

The Lies We Tell Ourselves

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ...

I've heard it said, "That the worst lies we tell - are the lies we tell ourselves"...

That sort of reminds me of the story about the little boy who was always getting into the cookie jar when his parents were sleeping... and each night he would go in and take a few (even though he knew of his parents disapproval)...

And so the boy's mother eventually said, "Bobby, didn't I tell you that you're only allowed one cookie after dinner?"... (The little boy dropped his eyes and shook his head)... "Then why do you keep disobeying me and going into the cookie jar at night?"...

And, of course, the boy said, "Well Mom - the devil makes me do it!"...

Not really buying the boy's excuse the mother said, "Well next time you feel tempted I want you to tell him to "get behind me Satan!"

Well, the very next morning it was obvious that the little boy was up to his old tricks and had taken a few more cookies... upset that the little boy continued to disobey his parents - the mother said, "I thought I told you what to say when you feel tempted"...

The little boy looked up and said, "I did - I said, "Get behind me Satan" - and that's when he pushed me in!"...

I share that with you this morning because in many ways that's the same excuse we hear Adam and Eve tell God in our reading from the Book of Genesis... God had made it very clear to them to stay away from what some have called the 'Tree of Good and Evil' (or the Tree of Knowledge) - and according to Scripture, the Bible tells us that they ate from it anyway... in other words, this is a story about disobeying God...

And what I find interesting about this story - is not so much the historical accuracy of how it's told - but rather - what it's trying to teach us about taking responsibility for our own actions (and the dangers that follow when we try to tell ourselves lies)...

Now let me just shift focus for a moment and tell you that one of the main ideas in the Book of Genesis is that when God created human beings we were created to coexist with God... the Bible tells us that in our primal creation we were in a state of bliss – in a perfect union with our Creator (where there was no pain, there was no suffering, and most importantly, where there was no separation from God)...

But then something happened – the Bible tells us that Adam and Eve (who represent the human condition – and are supposed to be the archetype of all human beings) strayed from God's will (rebelled against Him) - and in doing so – they found themselves in a huge mess (separated from God)...

But the source of their problem – according to Scripture – is not that they made a mistake (or even that they rebelled against God)... the issue for Adam and Eve is that they couldn't take ownership of what they had done (they couldn't be honest with themselves and take responsibility for their own actions)... and instead they tried to cast blame on someone other than themselves - in this case the Serpent (which many believe is supposed to be the Devil)...

And as they continue to fall into that trap – viewing themselves as victims as opposed to being Children of God who made a mistake - (their whole world continued to crumble)... and they find themselves lying not only to themselves (but also lying to God) – which is the deeper meaning of this ancient story...

And maybe that's the same challenge for *many of us* even today – that just like Adam and Eve (and the little boy who couldn't resist stealing cookies in the middle of the night) it's not so easy at times to admit when we've fallen short, or when we've done wrong, or when we've made mistakes (in fact, sometimes we struggle with the same temptation to blame others for our bad behavior rather than take ownership of it)...

I mean – how many times have you heard people blame their parents for their lot in life (or blame a spouse for an addiction – or blame this one or that one for not being happy in life)... it's what's called a victim mentality (and to be quite honest with you – it's not in step with our lives as Christians)... because we're not victims (we're Children of God)...

But let me remind you of what Jesus tells us in John 8:32... he says, "That if you continue in my Word you will know the truth – (and the truth will do what?) – *the truth shall set you free?*"...

And of course 1 John 1:8 also says, “If any of us says that we have no sin we only deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us – but if we confess our sins God who is faithful and just (will forgive our sins and cleanse us) from all unrighteousness”...

And yes, I also know that we live in a world that celebrates perfection, and beauty, and self-discipline (and for many of us it’s hard to admit when we’re wrong) because we don’t want to appear ‘less than’, and we also don’t want to feel bad about ourselves...

but the truth is that you and I are still human beings (and we’re all going to make mistakes and fall short from time to time)... and sometimes we let ourselves down by following our appetites and not our hearts... we confuse needs with desires... lust with love... we confuse our own shortcomings with the shortcomings of others... and at times it can be very easy to point fingers (rather than look at ourselves)... it’s all a part of being human...

but I think that at the core of what our faith teaches us (again and again) is that it’s not our sin that makes us such terrible people... what makes us so broken is when we try to hide it (and act like it doesn’t exist)... it’s when we try to blame other people (or make excuses for our own bad behavior) that we fall short of the Glory of God...

But when we admit it (and accept it – and confess it - and put it behind us – and have a willingness to move past it) the Bible tells us that not only does God continue to embrace us (and restore us and live in communion with us) – but most importantly, God also forgives us... *Because God wants us to be*

happy, joyous, and free ...

So let me close with a story that Richard Hoefler included in his book titled, “Will Daylight Come?” about a little boy who was playing outside with a slingshot his parents had given him (under one condition) that he only use it in the woods and away from the house...

Well, to keep a long story short the boy didn’t actually listen (and accidentally hit the side of the house with a rock)... hearing a loud crash the little boy’s older sister had come out where the boy was and saw him with the slingshot in hand... immediately the girl said, “You’re going to be in so much trouble – look what you did!” – pointing to a broken window...

At first the boy denied that he did it – then he tried to explain that the window had already been broken... and then finally said, “Please don’t tell Mommy and Daddy!”...

Well, that little girl decided to get some mileage out of his misery and said, “I won’t tell them under one condition – you have to do whatever I tell you to do”...

Later that night the mother of the children said, “Sally, please get in here and do the dishes”... and of course the girl said, “Peter will be in there in a just a minute... he said he wanted to do them”... at first the boy resisted – but the sister said, “Remember that window Peter!”...

The next day the children’s father said, “Sally, help Mommy with the laundry”... and the girl replied, “Peter said that he wants to do it... he likes doing ~~dishes~~... laundry”... again the boy was ready to disagree with her – but then heard his sister say, “Remember that window Peter!”...

Well, this went on and on for about a week – when finally the boy broke down and said, “I can’t go on like this... Mom -Dad, I broke the window with my slingshot - and I’m sorry”...

And according to the story the mother says, “We already know you did – in fact, we saw you do it... and we’ve already forgiven you because we love you... we were just wondering how long you were going to go on letting Sally make a slave of you”...

The point of that story – which is what I’ve been trying to say to you this morning – is that yes, we can blame others – we can deny that we’ve done anything wrong – we can even hope that no one finds out the truth of our own shortcomings...

But the key to ongoing peace, and the release from the slavery of guilt and shame is always found in our ability to promptly admit our own shortcomings, take ownership of what we’ve done wrong, and then know in our heart (that God will always be right there, ready to take us back) and most importantly – forgive us forever... so that we can be happy, joyous, and free

If you’ve come here this morning and you’ve made some mistakes (let me remind you that you’re in the right place)... because the church is not a museum of saints (but at its core) is really just a hospital for sinners (like you and me)... and if you don’t hear this message in any other place today (let me say it to you again – God

5

already knows the things that you've done – and yet, He still loves you anyway) and forgives you – forever!...

May the peace of God fill your heart this morning – May His courage give you the ability to be true to yourself – and May the blessings of everlasting peace be given to all of us...

In Jesus' name we pray...

Amen!