

Genesis

Today starts another cycle of our narrative lectionary year, so we're back at the beginning. This is the second creation story. The first is the account of the 7 days of creation. The story of Adam and Eve first sets up a vision for what creation was supposed to be like. The second part of it is I think not so much an explanation of evil, but rather what evil looks like in us, and a vision of its consequences.

Those consequences play out over and over again, not only in scripture, but in life ever since.

In the first image in the garden you get this sense of connectedness. God's very breath brings the first human being to life, connecting that life to God. The human is a friend of the other creatures, giving them their names. What we read today skips over Eve's creation, but out of the one creature comes two unique people...sharing bones, flesh and soul. They are designed to be partners in caring for this beautiful creation.

The people depend on the plants in the garden for food. The garden depends on the care of the humans, but it also depends on the health of the animals in the garden.

And all are connected to God, their creator. In that God-centered world, the two people could be who God created them to be. They could participate with God in the ongoing creation, shaping the world through their work. It wouldn't necessarily have always been easy. I think humans need some struggle to grow.

There's a sense of connectedness in that first vision of creation...a sense that all of creation gives and receives from each other so that all can flourish and grow.

But then, the crafty serpent puts in their minds a question...can God really be trusted? Is God really good? The so called first sin isn't actually eating the fruit. The first sin is the suspicion that maybe God can't be trusted.

Before this, they could trust God to judge good and evil. Now they're not sure. Maybe it would be a better world if they could judge good and evil for themselves. Maybe they did want to be like God.

So they ate. They ate a fruit that humanity has continued to eat ever since.

The minute they ate, that connectedness vanished. In its place was separation.

Separation was the very first thing that happened after they ate the fruit. Shame crept in...they were ashamed of their bodies and they were afraid to be seen by God. Their true self was stained and they felt the need to hide from each other and from God.

When God learns what has happened, they immediately try to place the blame somewhere else. From the minute they ate the fruit, they proved that human beings do not know how to handle the judgment of good and evil.

That seemingly small failure created a tiny crack which ultimately spread out into an ever extending web of cracks like a tiny chip does in the windshield of your car.

From that time on, instead of the connection between God and humans, humans and the rest of creation, and God and the rest of creation, there would be separation.

Humans would have to fight for survival against the powers of the natural world. Instead of caring for and furthering creation, humans would try to force the natural world to serve humanity, even if it destroyed it.

And, unable to trust and depend on God, humans would no longer be able to trust one another either. In the next generation, Cain would kill his brother Abel. And the cracks would continue to race across creation, with everyone trying to force their own definitions of good and evil.

Well, God didn't abandon them after this. God did send them out into the world where they would struggle, but they didn't go alone. God went with them.

The rest of the biblical story is that of God's ongoing work to connect and reconnect. God's desire for creation all along has been that union that was present in the beginning. Union between creation and God, humanity and God, humanity and creation, and really even within ourselves.

As we go through the story this year, look for the separation and what God is doing to reunite. Look for places in our lives now where you see God working to end separation and bring all of creation back to that wholeness and connectedness.

That first image of Eden is one of an amazing interconnected friendship between God and God's creation. In Jesus, God literally became a human friend to us.

The Spirit within us maintains those ties of connection, even as we try to break them.

But the story keeps moving forward. From that first vision of God's peaceful world, God continues to work within creation to bring it to its glorious fulfillment... a new beginning.

Welcome to the journey as we take our place in God's unfolding story.