

# Forty Days

## **TO BE NEVER ALONE**

### *Lent One Video*

In the beginning, our beginning, we were only dust  
Knowing nothing of good and evil  
Only the pure innocence of God,  
    In the garden  
    Alongside Creator  
    The Birth-giver  
    Witness to Live begetting life.

We were shameless—  
    Known in our nakedness  
    freely creating,  
    work was being human.

Standing at the edge of Eden,  
    things were not the same,  
Fragile, we needed protection  
    and so we hid—  
        behind trees  
        behind one another  
        behind our lives,  
            work was no longer about creating, but surviving.

Individuated from God  
    We sought shelter from the pain  
        of the memory of what we lost.

But at the edge we stood, never alone  
    wrapped in a pale reflection of our former selves  
        Would we know how to be man and woman again?  
        Would we remember how to walk together  
        with clear vision of each other—  
            as more than self-made image  
            but souls sheltered in the divine  
            looking for the one who created and loved?

From the garden I entered the wilderness of my striving  
where I encountered demons,  
my demons,  
in the shifting sands,  
dirt between my toes,  
as a reminder of my mortality  
to seek to fill the hunger  
to remember who I was,  
but really always forgetting  
caught up in work  
or in another  
or in distractions.

There were days when dreams became fantasy,  
painting my self into corners  
to connect with all those I loved  
including a life, that I left behind—  
stretching myself across a canvas of memories  
the walking across a painted dessert  
to look down from the highest cliff  
to hold kingdoms in my palm—  
temptation before me.

What they were for me they were for the Son of Man,  
A deep growl in a hungry soul.

Jesus came to face himself, and his frailty.  
He feasted on food made of words  
baked in the mouth of God.  
Words of life that promised another way  
back to lush lands,  
a place where we could hold hands  
and be together, with the One who never left us alone.

## **Questions for Reflection**

1. What would it be like to be “shameless” and “known in our nakedness”?

2. In what ways have we abandoned creativity for survival? How do we “hide behind one another/behind our lives”?
3. How has God not abandoned us, even when some of us have abandoned God?
4. What are the demons we might encounter in the wilderness? What painful things might we confront about ourselves?
5. In what ways were Jesus’s temptations very much like our own? In what ways were they different?

How did Jesus feast “on food made of words/baked in the mouth of God”?

6. What kind of life does God promise for us? How can we come to a place where we can once again “hold hands” with God?

## **Practices of Lent**

One interpretation, a primarily Jewish interpretation, is that because there is no mention of the word sin (*chata*) in the third chapter of Genesis, the story of “the fall” of Adam and Eve is not about sin, but lost innocence. The couple was no longer ignorant to “good and evil” and “the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.”<sup>1</sup> The intimacy they had with the LORD God was no more. They had abandoned it for what they thought would be sweeter fruit.

Many of our pursuits, projects, and relationships are simply a hope to return to the innocence of the garden. There, work was meaningful, food was plentiful, and relationships were satisfying. What we often experience now are only shadows and glimpses of what was abandoned. In this way, our longing is good. It makes us search for that place we left, the place we know as home. But at times, this longing is numbed by things that are unhealthy or even self-destructive. Some of us therefore abandon our search for home, abandon the hope to find our Creator.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:7

Sometimes, we abandon our pursuit because we have felt abandoned. The proverbial fruit seems beyond our reach. It can be argued that the LORD God did not drive them out of the garden, but they themselves forsake it. Nevertheless, even before the couple's expulsion from the Garden, their Creator was always with them, providing them protection and presence. Soon, the LORD would speak to the children of the man and woman, in the same way God spoke to them. God's absence is a *perceived* absence. It is the sense of abandonment that we experience when we turn away from the Creator. However this is not the reality. God's presence is and was always expressed in the Hebrew world, *chesed* or "tenacious love."

How has God shown you God's tenacious love? What about God's presence and peace that has remained with you despite times when you might have turned away from God? How can the season of lent remind you that even in the desert there is provision and shelter?

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