

1 Sermon, April 21, 2013

Texts: Genesis 3:1-13, Romans 5:18-19, Romans 6:5-11

Title: The Bible in Song: "The Cookie Jar"

1. Second creation story
2. A lot of theology based on "the Fall"
3. Christ offers a way out of the cookie jar

Intro

Sing/chant song

1. Second creation story

A lot of commentary on the Eden story skips the poetry. Did you hate high school English? Well, those literature classes can be helpful with a story like Adam and Eve. This is the second story in the Bible. There are two creation stories. The first is cosmic everything is created in six days.

This is the second story. You'll notice subtle differences. In the first story, animals are created and then human beings. In the second story, Adam is created, and then the animals.

In the first story, the point is that everything belongs to God. God made it all, and made it good.

In the second story, we see evil and temptation and vanity come into God's good creation. It answers the question of why there is evil in the world – in the way only a story can.

This is a story that came about in a storytelling society.

It's not twitter. It's not a web site. It's a story with mystery, meant to be told to grandchildren around a campfire, not taught out of a textbook.

So when you're told that the snake started out with legs, and then upon God's curse was condemned to crawl on his belly, it's not a lesson in biology.

It's a reminder that sin is sneaky. You can imagine sin, in the form of a snake, hissing in your ear – inssidious – sssussspiciousss – dsssppicable.

You can see that sometimes it's the people closest to you that can tempt you. And you can see that no relationship with another human being is perfect.

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And in this story you can see very clearly that there are consequences for your actions. Indeed, sin gets you kicked out of the garden, never to return.

That's one of the reasons I like this song. It puts some of the mystery back into the story. We can imagine ourselves caught with our hands in the cookie jar. We can feel our faces turning red with embarrassment about taking a cookie from the cookie jar when we were told not to.

2. A lot of theology based on "the Fall"

When I was in high school, I usually ate lunch with a guy named Robert. He loved peeling oranges in a spiral, so that the peel was all in one piece.

One day, he put the spiral peel back together so that it looked like a whole orange again. Then we put a note inside the empty peel that said, "Help! I'm a prisoner in an orange tree!"

In some ways, the fruit on the tree in the Garden of Eden can get us trapped, too.

We can get stuck in doctrine, and never get out of the tree.

A lot of Christian theology focuses on "the Fall," and how we are unable to do good without God's grace. That's all fine as an intellectual concept. But does the doctrine really change our behavior for the better?

Instead, what if we imagine ourselves into the story of Eve and Adam, and imagine that we make a decision to do something even though we know it's not what God wants. We reach into the cookie jar. We have just decided that we know better than God. We imagine that we know the consequences of our action better than God does.

And then, let's imagine that we discover God was wiser after all. And we become ashamed, and we do anything we can to cover our shame. We sew fig leaves, we hide, we lie, we blame the snake, anything we can do to avoid the consequences.

If we can imagine ourselves into the story, I think that *does* have the power to change our behavior. It helps us to think through the

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consequences of our actions. It helps us to see how vanity and guilt and avoidance get us into trouble.

3. Christ offers a way out of the cookie jar

That's the Old Testament part of the story. But the song goes on:

Until at last the morning star rose above the cookie jar!

A vision of his Father's will

He died and then rose farther still.

And now releases every heart

Fallen in the cookie jar!

That's the New Testament part of the story.

We may have gotten cut on the cookie jar, but Christ has the power to heal.

We are tempted to sin, but Christ has the power to forgive.

We will die, but Christ has the power to raise us to everlasting life.

Jesus adds a new chapter to the story of Adam and Eve. The story of Eden ends with Eve and Adam exiled from Paradise. Jesus said to the thief, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

The story of Adam and Eve, which ends in disappointment and exile, now in Christ becomes joy and reunion.

Imagine yourself into that story!

Imagine yourself in the place of Mary Magdalene, who met Jesus in a garden, and found Jesus speaking to her, transformed. Imagine the joy and wonder, the hope for this life and the next.

Play song.

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"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. 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. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate."" Genesis 3:1-13, NRSV.

"Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." Romans 5:18-19, NRSV.

"For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Romans 6:5-11, NRSV.