



BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

Lent 1 (A)
March 1, 2020

RCL: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

“The serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal the Lord God had made.” The serpent not only questions God’s authority but also encourages Eve to do the same. And once he has Eve questioning God’s authority, he presses her on to question God’s honesty as well.

Will you actually die if you touch it?

So, with limited wisdom and too much bravery, Eve chooses to eat. Her innocence died that day. Her trust in God died that day. Her sinlessness died that day.

The world has questioned God’s authority, and constantly encourages us to do the same. The world has encouraged us to question God’s honesty, reliability, and goodness.

What will happen if you actually _____ (fill in the blank)?

We have limited wisdom and at times too much bravery. But we have Jesus, and he has reached across the great chasm of death to save us from our sin.

- What are you trying to cover with rough-hewn fig leaves as you stand exposed in front of God?
- Are you willing to drop the proverbial fig leaves and grasp the outstretched hand of Jesus?

Psalm 32

Imagine a person walking along a sandy march, gazing around at the beauty of nature, perhaps squinting into the sun to see birds soar past. Their foot sinks a bit, and taking a more intentional step to remove it, they find their other foot is now lodged. They feel a sharp twinge in the tendon of their hip as they attempt to yank free. But they cannot move. Struggling, they find they have sunk into the wet sand to their knee. Pawing at the sand and now trying to lunge free, they sink more. The quicksand is up to their chin and eventually puddles over their mouth until they are consumed by the sandy marsh.

So it is with sin.

The psalmist knows this: “Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven.” Happy are they who recognize the quicksand, avoiding the patch as they walk through the sandy marsh, squinting into the sun to see a flock of birds soar by.

- Have you ever felt like your sin had you in quicksand?
- Has forgiveness every helped you avoid quicksand?

Romans 5:12-19

In this passage, Paul juxtaposes the arrival of original sin through Adam and the free gift of grace and justification to make sinners righteous. Sin and this free gift are starkly different but reliant on one another for function; Jesus' grace covers the original sin of Adam and makes sinners righteous.

The entwined reality of sin is like that of a rope: a collection of fibers twisted and weaved to make the whole. Sin is rarely an autonomous entity, but a fabrication of pieces to make the whole, with new fibers weaved to cover the old. Layer upon layer, until fibers are twisted into a single cord. The first fiber of this rope was presented to us through Adam: the fiber of sin and death. Each layer of our sin is fastened and twisted to this, entwining our lives to the sin we weave.

And through grace, the gift of forgiveness was made through the sacrifice of Jesus. He pulled at the first string of the rope of sin, untwisting it; allowing the cord to loosen. The weave of sin has been frayed by Jesus and his gift has made it possible to unravel the rope, releasing us, offering justification and righteousness.

- If you were to picture a rope of personal sin, what would it look like?
- What is a string in your life that needs to be loosed and untwined by Jesus?

Matthew 4:1-11

The Tempter meets Jesus in the wilderness following his baptism, confronting him with three temptations and challenging the Christ's commission. This challenge and subsequent temptations are a scripturally based dialogue between the Tempter and Jesus.

1. "Command these stones to become loaves of bread" – Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 and will go on to provide bread for others in 14:13-21.
2. On the pinnacle of the Temple, the Tempter quotes Psalm 91:11-12, saying, "He will command his angels concerning you." Jesus responds with Deuteronomy 6:16: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."
3. On the mountain, the location that symbolically represented the nearest possible place to God, the devil offers him power from his worldly reign. Jesus refuses, referencing Deuteronomy 6:13: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

Not only is the influence and worldly reign of the tempter revealed here, but more so is the steadfast obedience of Jesus Christ. This obedience will conquer.

- What scriptures do you look to in times of trial or temptation?
- How do the responses of Jesus encourage you to remain steadfast and obedient to the Lord as well?

Audrey enjoys going on weekend adventures with her husband and two daughters, where they spend time outdoors or travelling to unusual or new places within driving distance. Before seminary, she spent her time as a Youth Minister and full-time mom. She enjoys reading and writing, painting and intentional time alone with God.