

Sermon for Morning Prayer: Trinity I

The Reverend Warren E. Shaw, Priest Associate

First Lesson: Genesis 3.

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy

life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Second Lesson: Romans 5.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift

of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Text:

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." Romans 5:19.

Body:

That is a difficult text for Americans to understand. In America we place so much emphasis on the individual as the basic unit of society that we find it hard to accept, or even to understand, the biblical concept of headship. We argue that one person's actions do not reflect upon a whole group.

I find it interesting, however, that we tend to argue that rugged individualism in only one direction. When someone from our family, or our church, or even our neighborhood wins a great honor, we are proud to be associated with that person and share in the glory. But when someone from our family, or our church, or our neighborhood commits a crime, we have no desire to share in the guilt.

In the same way, we are more than willing to appropriate to ourselves the benefits of our Lord's death and resurrection, but not so willing to accept the burden of Adam's sin. St. Paul, however, says that our associations work both ways. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous."

The apostle is not alone in his understanding of how society works. Most people outside of the United States think of the family rather than the individual as the basic unit of society. For example, if you ask someone in China to identify himself, he will tell you his family name. Later, perhaps he will tell you the name by which he is known within his family.

Family is of great importance in the Bible. Why do you think there are so many genealogies? Why do you think the Jews are so proud to be descendants of Abraham? And why do you think St. Paul claims that Christians are the spiritual descendants, if not the physical descendants, of Abraham?

Every family has a head, and the head, and what the head does and how he functions reflects upon the entire family. The head represents the family in dealings with the world outside the family circle and is the spokesman for the family in the larger society.

Within the family, the head directs and leads in a general way. In a properly functioning family, he does not micromanage, but he does anticipate problems and recognize opportunities as they emerge. The head exemplifies and articulates the goals and the values of the body. He encourages discussion and listens to what others have to say. He corrects when necessary, even rebukes when necessary, but he always looks for areas of agreement. When he is satisfied, he announces a decision. That is how St. James presided at the council of Jerusalem. That is how the Pope presides, in theory, over the College of Cardinals. That is how wise heads of state govern. And that is how in every family the wise father exercises headship.

We see everyday how the actions of the head of the household effect the whole family. When the head of the household prospers, the whole family prospers. When he fails in his responsibilities, the whole family suffers. When he becomes tyrannical, there is dissension and conflict throughout the household.

The head is expected to lay down his own life, if necessary, to protect his family. That, is exactly what Jesus did as head of the Church and what Adam did not do as head of the human race. When Eve ate the forbidden fruit and incurred the death penalty as a result, it was Adam's duty, as head of the family, to intercede for her and to offer himself to die in her place. Instead, he joined her in rebellion and brought condemnation on the whole human race.

Jesus, the second Adam, does what the first Adam did not do. As head of the church, Jesus intercedes in behalf of the body and offers Himself to pay the penalty of our disobedience. Those who place themselves under His headship, which we do when we are baptized, obtain the benefits of His suffering, death, and resurrection.

This view of salvation differs from the typical Evangelical Protestant one that is so prevalent in our country. In that view, salvation is largely a matter of the individual's establishing a personal, one-on-one, relationship with Jesus. The Pauline view, on the other hand, emphasizes the incorporation of the individual into the body of Christ, which, in turn, involves a transfer from the headship of Adam to the headship of Christ. Jesus and Adam, you see, are not just individuals. They are the heads of two different orders of creation: humanity in its natural state, and humanity in its transformed state. That is why the Apostle is able to say, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous."

This concept of headship and its consequences is found throughout the Bible from beginning to end. In the beginning, Adam is given headship, not only over his wife but over the whole creation. That is why he is the one that God calls to account for the what happened in the garden. Having failed in his duty, the man now attempts to put the blame on his wife, who in turn points to the serpent, but God continues to hold Adam responsible. So does St. Paul, because he says "As in Adam all die." He does not say, "As in Eve all die", even though she was the first to disobey.

We find this concept of headship and its consequences in the law of Moses, where the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. Conversely, we find King David granting favors to the children of men who were of aid and comfort to him. Among the prophets we hear Isaiah cry out in his famous vision of heaven, "Woe is me ... for I dwell among a people of unclean lips." Further on in the book, the prophet identifies the Messiah with the whole nation of Israel.

In the Gospels, the Jews claim God's favor on the basis of their descent from Abraham, and Jesus himself declares several times that what happens to him, both for good and for ill, will happen to those who follow him.

Jesus also says, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven." So those rugged individualists who eschew the headship of Christ and distance themselves from His body are left to their own devices, not only in this life but on the day of judgment. If you don't want that, and I know I don't, then you have two choices. You can remain under the headship of Adam, who refused to stand up his wife, and deal with sin

and death on your own, or you can start a new life under the headship, the protection, and the authority of the Head of the Church.

The legacy you inherit will be very different, depending on the choice you make. “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”

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