

THE MESSAGE for June 19, 2011

Genesis 1:26-2:4a

Adam and Eve... Relationship and Responsibility

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How much do you know about your family history? Lately, there's been a growing interest in genealogy, especially through online resources like Ancestry.com. People want to learn about their ancestors, perhaps because it teaches us something about ourselves.

My younger brother did some research on our family a few years ago and discovered that we are related to a woman called, Indian Eve. Her married name was Eve Earnest. She was married to Henry Earnest in the mid 1700's. They lived north of Fort Bedford along Dunning's Creek. Henry had cleared the land and built a log cabin for their family of 6 children – George, Mary, Jacob, Johannas, Henry, and Mike as told by Emma Replogle in the book she wrote around the 1900's titled, "Indian Eve and her descendants: An Indian Story of Bedford County, Pennsylvania." Emma writes...

Very early one autumn morning several men had come to the Ernest house to help make rails [for a fence on the property]. While sitting around the chimney fire, they heard a noise like owls hooting. One of them said, 'We will not make many rails today for it is going to rain soon – the owls are hooting.' It was the war whoop of the Indians they heard, and in a moment they were upon them. One or two of the men were killed at once. Mr. Earnest reached for his gun above the door and was shot. The men were all scalped.

George [the oldest child] must have been still in bed as he sprung up and tried to jump out a window and go around to the opposite window to reach in and get his gun, he was shot at, fell from the window as if dead, and made his escape in his shirt.

Mother [Eve] had gone to the loft where Mary and Jacob were perhaps still asleep. She was about to hide them, but fearing the Indians would burn down the house she left them out by way of the roof. Mary – they called Molly – ran down through the meadow and made her escape. Jacob slid down the roof and hid in smart weed. He said he could see the whites of their eyes glaring as they were hunting for them. Nothing has ever been said as to how Johannas escaped.

The family had a loom and did their weaving. While the Indians were cutting a coverlet [out of the weaving] to take with them, and parlaying about it, the mother pushed her husband's scalp and at least one other behind a chest. Looking around after missing the scalps and talking [the Indians] decided the coverlet was their token and got ready to leave at once.

What a scene at daybreak on that fateful morning. Here beside the stream where they had build their cabin home and while the father cleared the forest and raised grain for food and flax for clothing, the mother spun, and wove, and cooked by the hearth, and

took care of the garden besides assisting her husband in the fields. In a few hours these ties were all broken. [Her husband and the other men all lie dead.] She must flee with these [Indians] in great haste leaving all that was precious except her little boy Henry and two year old baby Mike. Pressing her baby boy to her bosom with one arm and leading Henry by her side, she went not knowing whither, nor the fate of the other children. By her presence of mind in hiding the scalps she was saved the awful sight of seeing her husband's scalp dangling from an Indian's belt on the long[and difficult] journey.

That long and difficult journey took Eve and her two boys to work in various Indian camps traveling over mountains, forests, rivers, and marshes. Once while in a bark canoe crossing a river, Eve prayed that they would all be drowned but the Lord did not answer her prayer. Finally when they arrived near Fort Detroit [Michigan] a number of years later she was sold to the British. Oddly enough young Henry was dressed like an Indian and could shoot a bow and arrow and liked it. The Indians wanted to keep him. Eve told the British officer, 'If I can't take my boys with me, I will stay with the Indians.' 'Just come' the officer said to her with a wink then gave the Indians a glass of whiskey with a silver coin in it. As they were looking at this the officer grabbed the boy and gave him to his mother.

Eve had to work to pay her ransom at the fort like many women who were sold there – cleaning and cooking for the officers. Nine years after being taken from their home Eve and her two boys were released from Fort Detroit and started back to Fort Bedford. She had saved money and bought a pony from the Indians for the long journey back to Bedford, PA. When she arrived at the family homestead she was reunited with her son, George who was out working in the barn. George had married Elizabeth Samuels. Eve soon married her father, Conrad Samuels. After coming back to Bedford she was always called Indian Eve. There are not many families in Bedford County who are not in some way connected with her descendants and many are all over the western states...

I am fascinated by this part of my family history. It helps to explain who I am and where I come from and why I am the way I am. My ancestor, Indian Eve, had a certain *sticktuitiveness* when facing adversities. Perhaps I get that from her. Her story is part of my family story, into which my own story is being written along with yours.

We all have a story. Each one of us is a living book. We are part of God's larger story, a story that involves another Eve – Adam and Eve.

Some people believe that the story of Adam and Eve is literal history. Happening just the way the Bible tells it. If so, then our family tree begins with Adam and Eve. Other people believe that this Bible story is not literal, but rather a narrative about all humanity, Adam and Eve representing all of us, describing our human experiences on earth. No matter how you look at it, this remarkable story can teach us some important things about God and ourselves.

The Adam and Eve story is set within a larger creation story. God creates the heavens and the earth. Light and darkness, galaxies and quasars, canyons and mountains, oceans and rivers – they all come into existence as God speaks them into being. Creation lives by the word of God. The beauty of everything that exists does so because of God’s vivid and creative imagination in the word. Then comes the crown of God’s creation, God saves the best for last, Adam and Eve – humanity. According to God’s word, humanity is the pinnacle of God’s creation.

We often focus on the “how” of creation. I invite you to consider the “why” of creation. Why did God create everything? Simply put, because of love. God’s love is pulsing through all of creation. God exists from the beginning as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a community of love. The relationship that Adam and Eve shared with God and each other and all of creation is a reflection of God’s love.

Adam and Eve were created in love and for love. They are given a special place in God’s creation as stewards of God’s love on earth. God gives them dominion over all things. Dominion is a royal word like a king having dominion over a kingdom. It implies protection and leadership and oversight in a “power with” not a “power over.” Adam and Eve are created to be caregivers of the earth and everything that God created.

