



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Genesis 3:1-21

It didn't take much effort for the snake to lead Eve into doubt and faithlessness. The simple question, "Did God actually say..." was all it took to cause her to start wondering whether God really knew how to be God. That was all it took for her to conclude that there might be a better way for God and his creation to interact. She took the fruit, ate it, and gave some to her husband. She could see no reason not to. The prospect of being like God was simply too much to pass up.

- *Why would Eve think that God might not be telling her truth about the fruit on the tree? Did she have reason to doubt him?*

The condition humanity has lived with since the fall from grace is that we are not content to be God's creatures. We want to be our own gods instead. Sin, then, is not simply particular bad behaviors. It is the condition of being in rebellion against God. It is our desire to overthrow God's reign and be the lords over our own lives.

- *In what sense did the snake trick or deceive Eve? What's so bad about wanting to be like God?*
- *What are some ways this sinful condition is apparent in us?*

As soon as they ate the fruit, the people's eyes were opened. For the first time they experienced shame. They had a sense that, not only should their actions be hidden from God, but they themselves should hide from God and each other. They covered themselves up because of their shame.

Adam and Eve both tried to shift the blame for their actions. Neither wanted to admit that they were disobedient or faithless. While they willfully took of the fruit, they didn't want to be held responsible for what they had done.

- *In what ways do we try to shift the blame for our actions? What is the relationship between the human will and our bondage to sin?*

Psalm 32:1-7

Do you ever wonder if Adam and Eve would have taken responsibility for their sin, came to God in repentance and asked for his mercy, if things might have been different for them (and for us)? The psalmist says that it is a blessing to be forgiven. When guilt is removed from us by our heavenly Father, our lives are changed.

- *When have you been forgiven of a particular sin and felt the great grace of God wash over you? How did it change you*

{Eve's} eyes could not be satisfied with seeing. It was nothing to her now that she possessed the knowledge of God, and that she had a sound and perfect mind. She was not content without the addition of the knowledge of evil also. And this was the very essence of Satan's poison; her desire to be wise above that which God had spoken to her as his command.

-Martin Luther -

*Luther on the Creation:
A Critical and Devotional Commentary on Genesis*

Romans 5:12-19

In our time we have tried to downplay the relationship between sin and death. Death is spoken of as a natural and necessary aspect of the created order; we even refer to death as just another 'transition' in life, on to a different place. But Scripture is consistent on linking death to sin. The link between sin and death is part of the fallen order. Death is not just a transition or phase. In this fallen world, it is the enemy of all enemies.

- *In what ways do we experience the link between sin and death? Do you think we can always link specific sins to specific deaths?*

In verse 18, Paul tells us that Christ's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for "all men." Just as sin is tied to death, righteousness is tied to life. By taking away our sin, Christ is taking us out of the realm of death and bringing us into everlasting life.

- *When Paul says Christ's act was "for all men" does that mean everyone is automatically saved? How can Paul's statement be true without implying universal salvation?*
- *How does Christ's righteousness get extended to us? In what way does life in Christ change our thinking about death?*

Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus' temptation in the wilderness took place immediately after his baptism. The Spirit came upon him, identifying him as God's Son, and then drove him out into the desert. Far from a life of comfort and ease, Jesus' identity as God in the flesh placed him in the sights of the Tempter. God's Anointed One was not going to live a life of ease and power. The presence of the Holy Spirit upon him brought the Tempter straight to him.

- *What might Jesus' experience of temptation immediately after his baptism tell us about what we can expect as children of God in this world? Should we expect to be free from temptation?*

It doesn't seem like it would have hurt anything for Jesus to acquire some bread for himself. The reality of many of our daily temptations is that they often seem quite harmless. This first temptation of Jesus looks like something harmless, but underneath it is the question of whether Jesus really is the Son of God.

- *How do the temptations to "small" sins feed into more drastic sins? How are all sins tied to the original sin of faithlessness?*
- *If God is gracious and merciful, what would be the harm in Jesus taking the shortcuts offered to him by the devil?*