

Of Authority, Leadership, And The PC Police

A sermon series by Pr. David Johnson (Week 3)

As I begin the third message in this series on Roles, Authority, and leadership; I don't want to seem blind to the fact that it is also the first Sunday in Advent. As one person asked me this week, "Aren't you going to talk about Advent?" And my answer is *YES*, but not in the conventional way you might expect. For you see, the first promise of a coming Redeemer is actually coming in a passage we will address today.

But to begin, I need to review what we discussed last week for those who were gone. We looked briefly at the order of God's creation in humanity; moving first from Adam formed out of dust (enlivened by the divine breath of God). We see God establish Man in the garden, giving him two instructions for management and obedience (Take care of the garden, and don't eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge). And in this, Man seemed content.

Soon, God identified a point of lack for His creation. Man didn't feel limited or lonely, and he certainly didn't initiate the idea. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." God understood that Man would need companionship unique to him (*We see that no animal would suffice*). So God made a helper for the man, to come alongside him in his work, and someone to provide a progeny for life to continue (*As we saw in Gen. 1:28*).

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

We see no competition for authority. God made Man from dust, giving him life by His own divine breath. God then takes a rib from Man's side (life comes through Man), and forms a unique partner for him. Man is overwhelmed at this moment. He has a precious companion of his very own, personally crafted by God Himself. And his response is one of gratitude and wonder.

Genesis 2:23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man. **24** For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

Reading this put me in mind of the Noel Paul Stookey, *Wedding Song*:

A man shall leave his mother and a woman leave her home / And they shall travel on to where the two shall be as one. / As it was in the beginning is now and til the end / Woman draws her life from man and gives it back again. / And there is Love, there is Love. "The Wedding Song" – Noel Paul Stookey

But then something went terribly wrong; Satan showed up and attacked God by way of His creation. He bypassed God's divine order, and planted seeds of doubt and confusion in the mind of the Woman. He didn't come to her with outright lies or assaults on God's character. No, he came to her with subtle, and appealing diversions.

Genesis 3:1 "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any (every) tree of the garden?'"

Oh, what a powerful question. The question he asked her, "Did God say?" has been at the root of every temptation since. Woman didn't even realize what Satan was doing at the time. He was diverting her attention from all that God had given them, to the one thing He denied them. In that moment, the woman gave way to Satan's challenge of God, and opened the door of human alteration.

Genesis 3:2-3 The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

In that moment, we'd like to think that the Woman was in control; she had stood up to her adversary and won the day. But she had actually pulled her first punch; she had changed God's Word by adding to it (or touch it). And Satan jumped at his opportunity.

Genesis 3:4-5 ... "You surely will not die!" ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan's temptations come with simple and seemingly innocent questions. But never are they either, they always cloak the cunning of a liar and deceiver, a murderer and a thief. In that moment, the Woman had a choice; to believe the words of her creator as instructed by the Man, or the words of this tempter, who came with doubt dripping from his lips. But then some things don't change:

John 8:42-44 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Satan's first lie was that death wouldn't come. But he was confusing the Woman with the nature of death. He was equating material death with spiritual death, and they were never the same with mankind. As we saw in Man's creation, it wasn't in the dust that life came, but in the breath of God. Similarly, life came to Woman through the divine life given to Man. (*Woman draws her life from Man and gives it back again*) In the same way, death would not come materially, but through the soul's loss of divine provision. Death would come (*or begin*) when the soul loses its eternal connection, which is what happens in sin.

Satan's second deception was in the statement, "...your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." In that cunning statement Satan planted two cancerous tumors of doubt. The first being that God was holding out on them. He implied that God was actually a selfish, narcissistic, autocrat; who didn't want to share his toys or power with anyone; a groundless lie which he personally harbored.

The second cancer was that the Man and Woman were somehow lacking something good and necessary (*the ability to recognize good and evil*). But in fact, this was also a clear denial of reality, for in the simple instruction of God, good and bad had been clearly defined. The Man and Woman already knew what was good and bad by the clear teaching of God; everything was good, but one tree was bad. And this is a principle we often forget, what God says is good...is good. And what God says is bad...is bad.

“God had given such a sacramental nature and significance to the two trees in the midst of the garden, that their fruit could and would produce supersensual, mental, and spiritual effects upon the nature of the first human pair. The tree of life was to impart the power of transformation into eternal life. The tree of knowledge was to lead man to the knowledge of good and evil; and, according to the divine intention, this was to be attained thought his not eating of its fruit.” -Keil & Delitsche

That should be enough for us, but it frequently isn't. We are often faced with two options, one that appeals to our flesh; and the other that aligns with the Word of God. We know that God has determined some things as good, and others as bad. But rather than resting in the all-wise and perfect knowledge of God, we want independence and choose what our flesh desires. Which is exactly what the Woman chooses in this situation. She turns away from what the Man had told her, by the instruction of God, and considered the promptings of Satan to her flesh:

Genesis 3:6 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Rather than being content with “God said...,” the woman listened to Satan's deceptions and considered her options; either stay away from the fruit or rationalize:

- * *God knows I need food.*
- * *Wow, that fruit sure looks good!*
- * *Wisdom is a good thing, right? God shouldn't keep that for Himself.*

In the end, the Woman chose independence from God (*which is the foundation of sin*). But she didn't want to be independent alone. Misery loves company after all, so the Woman looked for Man to share the blame, again breaking from God's order and headship. And immediately, the shame of their sin was revealed; their physical nakedness reflected their spiritual exposure. They were spiritually naked and had nowhere to hide.

Sin was now present in God's perfect world, and something had to be done. So God went after the Woman, since she was the most to blame, right? Nope! God went looking for the Man. Why? Because he was the one delegated with management. He was the one who had received the instruction about the trees. He was the one who God held responsible for the oversight of His creation, including the Man's own helpmeet, the Woman.

And how did each respond? They all blamed each other. In the passages to follow we see the first recorded example of blame-shifting.

- * The Man blames the Woman...and God
- * The Woman blames the Serpent

And the results? Divine curses all around.

- * *The serpent would be cursed forever, slithering along the ground, and experiencing “enmity” (hostility/hatred) between himself and humans for all times.*
- * *The Woman would experience pain in childbirth, and forever desire (longing/craving; as water-to run after or over) her husband. But he will rule (have dominion/reign/power) over you. They will no longer be united.*

But before we get to Adam's curse, we must acknowledge that God specifically identifies two reasons for the Man's curses:

- * *He listened (with consent/obedience) to the woman, and followed her lead*
- * *He ate of the fruit when he was commanded not to*

Because of this, the Man was also cursed:

- * *Cursed is the ground*
- * *Work will be long and a labor, food will come hard*
- * *Weeds and thorns will flourish*
- * *Physical death will be inevitable (to dust you will return)*

But in the midst of all this sadness lies one glowing promise, which is remarkably important at this Advent season of the year. At the end of God's curse to the Serpent, He states:

Genesis 3:15b “...he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

It is in this seemingly unimportant statement that we see the hope of Jesus' incarnation. It is for this end that God's Son came to earth. As the apostle Paul writes:

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Romans 5:15-17 But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶ The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.