But something happened to change all of that. God gave Adam and Eve free reign in the garden with one exception. God said, *“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.”* Doesn’t seem like much, does it? God simply set the boundaries. And yet, we humans like to push the boundaries. That’s what the serpent uses to our disadvantage. The serpent plants the seed of doubt into the minds of Adam and Eve, and that doubt undermines their trust in God’s love and goodness.

I’ve discovered that giving into temptation always leads to sin and sin always leads to death and death is the ultimate state of separation.

Instead of trusting in God and God’s word of love, Adam and Eve chose to trust in themselves. They tried to be their own god and, in that moment, everything changes. Adam and Eve realize that they are naked, are ashamed, and covered themselves. Now guilt instead of grace guides their very lives.

Their faith in God becomes fear of God. When God walked through the garden to join them for afternoon tea to see how things were going as God often did – Adam and Eve went into hiding one day. They hide from God and the beautiful garden begins to produce weeds and thorns. Sin will do that in our relationships.

Their story is part of our story. And it helps explain a lot about why we are the way we are. When you and I doubt God’s love for us, when you and I think that we are somehow unlovable, when you and I seek to live on our own terms, and try to be our own god, everything falls apart.

On our own we make bad decisions and bad choices and our relationships suffer. The serpent loves it when we give in to this temptation, which sends us into hiding from God. That's never a good thing.

I tried doing that this past week. I was in a funk. I was in a bad place. I wanted nothing to do with anybody. Ever been there? I was a crab pot, a big crabby baby. I was crabby to everyone, my wife, my kids, my neighbors.

Funny thing is I didn't want to be that way but I couldn't do anything about it. I just kept getting crabbiest. So I did the only thing I could, I went into hiding. But I didn't go alone. I took my Bible with me. I went to a park nearby and opened my Bible to Galatians and I spent time with God's word of love for about two hours. I would love to offer a Bible study on Galatians sometime. There is some awesome stuff in here.

I came to verse 3 & 4 in chapter one (reading from the Bible), *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of God.*

Jesus gave himself for our sins to set us free from this present evil age according to God's will. Free from sin, death, and the devil. We are set free. That means sin, death, and the devil have no power over us. That's the gospel! That's the good news we share about Jesus. I've heard this before but now it makes so much more sense. I then considered the fact that when I sin, I'm nailing Jesus back on the cross. Jesus doesn't want to be on the cross. And I don't want to put him back there.

Then I came to verse 6 & 7 in chapter one (reading from the Bible), Paul writes: *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.*

It dawned on me that when I act crabby, I am living by the gospel of the serpent and not by Christ. When I act like that I am perverting the gospel of Christ. I don't want to do that. I don't want to confuse anyone regarding the gospel of Christ.

I came to verse 14 and read (reading from the Bible). Paul writes: *I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my own people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God set me apart before I was born called by grace so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles.*

I realized I was not zealous for sharing the grace and gospel of Jesus Christ. I want to share with others what Jesus has done for us because that's what God has called me to do.

Then I read verse 23 & 24 (reading from the Bible) Paul continues: *They had heard it said, "The one who was formerly persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me."*

WOW! And they glorified God because of Paul. I wonder do people glorify God because of me. Not if you are being crabby, I thought. God's word of love in and through the Bible reminded me of the freedom I have in Christ and so the temptations of

sin, death, and the devil have no power over me. And I don't want to put Jesus back on the cross. I want to be about his gospel because his love is enough for me. I want to reflect the glory of God in everything I say and do.

Do we not doubt God's love for us? Do we not seek to live on our own terms like Adam and Eve did? Do we not forget who we are and whose we are and what God has done for us? Do we not realize that sin desires to take control of our lives everyday? Like Adam and Eve, these things send us into hiding from God and one another.

I'm a hider. I like to hide. I think of all the things I haven't done because I was afraid I'd fail. All the things I haven't said because I thought I'd sound stupid. All the mistakes I've covered up because I was afraid you would think I was incompetent. All the relationships I've kept shallow because I was afraid I'd be rejected.

How about you? Are you a hider? Truth is we probably all participate in the cosmic game of "Hide and Seek" from time to time; where sin keeps us from having an intimate relationship with God and one another.

My kids love to play "Hide and Seek." One day they had some friends over and they were playing Hide and Seek in the house. One of our children hid so well that no one could find her. The game ended and she was still hiding. But she didn't want to come out. She wanted someone to find her. So she started singing softly at first then louder and louder. I think she was singing Amazing Grace. When I found her in the laundry room under a pile of dirty laundry she was so excited to be found. "You found me!" She shouted, with a huge grin on her face.

Some of us hide pretty well. People can see us, but the real us is hidden away under the dirty laundry of sin, or shame, or guilt, or insecurity. You may want to stay hidden but it is so much better to be found.

In a real game of Hide and Seek, when someone hides so well that no one can find them, the seekers cry out, "Olly, Olly, Oxen Free!" and the one who is hiding is supposed to come out and get found. I did a little research and found out that nobody knows what that phrase really means. The experts believe that a child misunderstood the words, "Everybody, Everybody, Come Out Free." And the child yelled, "Olly, Olly, Oxen Free." And it stuck... Makes sense.

When Jesus was raised up on the cross, he cried out for the whole world to hear: "Olly, Olly Oxen Free. Come out. Get found. Let my love, my grace, my forgiveness, free you from your hiding places. Come out! There is no need to hide anymore. You are free."

Adam and Eve hid themselves from God. BUT we don't have to. God in Christ Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit longs to be in a loving relationship with you today and everyday for all eternity. That's God's story. That's our story. Let's live it by the grace of God. Amen.