

Rev. Luke C. Werre
Peace, Sun Prairie
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Lent 1

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17; 3:1-7
ONE COMMON SIN INFECTS US ALL

All mankind fell in Adam's fall. One common sin infects us all.
That is our sad song. It is a true song. Every one of us is infected with the same germ. It is the sin of Adam and Eve. From them it spread like a plague to the rest of the human race, deadlier than any bioterrorism.

The reading from Genesis today sets the stage for the Gospel Lesson about Christ's temptation in the wilderness. Where Adam and Eve failed, Christ succeeded.

First, in order to be able to understand and believe what Christ has done for us, we need to understand and believe that the account of Adam and Eve being tempted by the serpent is real, factual, literal and historically accurate. It set the sad course of the world's history, and as a result God set in motion His plan for our salvation.

God had blessed Adam and Eve more highly than any other creature, even angels, with a special relationship with Himself. Genesis 2 tells us, "*The LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground.*" The word "formed" is the same word for when a potter forms something out of clay. God took special care to fashion the man. Then He took special care to give him life. We are told: "*And the LORD God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.*" It is not said this way about any other being. God fused both components, man's body and soul, as a unity. It was intended to stay that way forever.

Man's soul makes him a rational being, a moral being, created in the image of God. His will and thoughts were a mirror reflection of God's.

In love God provided for the man's inherent need for beauty, for food and a place to live, and for useful occupation. But above all with a special tree God provided the man an opportunity to have a mutual relationship with God, unlike any other creature –an opportunity to respond to God's generous love out of gratitude, an opportunity to worship God. And God fortified the man's will and desire with His Word. We are told, "*Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of tress grow out of the ground –trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'*"

God was not testing Adam with the tree. There was no need to test him. What would be the point? Adam was perfect. Rather the tree was like Adam's church. Imagine the laborious works God could have required of Adam to worship him. But instead, Adam could exercise his joyful freedom to be in harmony with God by NOT doing something.

That joyful freedom to be in harmony with God was soon lost when satan planted the germ of sin to infect the man and woman. Satan is a very powerful angel whom God originally created good, but soon after became proud, defiant and evil. He was thrown out of heaven. Out of vengeful malice he is bent destroying God's creation.

Satan tempted Adam and Eve by calling into question God's Word –what God said. If He can break our confidence in God's Word, then He can break our relationship with God. Even when satan tempted Jesus, satan kept calling into question God's Word.

Satan set up a no-win scenario to Adam and Eve. He suggests that either God didn't actually say that you couldn't eat from every

tree, or else He's not a loving God. We are told in Genesis 3, *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, You must not eat from every tree in the garden?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' 'Not –you will surely die,' said the serpent to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"*

With the injection of an entirely new thought, a thought, no doubt, in her innocence the woman had never considered before, Satan suggests that God is not being entirely forthright, that God has an ulterior motive, a selfish motive for withholding the fruit of that tree, a motive to put them down and keep them down.

The first sin of Adam and Eve was not eating the fruit or even looking at it. Their first sin was unbelief –doubting what God said. We are told, *"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."*

No longer were they free to be in control of their own desires, emotions, will and urges according to God's good purposes. Satan's perverted promise was twistedly correct. They did now know the difference between good and evil. But they could never go back to being good. They had pit their will against God's will. God said, No, but they said, Yes! They were not in compliance with God. They were in compliance with satan. They followed what satan wanted.

All mankind fell in Adam's fall. One common sin infects us all. We are born compliant to satan too. It is hard for us to comprehend, especially when our minds are at relative ease, but we have inherited from Adam and Eve the total opposition to God, the

inability to think of God first, or to love and trust God above all things. Jesus said, "Whoever sins is a slave to sin." It is not a choice for us. We're like a stroke victim who forgets that he has lost the use of his legs and gets up out of his chair to walk across the room only to fall right down onto the floor. We imagine we still have good in us and can do good things and make good choices. But that only shows how blind we are to our own dire condition. The apostle Paul wrote, *"I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there is nothing good."*

We are not basically good or basically neutral, but basically evil and completely helpless in moral, spiritual and eternal matters. On our own, we are doomed to sorrow and confusion here in earth, and then death, and then eternal damnation. That is why Christ had to come. Christ is not a helper or a guide. He did not come to show us the way, nor to be a good example to us. He is our Savior, our total rescuer. He came to save our lives. As one of us, in our place, and for our sakes like a hero He took on the devil out in the wilderness and came out the winner. Like a Mighty Fortress He earned for us the perfection that we needed to have a relationship with God as Adam and Eve once had. By His sufferings and death on the cross He took the curse of the sin of all humankind on Himself. He secured for us God's forgiveness. Through faith in Christ we are rescued.

Any unbeliever can accept a god who protects them, blesses their work, overlooks their sins, and rewards them with heaven for the so-called hell they had to put up with here on earth. But the true God reveals in His Word (because there is no other way we could ever have guessed) the full extent of our utter depravity so that we can believe in the Savior who really came to rescue us from our sin. Through faith in God's forgiveness for Jesus' sake, we have a restored relationship with God and a new life here that will last with Him forever in eternity.

One common sin infects us all. That was our old song. But Christ has given us a new song –a song of salvation, a song of life with music that heals. It is the song of His forgiveness that He sings to us through His Word and water and bread and wine.