

1st Sunday Lent

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3-13-11

Well, you really can get anything online! After extensive searching, and at great cost, I have for you today.....an amazingly well-preserved apple from the Garden of Eden!

You know the story: Adam and Eve were pure and clean; they laid their heads on the pillow each night with a clear conscience. They were in harmony with God, with each other, and with the earth. "Adam, dear, look at these thousands of apple trees in the Garden! Red delicious, Granny Smith—enough apples for a lifetime! And we can eat from any of them—except the one in the middle of the Garden."

Adam of course, says, "Well let's go look at it! We're allowed to do that. No harm done!" So Adam and Eve hop on their motor scooter, and see the Tree of Life up ahead. She says, "God said not to eat of that tree??? The serpent told us it would be all right! Let's at least pick one apple. We can do that much!"

Adam is getting worried: "Eve, isn't that asking for trouble, to get that close to the forbidden fruit?" "No, Adam, we can handle it! We'll just look, that's all. We'll put on a glove; that we won't be toughing the apple!

So they pick an apple; the whole earth is watching, the angels are watching, 50 billion souls--not yet born--are watching.

"It looks good. It smells good. Just a little nibble. Not the whole thing, just a nibble."

And that nibble led to the whole apple. And Adam and Eve lost their innocence. And they sewed clothing to hide from God's gaze. Over one apple.

2.5 million years later, St. Paul would write to the Romans that "through one man sin entered the world." A few pages later, Paul would write of himself, "I cannot understand my own behavior. I fail to do the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate...the will to do the good is within me, the performance is not...instead of doing the good things I want to do, I carry out the sinful things I do not." (Romans 7:15ff)

Whoever Adam and Eve were, wherever and whenever they lived, whatever disobedience they committed, sin entered the world. And every day, it is a struggle for us to be good, to do the right thing. Even Jesus was tested.

Here we are, moving into Lent. Abstaining from chocolate, salty crunchies, speeding, alcohol, and foul language are all very good, but the real goal of Lent is to look our particular apple in the eye, to name that apple, and to turn away. Which is not easy at all. Which is why we need to pray a great deal during these forty days. So, Lent is a wonderful, hopeful season: Jesus gave his life for all those apples of ours. And by his power, we can become better people.

To end, here's a quick parable, which I have paraphrased. If anyone has the exact text, I'd love to have it.

I walked down the same road I always walk down.

I fell into the same pothole I always fall into. I stayed in it a long time, like I always do.

I walked down the same road. I fell into the same pothole. I didn't stay in it as long as I usually do.

I walked down the same road. I fell into the same hole. I got out immediately.

I walked down the same road. I carefully walked by the edge of the pothole.

I walked down the same road. I did not look toward the pothole.

I walked down a different road.