

March 1, 2020

Dt 26:4-10; Rom 10:8-13; Lk 4:1-13

We heard in the second reading: *just as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so, through one righteous act, acquittal and life came to all.* Jesus came to reverse the sin that came into the world when people got the idea that it was ok to not follow God. Sin happens when one chooses to ignore God either directly - to not give God the worship and service that God is due, or to ignore God indirectly by failing to love our neighbor. When we sin we choose a short-term gain over following God and loving our neighbor as God commanded. As a result we become separated from God, alienated from our brothers and sisters, made to suffer on earth, and can eventually lose eternal life - all for a short-term gain in the *temporary now*. The ashes we received on Ash Wednesday called us to remember the temporary nature of our lives on earth, and to spend the time now, not in sin but in following God. Lent calls us to be like Jesus in the Gospel and to turn away from sin.

Let's take a look at the story of Adam and Eve in the garden. Before that encounter at the tree they were innocent, it has not even occurred to them to not follow God. Humanity was in harmony with God - they were provided for by God, they gave total devotion to God, there was no pain, strife and discord - it was a paradise! The voice of Satan that tempted them is still running through the world now and still trips us up. Once these lies got out, they continued to get spread down from generation to generation. Let's look at a couple of these lies that can tempt us to turn our back on God and our neighbor.

The serpent says: *Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?* He says, So, God basically told you to starve? You can't eat from any tree? Not what God said. This is a common tactic, to portray God as unreasonable and not providing, by focusing on the few things that God says we can't have. *The woman answered the serpent: We may eat of the fruit of the trees in 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.'* She clarifies the command of God and says that God has provided more than enough - there is only one thing you can't have - it hasn't even crossed her mind that to be denied one thing out of hundreds means she has been unfairly treated or deprived. The serpent has to give her that idea. Behind many thoughts that lead to sin and anxiety and depression and suffering is that desire to have things I can't have -

in the process we loose focus on all the tons of things God has given. and reach out to touch the thing that will harm us. Next comes the lie from the serpent that has become very common in our time: *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.* The lie here is: Nothin bad can happen for not following God's commands; the forbidden fruit won't hurt you ... God knows better, that's why he say not to touch it. The lie goes on: If you choose your own rules, you can be just like God; you can make the rules. This is another classic way of thinking that leads to sin. This is like saying that if you don't follow the state laws that they somehow now are changed and you can do whatever you want and nothing bad can ever happen - because you basically make the rules and can control the consequences. It's silly and not even logical, and most anyone who does this really knows that something bad can happen. Because we don't follow God's commands does not change them, or change the things that can happen from not following them.

In the Gospel story, Jesus encounters the same temptation to sin that Adam and Eve did. The same serpent in a modern form. The tempter says to Jesus: *All these [worldly things] I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.* In other words: Forget God, get satisfaction in the world - let those things make you feel better, in fact sell yourself and your soul for it. Nothing bad can happen, there is nothing to be concerned about beyond this world (same lie Adam and Eve bought and it cost them paradise). Jesus says back: *The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.* Follow God, because there *is* another life I need to focus on, because God *is* the one that makes the rules, not me or other people who sound real smart. In the story we hear that Jesus *was hungry*. He had a human need, he was in a want, we hear: *The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread."* Just like with Adam and Eve he lies saying that God is not providing for him. He is telling him: Forget about God, use your own power to do things - be like God, be your own boss - fill your own needs the way you want. Jesus says: *"It is written: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."* Rather than put my effort on using my powers and energy for my own temporary satisfaction, I'll use it to more deeply hear the word of God, and follow God to an even greater satisfaction.

Jesus gives us his own body today for our bread, this is food for the journey and allows God to fill our human hungers and needs. This lent let us resolve to listen to God and God's truth, not the lies that fill the world and that cause us to turn away from God and neighbor and to forfeit the paradise that the God of Love wishes to have with us.