desert. First, the devil appeals to the very human drive for survival in offering a loaf of bread but Jesus know that God will provide in God's time. One of the very first complaints of the Israelites was their hunger (Exodus 16) and God responded with manna. Next, the devil asks Jesus to prove God's love by throwing himself to the ground. True love, however, does not have to be proved but is known in the heart. The temple in the Exodus was the mountain where the presence of God rested. While Moses was gone, however, the people tested God with the Golden Calf (Exodus 32) Finally the devil appeals to Jesus' strong sense of purpose by tempting him with public approval. Jesus chooses God's love over the fickle love of humanity. When Israel faced the "kingdoms of the world" in the promised land they failed to serve God but instead refused to enter. Instead of forty years in the wilderness complaining, Jesus spent forty days being faithful and was waited on by angels.

## **Sermon "Listening to God"** (*[Sermon Video](#)*)

In Romans, Paul argues that it was through the disobedience of one man that sin entered the

world and it was through obedience of one man (Jesus) that all are saved. The question then arises obedience to what or whom? The traditional answer was the Law but Paul will argue that the Law only reveals sin but does not save people from sinning. Looking toward Jesus as the pioneer of the faith, Paul redefines obedience in relationship to the will of God revealed through the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit given by Christ can bring life. The next logical question is how is the will of God revealed through the Spirit. The answer is very simple - listen in prayer.

When Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness when Jesus is famished, Jesus responds, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Note that Jesus says every word the comes (not came) from the mouth of God. God is continually speaking through the Holy Spirit in prayer. The only question is if we are listening. When we rely not simply on the written word but on the living word revealed through the written word, we take the first step in resisting temptation. By listening, we open ourselves to the saving and protecting power of God in our lives. If we fail to listen to God, we begin to be distracted by the numerous voices that surround us in our everyday life.

Eve sinned first not by eating the fruit but rather by listening to the serpent rather than to God. Genesis describes a time when God walked through the garden. Eve could have brought her questions to God but instead she decided to listen to the serpent. Listening created desire and desire became manifested in action. When we fail to listen to God, we take our first steps down the road of temptation. The only question this Lent is who will you listen to?