**“Forest for the trees”**

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Genesis 3:8-15

2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1

Mark 3:20-35

2nd Sunday after Pentecost

“Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel’” …

… but **grace to you and peace** from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1

**The facts** … and then **some things that God was willing to do about those facts**. **That’s** **today’s consideration**. It was, perhaps, a Sunday morning, but could have been **any** morning or afternoon or evening. **I picture it** being a morning, because morning’s is where you’d think **we’d be more inclined to make the best choices** (when freshness and a willful goodness would seem to be more naturally expressed … before the day sets too far in, and corruption muddies-up the mind and then we’re more inclined to **make decisions toward bad things**). So I think this happened in the morning (when it really **shouldn’t have**).

Eve and Adam apparently were in different areas of the Garden of Eden then so the lesson there is that it’s not good to be alone apart from the accountability of a **really Good (Christian) friend to “hold you ACCOUNTABLE FOR YOUR ACTIONS”**. But **Satan (while she was alone) tempted Eve**. That particular one **seemed like** just one of the many trees that God had **gifted** the fruit be eaten from (it was an **abundance of all others** that He’d provided for **Good food**). But He expected obedience upon His command about this one. “Did God really say that if you eat from the fruit of this one tree you’d die? … Surely you’ll not die” he suggested, “but, rather, be **like Him / Godlike** … knowing, then, **evil along with Good** … which has **got to be a more fun option**”. And, with that, maybe Satan didn’t completely lie … at least on the idea anyway. Mankind would, then, know evil, but Satan had Eve convinced that that would be **interesting** (an **entertaining thing** / a **satisfying thing**) … and the satisfaction part was certainly a lie.

People **still fall for “that lie”**. Billy Joel (the singer) wrote a whole song about it: “only the good die young (at least to themselves)” and he’d rather be selfishly “laughing with the sinners than what (he thinks) is crying with the saints”, because he says that “sinners much more **fun**”, and “fun” has been made (since the fall of Adam and Eve) about **EVERYTHING** …

… and Satan knew that the **whole world for all earthly time** (oodles more than just Eve and Adam) would “**buy into that concept**”. See, “**fun**” has become the “**trees of a Forest that God should have charge of, with us enjoying that ABUNDANCE**”. The misleading idea of the ever-fickle-pursuit-of-fun is the trees that nearly everybody (and most all the time) **gets lost in** … and we love to get lost among those trees, so it’s a **self-perpetuation issue**. Adam followed Eve into it and has been “toiling in tough soil for it” his whole life. **We** “toil in tough soil for it”, having **our** minds made up that **it (“fun”)** is the end-all goal to our days … **God’s ABUNDANCE** we seldom consider **ABUNDANT ENOUGH**.

**2**

God was **not surprised by the “fall into that kind of rebellious thought process”**. He **was hopeful that joy and plenty and just Goodness was enough**, but He wasn’t naïve nor surprised by the decision of the first couple (and all the rest of us in our times) to pick the **“fun” idea** over the **joy and obedience one**. “Evil” (and with it “death”) is the choice we’re **all making much of the time**. Now, we’ve got to **live with that**. I’ll die and you will because of our **choices**. The reason why we get sick and aged and then die is we sin and that’s still our choice.

God did, however, plan a **remedy, even with that earthly death**. A **fix for the** **worst part of the problem** was prepared before it was even needed. I picture God (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), before creation in an almost **football huddle**. **Discussion was had** with God knowing everything about the future. The Father voiced that Eve, then Adam, then all the rest of us would choose knowing evil with death (seemingly “funner”) over life. He voiced, then, the plan to redeem all things … to the benefit of anybody who’d **want to have and enjoy that redemption** …

… and that’s where He **turned to the Son in that football huddle**. He didn’t really **have to ask** since the Son already also knew, but I still picture **the question asked** (and there’s an example of the **Divine conversation of the Godhead**, something earth actually saw happen during the Son’s incarnation / the Son talking with the Father / prayer), so the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit knew that evil would kill whoever the rebellion-of-it was heaped upon their shoulders, **asked (the Father did) the Son to take upon His own shoulder’s that rebellion instead of every repentant man’s**. The Biblical response wasn’t recorded as **“I’m in”**, but the **sentiment was there in answer (Son to Father)**, and (there and then) the **Gospel in full detail** got conceived, and before, even, the “let there be” of God’s “in the beginning creation” was **said**.

