

VERY GOOD

EVE

“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”

“Don’t eat it.”

“But God, the fruit is good. You can see that. I can see it too. The monkeys can see it – the giraffes – even the elephants. Why not?”

“Because, Eve, it’s not about the fruit, it’s about the relationship. I want you to trust me. I want you to obey me.”

“But the fruit is good, and I would like some.”

“Yes, the fruit IS good. Everything I have created is good. But please trust me. To eat that fruit would not be good for you, and there’s a lot of other permitted fruit throughout the entire garden. Thousands and thousands of pieces of fruit. I have greatly provided for you. Why is that one particular tree so important?”

“The Serpent told me that that fruit has special powers – that it will open my eyes. The serpent told me that that fruit represents not your love, but your selfishness. He said that if I ate that fruit, that I would become like you. I want to become like you.”

“And why do you believe him. What have I ever shown you but love? Have you ever seen selfishness in me? Have I ever steered you in the wrong direction? Do you think I really don’t love you? That I’m being selfish?”

“The fruit looks good. I want some.”

The forbidden fruit. Eve’s hunger. The first scenario.

JACOB

Don't trick your father into giving you that birthright.

But God, you promised that I, Jacob, would be the child of promise – that the older son, Esau, would serve the younger son -- me. If I don't step in and deceive my father, he's going to give the family blessing to that red-haired caveman and your will for me won't be accomplished. Is that what you want?

I did promise that I would bless you, and that you would be ancestor to the Savior. That is true. I did share with your mother that you would ultimately rule over your brother. Yes. But I didn't tell you to grab your blessings by trickery, deceit, and lying. I didn't tell you to be manipulative and dishonest. I want you to be a man of integrity, of faith, of honor. Let me provide for you. I'll take care of it.

I don't know. I've waited a long time. ... Too long. My mother agrees. She says that I shouldn't let the moment pass through my fingers. She's willing to help me trick my father. She's got a whole plan.

Don't do it, Jacob. It will only bring heartache and sadness to all the people you love. Be patient. Stand strong. I will be with you. Stop trying to make it all happen yourself.

(changes voice to lower tone) **Father Isaac, here I am, your son Esau. God enabled me to bring you this wonderful meat from the animals I caught. And I am happy to receive my blessing from your hand, dear Father Isaac.**

The forbidden fruit. And Jacob. Scenario 2.

AARON

Don't make that calf, Aaron. You know the people will fall away from me if you build that thing.

But Lord, you're asking me to risk their friendship, their trust, their willingness to support me. With Moses on the mountain for so long, they've begun to notice that I have worth too – that I can help them with their problems. I like that.

By building an idol for them to worship?

Whatever. You can be the God behind the calf, right? When they worship the calf they can be worshipping you.

Didn't you see how I tried to show that the false gods of the Egyptians were no gods at all? Didn't you see how I led you out of Egypt? Didn't you see those incredible plagues, the pillar of fire and cloud, the opening and closing of the Red Sea? I AM your God and I love you. Please don't do this.

Yes, I've seen your love and power. But listening to these people and responding to their desire will keep the peace. It's the path of least resistance. And they'll honor me for it.

But it will ultimately lead toward emptiness, struggle and pain. Is that really what you want?

O people of Israel. I will fashion your calf. Bring me the jewelry that was given to you by the Egyptians as you left their land.

The forbidden fruit and Aaron.

DAVID

Don't sleep with her.

But Lord, she's beautiful. Can't you see? This is a woman unlike any other in the kingdom.

She's also married to another man, -- and you, to another woman.

But...you know the story Lord ... my wife is not so great. She doesn't really love me like she used to and she doesn't have the beauty she once did. But with Bathsheba I know I would have the relationship to end all others.

To take her as your own would dishonor my commands, disgrace Bathsheba's husband, and make an adulteress out of her. Yet you say you want to be a man after my own heart – that you want to serve me faithfully and sincerely. You pray, “Lord, make me your servant.”

I do Lord, but I've never seen a woman like her. So stunning. So breathtaking. And I am the King, after all. Doesn't the king deserve some fringe benefits – some extra blessings? Please Lord, tell me it's okay – this once – that I can be faithful to you and still have her.

