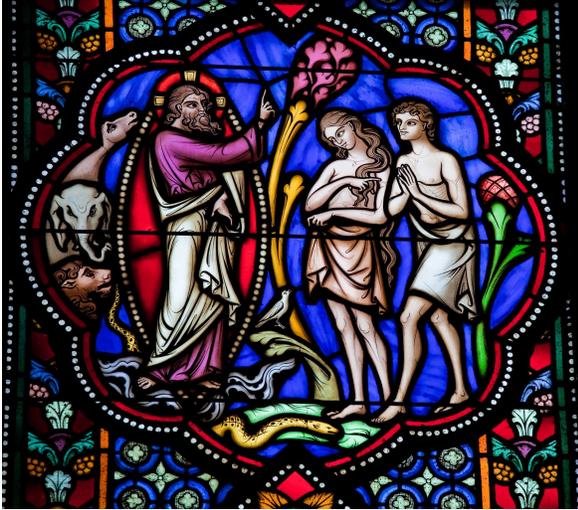


## BACK TO SUNDAY SCHOOL: CREATION

February 3, 2019

*Michael Swartzentruber, Senior Minister*



*St. Michael's Cathedral, Brussels, Belgium*

### Genesis 3:1-24

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' <sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup>but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die." ' <sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; <sup>5</sup>for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

<sup>8</sup> They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' <sup>10</sup>He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' <sup>11</sup>He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' <sup>12</sup>The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' <sup>13</sup>Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' <sup>14</sup>The Lord God said to the serpent,

'Because you have done this,

cursed are you among all animals

and among all wild creatures;

upon your belly you shall go,

and dust you shall eat

all the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he will strike your head,

and you will strike his heel.'

<sup>16</sup>To the woman he said,

'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;

in pain you shall bring forth children,

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4343 Harrodsburg Road • Lexington KY 40513

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yet your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you.’

<sup>17</sup>And to the man he said,

‘Because you have listened to the voice of  
your wife,

and have eaten of the tree

about which I commanded you,

“You shall not eat of it”,

cursed is the ground because of you;

in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your  
life;

<sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for  
you;

and you shall eat the plants of the field.

<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face

you shall eat bread

until you return to the ground,

for out of it you were taken;

you are dust,

and to dust you shall return.’

<sup>20</sup> The man named his wife Eve, because  
she was the mother of all who live. <sup>21</sup>And the  
Lord God made garments of skins for the  
man and for his wife, and clothed them.

<sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God said, ‘See, the man  
has become like one of us, knowing good  
and evil; and now, he might reach out his  
hand and take also from the tree of life, and  
eat, and live for ever’— <sup>23</sup>therefore the Lord  
God sent him forth from the garden of Eden,  
to till the ground from which he was taken.  
<sup>24</sup>He drove out the man; and at the east of  
the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim,

and a sword flaming and turning to guard the  
way to the tree of life.

## REFLECT & DISCUSS

### Context

The story of creation is two primary scenes:  
Genesis 1 is a poetic account of a  
transcendent God crafting and populating  
the universe. Genesis 2 is a more imminent  
portrayal of God intimately fashioning  
humankind. Genesis 3 follows these  
accounts to present the expulsion of  
humankind from Eden.

Each account is distinctive and offers a  
different take on what it means to be human,  
the value of the created world in relation to  
God, and the condition of created existence.

The ancient picture of the universe that is  
presumed in these stories is not the same as  
our modern understanding. The idea of the  
“firmament” or “dome” (see Genesis 1:9)  
suggests that the sky was understood as a  
solid layer, with holes that let in light (stars)  
and water (rain). Reading the creation  
accounts as modern science would be an  
“adventure in missing the point.”

Reading the creation accounts with other  
ancient stories of creation would be more  
fruitful. In the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, one  
of the oldest creation accounts, violence  
dominates. The Genesis story of creation by  
God’s “word” (“let there be...”) offers a  
contrasting picture of a peacefully ordered  
world.

Adam is a Hebrew word that plays on “soil”  
(*adamah*) and literally means “man.” Adam  
and Eve can be understood as figures of  
humankind who help us understand the  
complex human condition of blessedness  
(being “very good”—Genesis 1:31) and  
brokenness (expulsion of Genesis 3).

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Genesis 3 has been the story that Christian tradition has titled “The Fall.” It is here that the concept of Original Sin found a narrative home (though there is no talk of “sin” in the story itself and the serpent is *not* identified as Satan). The theological idea is that the first sin (disobeying God by eating the forbidden fruit) creates a permanent condition of rebellion that is passed on to each generation. Thus, no one is born that is not already “stained” by Sin. Original Sin is not something anyone does, but a state everyone already participates in.

St. Augustine, the earliest theologian to write in depth about the concept of Original Sin frames it as physiological: it is like a DNA trait, passed along from bodies to bodies, through sexual intercourse.

Later ideas of Original Sin would reimagine this doctrine, locating it outside the physical body in unavoidable cultural forces and social influences that we are caught up in: forces like sexism, racism, or economic exploitation.

## Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?
2. In what ways do you believe in or find truth in the stories of creation, Adam and Eve, and the expulsion from Eden?
3. What do you make of the doctrine of Original Sin? What is it? How does it square with Genesis 1, specifically God declaring all creation (including humankind) “very good”?
4. Reflect on the nakedness dynamic of the story. Adam and Eve go from no-shame to shame with respect to their nakedness. If nakedness serves as a symbol of vulnerability, how might Genesis 3 shed light on our own struggles with vulnerability, shame, and hiding ourselves?
5. Some scholars have noted that the curses are etiologies (ancient origin stories). They explain why snakes slither on the ground, why women are pained by childbirth, and why it is hard work to find and make food. What do you make of the curses?
6. What significance do you see in God clothing Adam and Eve after the curses?
7. What does the expulsion mean spiritually or theologically to you?
8. When have you felt cursed or experienced expulsion? How has God met you in those moments?

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