And we all **know history**. The Son did **come** (which is Christmas) and here He **took the rebellion of all people of all time upon His shoulders** (at His baptism / He was baptized into that), then **carried that rebellion all the way to a willing death by crucifixion (another particular “tree”) so as to “crush Satan’s head” and “bind him who is the strong man” (the devil) fulfilling what God promised in Genesis 3:15, explained by Jesus, recorded in Mark 3:27)**. For any not wanting to be held by the “strong man” (Satan’s) rebellious grip anymore, there’s **“forgiveness” by the bloodshed and death of Jesus**. He said, “Truly, I say to you, all sins **will be forgiven the children of man**”. He was the “**Offspring of the woman**” that would “bruise / crush / and bound up leaving him without full access baptized believers” the “strong man / Satan”. ….

We have the opportunity, **by grace**, to **participate in that “forgiveness”** (and without taking the Lord up on it, we’d have no hope … apart from Jesus there is no salvation). Jesus **made that point** as **“Children of men” made “Children of God” (the redeemed and “forgiven” / made to be of the Divine family) are these**: “Looking about at those who sat around Him, Jesus said, ‘**HERE** are My mother and My brothers’. **Whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother**.’” … (that’s a **Divine family** … **much the bigger issue than even the human one**)**!** ….

There’s a **Psalm** (suggested for this weekend, but we didn’t use it) that speaks-back to God **appreciative words for the chance to participate in His “forgiveness” … for access through the Gospel**. This Psalm **begs (from its beginning)** that God allow **even the us-we-know-best** into that family that’s so blessed and Holy, prepared for Heaven, **recognizing the gifts that membership in the Divine family gives**.

**Psalm 130** puts at all of our disposal the words to use for **that plea and, then, thankfulness**.

“Out of the depths **I** cry to you, O Lord!” (the “**I**” makes it **my plea** … and whoever prays it). “O Lord, hear **my** **voice**! Let Your ears, God, be attentive to the voice of **my pleas for mercy**” (in other words, with this we’re saying “**I know my nakedness / my hiding among trees know that You, Lord, are wanting to walk with me but I’m hiding**. “If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities” (or **remember my sins that I don’t seek forgiveness for**), “O Lord, who could stand? But **with You there is forgiveness**, that **You may be feared” (and honored … obviously, then, not willfully rebelled against by me)**. “**I** wait for the Lord, **my** soul waits, and **in His Word” (therefore promises)** **“I hope**; **my** soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning” (**a confession of faith**). “O **Israel**” (with all who **should be, faithfully, Divine children of God, forgiven and Heaven-bound**), “**hope in the Lord!** For **with the Lord** **there is steadfast love**, and **with Him is plentiful redemption” (ABUNDANCE)**. “**HE WILL** redeem Israel from all his iniquities”, **gifting him with everything He’s ever had intended for him**. **THANKS BE TO GOD** **then**, for +Jesus’ sake. Amen.

P.S.: If you ever get thinking that **there’s very little “fun” in joy**, then you’ve not lived in the joy and abundance of God much. It’s the **always-craving-more “fun” apart from the Lord God** that’s always been the problem (since the fall). Included in joy and abundance is the **“fun” of God’s gifts**, and with the word “Paradise”, Jesus hints at what’s coming and even the more that’s available now He chose to call that word (“Paradise”). I can only imagine the lifetime of how long Adam and Eve remembered the **loss of that kind of “fun” after having made their bad choice**. **Only they** knew the full extent of their loss. Amen.