

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

February 26, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Genesis 2: 15-17, 3: 1-7

Responsive Reading; Psalm 32

Epistle Reading; Romans 5: 12-19

Gospel Reading; Matthew 4: 1-11

Sermon Title: **Trust in the Lord**

By Re. Jim Gardner

Summary; Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God. Blessed is he whose help is in the God of Jacob; whose hope is the Lord his God.

This is the first Sunday in Lent and our lectionary starts it out with an overview of what has happened in the world from the time of Adam and Eve through the ministry of Jesus Christ. Condemnation by the act of one man, Adam, and redemption by the act of one man, Jesus.

Since about the beginning of time people have been saying “Don’t cry over spilled milk”, and Theologians have been doing that ever since Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden.

Apparently, God's intention was that no one would ever face a physical death in the world, and eating the apple wrecked all that. OK, it is what it is. Live with it, or should I say die with it? Any who. This "fallen world" is not a world without God.

God is still here and He is still listening.

Our Psalm 32 starts out, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. Whose sin is covered." It does not start saying, "Blessed is he who is righteous." It does not start that way but it finishes saying, "he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart."

The great gift of God is forgiveness and accepting that forgiveness makes righteousness an attainable reality.

OK, lets see if I can sort this out. William MacDonald's Bible commentary advances the belief that this Psalm was written by King David after his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. After this terrible violation of everything that is right and acceptable, David suffered the guilt and finally came clean to God and confessed to God that which God already knew. God forgave the iniquity of the sin, and David was acquitted, not because of who David was but because of who God is. This extreme act of forgiveness that seems impossible for us to do is right where God lives. God is so in love with us, His adopted children, that that He was not only willing to

forgive David but He would send His Son to die for us so that God might forgive the sins that would otherwise forever separate Him from us.

God is good all the time, and that is the understatement of the ages.

Our Epistle lesson from Romans shows how the sin of Adam affected all of humanity from beginning until now. Adam was the designated representative of the entire human race, in other words when Adam sinned it was not just Adam the man sinning it was Adam the representative of all mankind sinning. As representative, when Adam was condemned, all mankind was condemned.

Hey, that ain't fair. We did not elect him. Oh well, the milk was spilled either way.

There are two kinds of death, physical death and spiritual death. Paul points out that physical death remained even when Moses brought us the law and there was no indication that spiritual death was abated by the law. Paul even says that those who never committed a sin as serious as that of Adam were still held responsible. One act of sin by Adam resulted in condemnation of all men, but by one act of righteousness Jesus gave the free gift of justification of life to all people, in spite of many sins committed by all people, to all who would call on His name.

Like I said, “God is good, all the time!”

Our Gospel lesson takes us back to the start of the ministry of Jesus following His baptism by John the Baptist.

The devil hits Jesus with similar temptations that he used on Eve. He uses the physical, pointing out to Eve how good the apple would be to eat and he points out to Jesus how satisfying bread would be when Jesus was forty days hungry. He points out to Eve how important she would be if she were like God and to Jesus what a splash, no pun intended, He would make if He defied death in a public place. Lastly you can only serve one master. If Jesus worshiped the Devil Jesus would affirm the devil as God and if Eve were to be like God, she would not need to worship God. Jesus passed and Eve didn't and Adam flunked because he was supposed to be the head of the household and should have taken on the responsibility that God had granted to him.

So here we go into the season of Lent and the Passion of Christ. We cannot properly appreciate the meaning of the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus unless we can comprehend the ramifications that it has for each and every one of us.

Yes, we live in a fallen world. So, what! We do not have a fallen God. Jesus is alive and well and, in our world, whether we like it or not, and in our lives, our eternal lives, if we will but ask Him to attach Himself to us. Blessed are those who are forgiven.

Trust in God with all your heart and soul and heaven can start right now. If Jesus is walking with you and holding your hand you are already a part of Him. He is in you and you have made your reservation to your mansion with Him in His hometown.

Trust in the Lord! Hallelujah and Amen!