

So far in the Great Story we've looked at Creation. Remember the three acts – Creation, The Fall, Redemption? The Good God created us to share His life. We are made in his image and likeness with Freedom, Reason, and made for relationship. We were made to be loved and to love. That all sounds great . . . So what happened? What went wrong?

Today we're going to look at Genesis Chapter 3. This is the story of the Fall – only, remember last week's homily? It's not really a fall. It's a rebellion. There are two goals for the homily. First, I want to expose the maliciousness of the enemy. Second, I want to underline again the extraordinary response of the Father to our rebellion.

In Genesis 3 God wants to expose to us the workings of our enemy. [Pope Francis] God wants to make him come into the light. The Devil loves to work in the shadows, which multiply his power and strength. But as soon as the spotlight is on him, the Devil loses part of his power. So I want to answer four questions about him: Who is the enemy? Why did he rebel? What is his lie? Why is sin so serious?

Who is the Enemy? Turn to Genesis 3:1. “Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made. The serpent asked the woman, ‘Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?’” Remember back a few weeks ago when we were looking at Genesis 1:26? Right before God created human beings He created “all the creatures that crawl on the ground.” And they were pronounced good. Snakes! Everything was originally good, even the Devil. Nothing is outside God’s control. There is only one God. He has no rivals. The Devil is a creature, not divine. He is on God’s leash – but the Devil can still bite.

Let’s look at Revelation 12:9. “The huge Dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it.” The serpent was once in heaven. Let’s look at the names of the Devil. “Devil” means divider, the splitter of things. He divides marriages, families, parishes, churches, friendships, nations – our own hearts.

“Satan” means accuser. Satan accuses God (see Genesis 3!), and he accuses you and me. He whispers, “Do you really think God would . . . ?”

Second question: Why did Satan rebel? What motive did Satan have for leaving Heaven? Let’s look at Wisdom 2:23-24. “God formed man to be imperishable, in the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who are in his possession experience it.” The motive of the Devil was envy. Envy is defined as a sadness at the sight of another’s happiness. Of whom is the devil envious? Not God – he’s envious of you and me – human beings! The tradition teaches the angels were presented by God with His plan for humanity – that we were to be divinized -- and some were envious of our destiny. Revelation 12:4 says that a third of the angels rebelled. “Woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, for he knows he has but a short time.” (Rev. 12:12)

Third question, “What is the Lie that the Devil uses on us?” Sports teams use film from their opponents’ previous games to learn their

tactics and strategies. Genesis 3 is game film we can use against Satan. It shows his tactics in trying to seduce us. Look at Gen. 3:1b- 5. “‘Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?’ The woman answered the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it lest you die.’ But the serpent said to the woman: ‘You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad.’”

Note how harmless the serpent begins. He starts with a simple question. But it’s a fishing expedition, hoping Eve will bite. Don’t dialogue with the Devil! He’ll win. The Devil begins reeling Eve in (and Adam! He is standing next to her the whole time!) by accusing God. He wants to cast suspicion on God’s motives. Satan’s big Lie is: God doesn’t really love you. He’s holding you down, keeping you back from your true self. He’s restricting you. He’s keeping you yourself from being

god-like! **But, note very well: that is the same exact thing God offers us! To be divinized. Who really has the power to make that happen? God or the Devil? Who's the Liar?** Well, when Adam and Eve bite they don't become god-like. Their eyes are opened, and they hide from one another. The first thing after rebellion is suspicion and fear. They hide. That's what always happens in sin. God unites, Satan divides.

Finally, why is sin so serious? Sin is not a breaking of a law. It is a breaking of a relationship. The Father created us good and to share His life. Sin is a rejection of the One who is Love. This sin unleashed hell and very quickly in Genesis. A series of breakdown occurs. Adam and Eve are divided. The human beings are split from God. Humanity is split from the rest of creation. Adam is torn in two within himself. Sin quickly leads to the murder of Abel by Cain.

That is what went wrong in our Story. So, what is the Father's response? Read Genesis 3:8-11. "When they heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the

man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, 'Where are you?' he answered, 'I heard you in the garden: but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hide myself.' Then he asked, 'Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!'"

In your imagination, what tone do you hear God using there? Is it a harsh, accusing tone? Many of us hear it that way. But let us instead hear it as a sad tone. Imagine sitting across from your spouse who is lost in fear, anxiety, sadness – and saying, "Where are you? I can't reach you." That is God's tone here. As if to say, "Oh, you didn't trust me. You can't imagine what hurt you have brought upon yourself." We were made to be divinized, but once we began the rebellion there was no way back to God. The bridge was out. Only God could repair it. This is Good Shepherd Sunday. God's answer to our rebellion is to send the Good Shepherd to our rescue. More of the Great story next week.