

Gen 2:4-17

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.'

Sometimes we see a picture, a holiday photo, your computer wallpaper, the amazon prime screensaver, or an actual painting that we want to be part of. We want to walk into it and be part of it, we wonder what it might be like to be there. To be somewhere sunnier, more spectacular, or just less masky. And then we may even wonder, what we would be like if we were there. Would the air be better, the views more moving, the sun warmer.. Not only do we wonder what it might be like there, but we often wonder ourselves whether we will be lighter, fairer, calmer, happier?

The account of Adam and Eve in the garden is such a picture. It tells us so much about ourselves that I am at pains to reduce it for one daily update. There is so much that I would like to know more about, or share thoughts about. But for now, let's focus on the fact that the story is remote and in many ways feels almost lost in the mist. Eden, a paradise, is an oasis garden on an otherwise uncultivated plain. Rich with gold, resin and onyx, it lacks nothing. The familiar rivers that conform to its boundaries are at the same time mysterious, because though it is rooted in our world, we have yet to find it. And in this paradise, we find God and mankind in harmony with creation. It seems a million years ago.

But, at the same time, it is remarkably familiar, because Adam and Eve's life is lived with God on the same terms as ours. They are in a world in which not all is as it could be. The garden is cultivated, but the surrounding land is not. They are given a paradise with freedom, but there are also boundaries. God tells them, these things are good, these other things are evil. You are free to eat from any tree, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die. Both choices have consequences, blessings or curses. To be within God's will, or to be outside.

So Adam and Eve were left in a position of trusting God. As we are. To reject evil, we should remind ourselves regularly of the good God has for us.

In many situations we face choices and the choices we make reflect where we are with God. We make choices that express our trust in him. We pray to God about something distressing, for example, when we could instead repeat it over and over and so gently stew. We can sit and be bored, or we can turn that time as an opportunity to rest or build our relationship with God, to let him remind us we are loved and he is not far. And we make choices that express our distrust. We push ourselves forward so we feel loved, rather than trust that God loves us and make space for others to know they are loved.

Most of our choices and reactions boil down to choosing from these two positions. I can trust God, who wants good for me, or I can do my own thing which has consequences outside of God's hopes for me. We are to use our freedom by choosing truth and rejecting evil, in this way we show we love God, (1 John 5:2 amongst many others). Our approach to every action, thought and word each day, boils down to whether we believe God's words are good for us and effective. Can we trust that he is good? We know his words are effective, because when Adam and Eve sinned, we all fell under judgement.

The really good news though is that God determined that would not be the end. Eph 2:6-7 tell us that ⁶...God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in

order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

God's goodness towards us extends to Christ coming to us to restore us to the paradise the Father intended.

His word will be effective in the end.

Prayer for today

Gracious God,
as we remember before you the thousands who have died,
surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion.
Be gentle with us in our grief,
protect us from despair,
and give us grace to persevere
and face the future with hope
in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.
Amen.

Blessed are you, Lord our God.
How sweet are your words to the taste,
sweeter than honey to the mouth.
How precious are your commands for our life,
more than the finest gold in our hands.
How marvellous is your will for the world,
Unending is your love for the nations.
Our voices shall sing of your promises
and our lips declare your praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Blessed be God for ever.
Amen.