

Sermon March, 1, 2026

During their time in Exile, the people sought to make sense of their world and their experiences within a faith system where God had made the divine presence known to them in concrete ways. It is during this time, that our stories of how God created the world were first written down. Bible scholars have differentiated two creation stories. The first one is found in the first chapter of Genesis, when the God of Israel speaks the world into being... and affirmed each action as "good!" The second creation story gives us another perspective on God's activity. In the beginning, the earth is without water or life of any kind. The first act of creation was the forming of the *adam* from dust. The second act is the planting of the garden of Eden, where *adam* lives as the gardener. Ongoing works of creation include the creation of every living creature. Finally God, creates a life-partner for Adam from his own rib. Hear now selected readings from Genesis 2 and 3.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

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?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but 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.' " But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 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. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Matthew 4:11

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,'
and 'On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' "

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' "

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, "All these I will

give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him,
“Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only God.’ ”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Longing for Wholeness

In the beginning, there was harmony, trust and mutuality. Creation was blessed and it was good! But that mutuality and openness did not last. A serpent, a tree... and the world and how we lived in it changed forever. The world is now a broken place and it is not the way it was meant to be. We are a people longing for wholeness.

George HW Bush once said that we should look back with 90/90 vision. I’m not sure if 90/90 vision is even a thing, but I always liked that quote because there are times when we do not see as clearly as we think we do. Everything is distorted and out of focus.

This is how we remember Eve.

Eve, the mother of all humanity. Eve, created from Adam’s Rib. Adam – made from dust and breathed into life. Eve carried that sacred breath of life too. Adam looked at Eve and proclaimed:

*This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken*

Renita Weems, the feminist theologian and one of my former professor once wrote that this was the first love song in the Bible. The joy of a man and woman who are inter-connected, complementary... share the same essence.

Together they are whole.

Eve, loved by Adam, walking through a garden blessed by God. But she had not idea how to weigh decisions... no life experiences to judge things by. No understanding of right or wrong, good or bad... because God had told Adam not to eat from the tree that would give them the ability to discern.

Eve... and Adam... in so many ways were like little children with so much potential, waiting to learn the ways of life.

I hate what we have done to Eve... how we mis-remember her in our broken world. For thousands of years, Eve has born the weight of so much anger and hatred that has also been also turned towards women in general. Early church theologians who helped form our Christian faith— their words still impact how we view one another. Just listen to the early Church Fathers talk about eve and women:

- Clement of Alexandra wrote about Eve's story and proclaimed: "Every woman should be filled with shame by the thought that she is a woman."
- Tertullian declared that, "Women were the reason Jesus had to die on the cross; they were the "gate to hell," and a "temple built over a sewer."
- Saint Augustine wrote, "Men by themselves are the image of God, while women are not, they are merely men's helpmates."
- Saint Albert the Great, preached, "Women have faulty, defective natures; their feelings drive them to evil while reason drives men to good. Women are by nature, lying, deceptive creatures; one must be on guard against every woman as if she were a poisonous snake and the horned devil himself."

- Saint Thomas Aquinas proclaimed, "Women are defective and misbegotten." And I could keep on going.

Even if we hate these words, we inherit the views. They are woven into the fabric of our society... sometimes in ways we don't even realize. Today's scripture is a perfect example. We still mis-remember Eve and shun her... we have turned her into a willful seductress who is responsible for Original Sin and all that is wrong with humanity and our world. That is a heavy burden to lay on one woman's shoulders.

We mis-remember Eve and today we hear her story linked with Jesus' temptation in the wilderness... as if Jesus is the antidote to Eve. We look at her with 90/90 vision.

But I challenge you to take a step back and look at her ancient story with clearer eyes. Eve is the giver of life and the seeker of knowledge. Eve is not willful but trying to understand who she is in a new world. Without the knowledge of Good and Evil, without life experiences, she is learning and experimenting. Just like we all do as we learn. She trusts the serpent because she has no reason not to... and Adam trust her because he has no reason not to. That is the reality that God created for them. A reality of trust and no knowledge base. And when they fail... we should not be surprised. Still, We heap our blame on Eve.

For generations the church stripped Eve of her power to breathe life, and her wisdom in seeking knowledge. The church has offered up a mis-remembered fallen woman, a temptress, to be punished over and over again. Eve has become the cross women must bear in our bleeding and in our birthing. The church has offered Eve up as if she is little more than a doctrine, the doctrine of original sin; a doctrine born of the fall and served up by Augustine in the fourth century to solidify the church's role as the arbitrator of salvation.

The trouble is there was no fall. We are not and have never been fallen creatures. We were never perfect creatures who fell from grace, and scripture doesn't support that. No, there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can separate us from the LOVE that is God... love that began in those first creative moments and extend through Adam and Eve; Abraham and Sarah; Ruth and Isaiah... and Jesus Christ.

In the wilderness, confronted by his own tempter, Jesus teaches us how to counter and resist the temptations of power and division while reclaiming the true spirit and integrity of Scripture. Jesus shows us how to put God into the center of our lives and reclaim the wholeness we long for.

Because we need a world of new opportunities and mutuality. Too many women and girls are battered and broken by the men they should trust the most, and where the stories of Eve and other women in the Bible are used as weapons to justify the abuse and cruelty. 1 in 3 women will be victimized in some way in their lifetimes and too many male pastors tell women to forgive and accept the abuse. It's all comes down to Eve.

We need to repent and find another way. We need to look at the world with 20/20 vision!

So, may the sacred One who breathed life into us, female and male, continue to breathe in, with, through and beyond us. May the spirit of Eve the Mother of Life, continue to walk with us, as we seek the knowledge and the wisdom to follow Jesus the Son of God, with love and humility. Every day of our lives. Amen

Nothing surpasses the love you impart.

Beloved, Your strength may fail but God's hand never will! Chris will lead you wherever you may be