

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us this evening is found in the Old Testament book of Genesis the third chapter beginning at the first verse:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;³ "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.⁵ "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband

with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"¹⁰ So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"¹² Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life.¹⁵ And I will put

enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Heavenly Father, sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Today is Ash Wednesday and thus we begin our journey through the Lenten season. And during our midweek Lenten services we will be taking a look at some very important meals throughout the Bible.

Tonight, for Ash Wednesday, we will begin with that first meal that we have recorded in the Bible: Adam and Eve at the tree in the Garden. This is a meal that had disastrous consequences not only for Adam and Eve but also for each and every one of us. Because of that first recorded meal... sin entered the world.

And what may be most interesting to me in the entire account of that first meal is the sheer

audacity that Adam and Eve speak with. While they are explaining their side of the story and what happened to them... neither of them denied one simple fact: *and I ate.*

I once heard it said that the reason we pray before we eat is because the first time we didn't invite God to our meal sin entered the world. And there is a certain correlation between that notion and our first parents. They came together and they ate... without inviting God to be with them. Eve chose to listen to the serpent and Adam chose to listen to Eve... without question... and they ate. As Gerhard says, "*Our first parents did not - unfortunately - remain in the blessed state into which they had been created by God. Instead, they allowed themselves to be betrayed by the serpent so that they ate of the fruit from the forbidden tree. Thus they fell away from God their Creator and lost the image of God. This damage and misery they passed on to all their descendants as an inheritance.*" By that simple act of eating without God, they brought sin into this world. They disobeyed God, they did not heed His word, they acted without

worrying what God thought or wanted, and they brought sin into the world.

And yet, look at what our first parents did, though they blatantly acknowledged that they ate, though they admitted that they took the bite, that they disobeyed God... they wanted to blame someone else. Adam turns to God and tells Him, "well the woman you gave me..." And Eve does the same, "the serpent you created..." Instead of completely admitting that they had sinned and taking the blame, they admitted sin but boy they did not want the blame for their sin. And do we not do the same thing?

We know what sin is, we know that we sin, we know that sin has a consequence... but we don't want the blame for it. Sure I sinned and stole but God should have given me more and then I wouldn't have. Sure I sinned as I sped down the road and got a ticket, but if God hadn't made me late by letting that train go through. Sure I cheated on my wife, but if God had made her more how I want her to be then I wouldn't have. Sure I lied, but God

understands. It is interesting that we, usually, are okay admitting that we sin but we do not want the blame for it.

As Lange tells us, "***People often want to blame God for the sin in this world. They say that if God were all-loving, he would want to prevent sin, and if he were all-powerful, he would do it. They lay the miseries of the world at God's feet and say with Adam, "You are the source of all my problems.***" If God would just listen to me more, if God would take my thoughts into account... well then things would be better. Sure I've sinned but it really is God's fault.

Even Luther, nearly 500 years ago, picked up on this condition within man, "***When Adam was convinced of the sinfulness of his sin in what he had done, he attempts to defend his act as right and says: 'If Thou hadst not given me this woman, I should not have eaten the fruit.' Thus he lays all blame for his sin on God, and he charges God therewith. Now behold the example of Eve, who, being corrupted by sin, is seen in no degree better than Adam. Adam wanted to appear innocent***

and laid the blame on God, because He had given him a wife. And so also Eve attempts to excuse herself and puts the blame on the serpent, which also was a creature of God. She confesses indeed that she had eaten of the apple, but, says she, the serpent, which Thou hast created and which Thou permittedest to walk about in Paradise, has deceived me. Is that not blaming the Creator and disavowing one's own guilt?" And sadly to this day we still try to pass the blame, the cause, for our sin onto God... and we are not so ready to accept the consequences or blame on ourselves.

And, yet, while we like to pass the blame, while we like to pass the consequences, while we like to acknowledge the sin... Jesus did not.

Instead of passing the blame onto us... Jesus took the blame onto Himself. Instead of passing the consequences of our sin onto us... Jesus took our consequences. Instead of trying to get out of His obligation and His divine work... Jesus performed it all.

Jesus came into this world, a world full of sin, and He lived a perfect life. Jesus was tempted from satan himself, and yet He did not give into him. Jesus was tempted by the world to forsake God, but He would not do it. Jesus was tempted in every way that we are... and not once did He give in.

And during His life, Jesus Christ suffered. He suffered scorn, ridicule, mockings, beatings, pain... He was hung on the cross, and He suffered all of this for you and for me. He did not try to pass the blame, He did not try to pass the consequences, He took them all upon Himself. He took our guilt, our sin, our shame upon Himself and He died for all of that.

Jesus lived, suffered, and died for us. And three days later Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He rose to proclaim that His life and His death was the perfect propitiation, the perfect payment, for all the times that we do sin, all the times we do try to pass off the blame and consequences, all the times that we try to blame God for the sin in our life... Jesus lived, died, and rose for all those also.

And it is now through faith that we have heaven waiting for us. Yes, friends, we have sinned and sinned mightily, but our Savior is greater than our sin. Our Savior has redeemed us from our sin and our guilt and has assured a spot in heaven for all of His faithful children.

Dear friends in Christ the text for this evening not only has the first meal, and thus the first sin... but it also has the first promise to us, to our first parents. While our parents did sin, while they tried to blame God for their problems... God promised them a Savior. He promised that the seed of the woman would bruise, would crush, the head of satan... and satan would bruise His heel. And yes, satan did bruise Christ's heel, he did bring about Jesus' death... but he could not keep Jesus in the grave. And Jesus, well Jesus did crush satan's head. Jesus brought to naught all of satan's plans... and He did this for you and for me.

Our first meal in this Lenten season brought so much to us... it brought sin... but more

importantly it brought the gospel, it brought the promise of a Savior.

Thank God that He has given us so much through the meals that He has given to us. Thank God that He has always had our best interest in mind, regardless of my sin. And thank God that though I am not perfect, Jesus was and He bore my sin and my guilt all the way to the cross.

Thanks be to God. Amen.