

Lent 1 A Eating of the tree of knowledge and Lenten Weeding Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17, 3:1-7

Opening Prayer

Artist of souls, you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Revised Common Lectionary Prayers © 2002

Hymn: Break Thou the Bread of Life

*Break now the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
as once you broke the loaves beside the sea.
Beyond the sacred page I seek you, Lord;
my spirit waits for you, O living Word.*

*You are the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
your holy word the truth that rescues me.
Give me to eat and live with you above;
teach me to love your truth, for you are love.*

*O send your Spirit now, dear Lord, to me,
that he may touch my eyes and make me see.
Show me the truth made plain within your Word,
for in your book revealed I see you, Lord.*

Mary A. Lathbury (1877) Psalter Hymnal, 1987

Window of Wonder

“Where you tend a rose my lad, a thistle cannot grow.”
— Francis Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden

“Much more surprising things can happen to anyone who, when a disagreeable or discouraged thought comes into his mind, just has the sense to remember in time and push it out by putting in an agreeable, determinedly courageous one. Two things cannot be in one place.”

— Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden

Creative Response: Lenten Weeding

You may like to invite God to show you anywhere you may be receiving negative messages that tempt you away from true joy. Spend time this week soaking in things that uplift you, that remind you of God’s freedom and love for you. Weed away messages that are a negative voice in your life.

Closing Prayer

Whatever wilderness the Spirit has brought you to:
walk in boldness, as a beloved child of God
walk in peace, under the shelter of the Most High
walk in faith, knowing Christ walks with you. Amen.
~ Joanna Harader spaciousfaith.com

Devotion: A Garden with Two named Trees

The story of the Garden of Eden takes us right back to beginnings, when God first decided to create a home for humanity, by first planting a garden in the east, in Eden, and then putting people in that Garden, in order to work it and take care of it. It has been pointed out that the words “work” it, and take “care” of it, are words that describe the role of priests in the Temple. And so, on this understanding, humans were given a priestly role within this Garden, to protect the Garden Sanctuary, in which Adam and Eve also enjoyed a close fellowship with God, as God would visit them in the cool of the evening. And so, the language of these passages, including the fact that this Garden faced the east, as did Israel’s later Tabernacle and Temple, provide many hints that the Garden in which Adam and Eve were placed was understood as a Sanctuary, in which Adam and Eve would enjoy fellowship with God, and “serve” and “guard” it as caretakers of it.

We read that in this Garden God had also planted many different trees, which were pleasing to the eye, and also good for food. Indeed, this garden was full of good food, peace and abundant beauty. And in the middle of the Garden were two special trees called the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. No doubt, as standing at the centre of the Garden, they stood as symbols of central choices that Adam and Eve could make, representing life or death.

Adam and Eve were told not to eat from the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, because doing so would bring death – both physical and spiritual – meaning ultimate physical death, as well as separation from God and His Spirit.

In Genesis 3:4, the serpent denied God’s warning and promised that eating the fruit would make Adam and Eve like God, knowing good and evil. Seeing that the fruit was appealing and seemed to offer wisdom, they ate it.

This tree was forbidden because such complete knowledge of everything belongs only to God, who alone can handle it perfectly. Adam and Eve were meant to trust God’s wisdom and guidance rather than take God’s place themselves. True freedom is found by trusting God and living within God’s command, not outside it. Jesus taught that knowing and living by his word brings truth, and that truth sets us free (John 8:32). Sometimes it takes a life-time to learn this blessed truth.

Genesis 3:7 says that when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, choosing not to trust God, their eyes were opened, with disappointing results. They moved from innocence, protection, and freedom, to shame, and they had to wear clothes which symbolised separation from each other, as well as God, and from the beautiful Garden itself. Humanity’s intimate relationship with God and creation, which they were made to serve, and care for, which would be a sanctuary for them, was now broken. The decision humans made to be like God had disastrous consequences, including final physical death itself.

Devotion: A Garden with Two named Trees

At Genesis 3:22-24 God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever. So the Lord banished them from the Garden of Eden and placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword, flashing back and forth, to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

But this is not the end of the story, for at the other end of the Bible, in Revelation 2:7, Jesus promises those who renew their love for him and for each other, "That I will give the right to eat from the Tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God, or the new creation." Thanks be to Jesus, for he is now our true wisdom and life, and all that was lost in that beautiful, abundant garden is being restored in God's kingdom. May these words bless us today, as we begin our journey into Lent. Amen.

Rev Dr Ted Woods.



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Lenten Weeding

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