Sorry, David, I can't. And the problem is not so much about your relationship to her – but it's about your relationship to me. Do you trust me to provide good for you – to take care of you – to bless you?

If you REALLY loved me, you'd let me have her. You would give me the desires of my heart.

I never promised that.

Oh well, God, I have to go now. I'm going to work with general Joab and arrange for that lovely woman to be brought to me. Let's see where it goes from there. Trust me, God. *(crying out..."JOAB!")

King David and the forbidden fruit.

Real stories they are. Stories of men and women who looked at something that seemed good -- who could make a case, in their hearts, that to do the thing they were contemplating would create a positive effect that would ultimately bless them -- who were lured into a trap by various different styles of fruit. For Eve – the apple of wisdom and power – if it was an apple. For Jacob, the blessing of his father that would bring greater wealth and honor. For Aaron, the respect of the people and the popularity that his brother Moses had known. For David, the beautiful and voluptuous Bathsheba.

They knew God’s word – God’s will – God’s way. They knew His power and His love. But their hearts were moved by the lure of the fruit, whatever its variety. It was so, so good. And so they said in their hearts, “God has a good way. But I have a good way too. We’ll get to the same place, but just in different ways.”

Yet the truth was, that only God’s way was the right way. Only trusting in God’s promises and following His word would bring the peace and joy that they sought. And they had all the resources they needed to follow God’s way. But inside there was also the tug – the tug of the fruit. The tug of their innate selfishness, greed, pride, lust, jealousy. The fruit said, “I am good, choose me.” And the lure of the fruit offered different promises than God. And so, they yielded. And the consequent result was a quick appeal, but an ultimate hardship, suffering and pain. For Eve, the sin that entered the world. For Jacob, the loss of the relationship with his parents, his brother, his country, his home. For Aaron, the faithlessness of his people. For David, the murder and coverup of Bathsheba’s husband.

Fruit. It’s appeal challenges us to listen to another voice besides God’s. To trust in our own feelings, our own cravings, our own desires – and dresses it all up in wonderful clothing so that we say, “This is good, Lord. This seems better than Your way, so I’m going to try it.”

What’s your fruit? What’s the thing that leads you into a darkness that you think is filled with light? What’s the thing that calls out to you saying, “Look at the good things you will get if you follow my direction.” Maybe its gossip. Maybe it’s food. Maybe it’s your temper. Maybe it’s your desire to have greater wealth, prestige, reputation.

And let’s face it. You have and you will often yield to the fruit, because that’s what sin does. And, hard as you try, there will be days when resistance to the fruit will seem too hard, too oppressive, too impossible.

Thank God that there was One who followed a different path – One who, in all of life, was not lured into the Enemy’s traps.

Let’s listen in on His conversation with the Heavenly Father.

“It doesn’t look good, Father.”

“I know, Jesus. It looks awful. You will have to become sin for them. You will have to absorb their evil, carry their iniquity, suffer their punishment, and die their death. There’s no denying it. When you walk in their shoes it will be, for You, excruciatingly painful – agonizing.

Is there no other way? Can’t this cup be taken from me?

No. For there to be rescue, You MUST do this. I know it doesn’t seem good. I know that you will have to humble yourself even unto death. But trust me, it IS good. You will be solely responsible for the salvation of humankind.

Then yes, Father, send Me. I will do as you ask.

And it WAS good. Good Friday, we call it. And when Jesus accomplished that victory over the fruit that challenged Him, He opened up the storehouse of God’s strength to enable you and me to resist the forbidden fruit. To stand strong against the Devil’s temptations. To say, “Yes, Lord, Your will be done in Me.”

In a way, that’s what Trinity Sunday is all about: in learning to accept the mystery of God’s Essence, learning also to accept all the mysteries that we face as we choose God’s word over human wisdom – as we choose God’s Word over our own opinions and feelings – as we choose God’s Word over the fast and easy road – because we believe that when we go with God, that He will indeed bring about the greatest good that He wants for us. And in the end we will be able to look back and see He worked it all out – and it WAS good. Good indeed.

God grant it to you, for Jesus sake. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

