

Quick review from the last Rerouting homily on Genesis 2. After God creates Adam He tells him, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” Then God creates and brings to Adam all the animals, but none of them is a suitable partner – until Adam is introduced to Eve. To be made in the image and likeness of God is to be essentially made for relationship/ love. This may sound obvious, almost like a cliché. Our world speaks easily about love. But, in fact, we are increasingly a society of people who live, not in relationship, but separate, isolated lives. The greatest commandment of our society is to let nothing and nobody get in the way of living out one’s own dreams. And our technology only reinforces that tendency. Virtual contact is taking the place of face to face encounters with other human beings. But we were created, by Love, for love. Human beings need others to become truly human, to be who we were created to be. In this we’re simply reflecting our Creator, the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – the Lover, the Beloved, and the Love who unites them. But our ability to love has been wounded by the Fall.

Enough review. Now, I want to continue the Great Story and speak about the background to that Fall. Woven in with the story of the creation of Adam and his encounter with Eve in Genesis 2 is the story of the trees of the Garden of Eden. Please read along with me Genesis 2:9,16-17, “Out of the ground the Lord God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad . . . The Lord God then gave man this order, ‘You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die.’”

So, is God setting up Adam and Eve? Is the tree of good and evil an arbitrary test of Adam and Eve imposed by God, in which He basically said, “If you disobey me I’ll kill you?” No, this is not so much a test to pass or fail, as an opportunity to love – or not. What is going on here is that the trees offer the first human beings a relationship with

God. Loving relationships require trust to grow and deepen (think about healthy marriages). The trees of the garden offer the chance for Adam and Eve to trust God. God says to Adam and Eve, "I've given you everything. Trust me on this. Don't eat the fruit of that tree because when you eat that fruit you will try to take into yourself the origin of reality, because to eat something is to break it down and make the food one's own. But human beings can't do that with good and evil. Not that they just should not, but that they cannot.

We human beings cannot determine what's good or evil. We lack the capacity to do that. Good and Evil lie in the will of God (good), or the rejection of that will (evil). To try to eat of this tree is to try to make our own wills the standard of good and evil. And that very attempt cuts us off from God -- which means our destruction.

We must receive life and existence as a gift – like a child. We must remember we're dependent on God. The Tree of the knowledge of good and evil is a gift that allows trust to build between us and God.

God says to us, “Enjoy the Tree of Life.” Hear that! God wants you and me to enjoy life! All the other trees are ours and are good for us. But to eat of that one tree of Good and Evil is to reject our status as children of God, in favor of trying to replace the Father. Remember the Story of the Prodigal Son? The Prodigal Son wants his father’s property for himself. That’s to say, he wants his father dead. That’s the nature of sin. Sin isn’t breaking a rule. Sin is a rejection of a relationship.

In the Great Story we speak of Creation, the Fall, and Redemption. But rather than speaking of The Fall, it might be better to speak of The Rebellion. “The Fall” sounds kind of like an accident. Oops! But it was no accident. And ever since the first rebellion against God we humans are bad at relationships and trust. The first humans rebel and choose to eat of The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Bad, and literally unleash hell into their lives.

How will God respond to our rebellion? (Spoiler alert!) On Easter morning, Mary Magdalen mistakes Jesus for the Gardener (John 20-14-

15). But that's not really a mistake. Jesus, like Adam, hangs out in gardens. That's not an accident. Jesus spent the last night of His earthly life in the Garden of Gethsemane. And the next day, after He was crucified -- after He hung upon the true tree of good and evil, the cross -- Jesus was buried in a tomb in . . . a garden. The garden where Jesus was buried becomes a new Garden of Eden where humanity starts life over. Jesus really is THE Gardener.

We'll talk more about that next week. But in the meantime, think about this: we still live within easy reach of the tree of life and the tree of good and bad. The God who created each of us to live life to the fullest still offers us a relationship with Himself. In doing that He still asks a few simple questions of us, "Do you trust me? Do you trust me to set the boundaries of good and evil for your life? Do you trust that I'm seeking your happiness through those boundaries?" How are we answering Him?