

*What Went Wrong and Our Hope to Come Out of Hiding*

God had been lonely. It is no fun being all powerful without love. Life and the power of affection only come through free-will sharing. God, the Creator, knew this. The Divine, out of compassion, brought forth a diverse vibrant world filled with creatures who were made to support one another, share life with one another, and love. God asked to be trusted and respected. Something the Divine had already done entrusting creation with the freedom and responsibility to name and live together.

Something, a mystery beyond human conception, went terribly awry. The snake, a being brought forth in the goodness of the order, naively offered a thought opposed to God's Word. The humans, the ones entrusted as God's stewards and partners, turned from the relationship of their Parent to seek power beyond their conception and ability. (It is important to note as biblical scholars do that Adam, although not mentioned, is present when the snake tempts Eve. As the bumper sticker wisely proclaims, "Eve was framed.") The humans together chose their own independence and will over the trusted relationship and request of God.

The consequence was severed relationships. The humans use their new found power to hide, to go away from the One who gives life. The next use of this forbidden ability is to blame others and completely isolate the self from all creation. The consequence of the human rejection of God's Word is, "She did it. He did it. It is not my fault." A heartbreaking separation between those who were made to share life in the most beautiful and intimate ways.

The journey back to God requires reconciliation and acceptance of responsibility for ourselves and others. The sin of Adam and Eve was the rejection of genuine, trusting relationship. It is impossible for God to accept the love of one who is unwilling to compassionately engage the rest of the world. It is impossible because this is not the love we were made to share. The love that brought us to life is a love that recognizes the interdependence of all life.

One of the blessings and life-giving parts of our two-year transition as church is the renewal and reinvigoration of our call to serve the world. Yes, we begin in Mountain Home. It is our home, our Eden. This is where we are equipped to thrive and where God has called us to make the world a better place. A challenge for many communities is recognizing the ripple effect of mission and justice work no matter where it happens.

God's work and creation, as shown in the Genesis story, makes it so when a good or evil happen in one place it affects everyone. This is captured famously in Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's words, "An injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere." The opposite is true. Where there is justice and healing all of humanity is blessed.

One example came to mind this past week during the anniversary of Robert Kennedy's burial. It reminded me of the profound speech Kennedy offered on the evening of Rev. Dr. King's assassination. The speech took place in Indianapolis and was done in spite of the fears and resistance from Kennedy's top aides. They were afraid it was impossible to keep the leader safe. Kennedy had the burden of informing the crowd of King's death at the hands of a white

man, and the response was fearfully emotional. Kennedy continued to speak calling for peace and unity that sought justice. That night over 100 cities across America erupted in violent riots with 35 dying and thousands injured. Indianapolis remained peaceful without event. The chaos of violence powerfully thwarted with a compassionate engagement coming from a person in the back of a pickup truck. This is the work of reconciliation, of human relationship and love that both reveals the God's intention for humanity as well as our hope to return to God's paradise.

Our challenge is rediscovering the uniqueness of the needs of our community and the intersection with the brokenness of creation. It is hard sometimes to wonder how black lives matter, the refugee crisis, immigration issues, and questions about human sexuality apply to our daily lives. The short answer is they never will be solved. We will, outside an inconceivable act of God, never witness in our earthly lives the reunion of Eden. What we do with our reflection and God's Word today is rediscover the importance of our relationships and our Christian mission in our community.

There are young gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender high schoolers who struggle to believe church and Christianity accept and celebrate who they are as children of God. How could shared communion with them transform their perspective? There are young service members, air men and women, who think Christianity requires a certain creed or rigidity of rules. How powerful would it be to tell them we seek to discover God's revelation sharing love, faith questions, and all life's glory and pain with anyone willing to join? There are Spanish speaking neighbors, Muslim siblings who because of national news assume we would rather convert them or send them "home" than break bread with them and rekindle our Divine nature to be in loving relationship. How would the world change if we genuinely connected? There are elderly people who think all society has forgotten them and finds them useless. How transformative to share with them our belief they still have God's life to give?

Adam, Eve, and the snake had no idea their power and the pain they discovered. Robert Kennedy could not have imagined that 50 years later the peace he brought would continue to be a source of hope in a country violently divided. We have no idea the power of the food in our food pantry bucket. We have no idea the power and transformation we bring when we proclaim, "All people are children of God deserving love and care." The truth is every time we are able to do this we move humanity closer to God.