

## "Hissing In The Garden"

Rev Wayne F Schmidt  
Senior Pastor of Salem Lutheran Church  
Orlando, Florida

Preached February 10<sup>th</sup> 2008  
First Sunday in Lent  
Church Cycle A

Text  
13

Genesis 3 1-

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' 2The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 3but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die." ' 4But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; 5for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,\* knowing good and evil.' 6So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. 7Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. 8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' 10He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' 11He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' 12The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' 13Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.'

Sermon

**"Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil, and all of his empty promises?"**

This question is part of the Formula of Baptism. The prescribed response is: "I Do!" But sometimes we don't renounce the devil. Have you ever consciously chosen to do something that you knew was against God's will, or ways, or word? Sometimes we buy into the "promises" of the devil. Why? Because we believe they are not "empty"

Before the serpent had hissed to her that tree...that forbidden tree had no particular appeal to Eve or to Adam. Neither of them had expressed any interest -- in it or in its fruit. They heeded the Lord God's command. Though the Lord God gave no reason nor explanation as for the ban -- they accepted it. Though the Lord God only said they were not to eat of it because it brought death-- they simply trusted God and obeyed him.

And -- why not! For they perceived God as good. But now after the serpent had hissed in the Garden, Eve perceived the fruit of the tree -- differently

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate."

No one chooses evil outright. So... sin must be made to appear to be something that it is not – GOOD. Satan must disguise sin as desirable. The serpent promises Eve and us that if we disregard God's way we will be better off, The one hissing in the garden promises if we disregard God's word we will benefit. The snake of old promises we will experience a positive good if we do know is wrong God's eyes.

Now after the serpent had hissed in the Garden Eve perceived God – differently

“You will not die. God knows -- that when you eat of the fruit: Your eyes will be opened. You will be like God.”

The Serpent made her question whether God really was concerned over her well being. The Serpent made her question whether God really had her best interest at heart. The Serpent made her question God's motives.

Who is to be trusted? Who has your best self interest in mind? Who is it that is the real liberator? The first figure who gives the command? The second figure who questions the command? Did you know there are parallel stories to this biblical story in the literature of the earlier pagan cultures of Babylonia and Cana. Parallel except for one major difference. In these ancient pagan narratives the story is told of two deities. The first god covets the secret of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Selfishly this god commands that mankind "May not eat of it." According to the pagan story, this first god' intent is to deprive mankind. The second god comes along and exposes the selfish intent of the first. This god encourages the human to eat. The ensuing act of disobedience by mankind leads to human development.

Which story is true? Is the pagan story, where the second god has the best interest of mankind in mind? Is the biblical version, where the first has the best interest of the man and woman?

Is this God (Bible held up) for you? Or -- Is this God against you?

This God who says: “If anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other or the one who hisses in the garden: “Stand up for yourself. Don't be a fool. Never let anyone take advantage of you.”

This God who says: “Love your enemies” or the one who hisses in the garden: “To Hell with you enemies and anyone else who thinks otherwise”

This God who says: “Forgive seventy times seven” or the one hissing in the garden: “Never given them a chance to do that again to you.”

This God who says: “Do not commit adultery” or the one who hisses in the garden: “ go ahead. Try the shoe on before you buy it.”

This God who says: “Deny yourself, and pick up your cross, and follow me ” or the one in the garden hissing: “ You owe it to yourself. Go ahead. Indulge yourself. Life is short. Do what you want to do.”

"Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil and all his empty promises?

This question is not just asked at Baptism. This question is asked of us each day.

Who do you trust? Whose ways lead to life and ... life abundantly? The God of the Bible or the one hissing in the garden?

"Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil and all his empty promises?  
May we always answer: "I do."