



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School

1611 E Main St., Watertown, WI 53094

(920)261-2570

A Stephen Ministry Congregation

www.goodshepherdwi.org

First Sunday of Lent

March 5, 2017

“A Delight to the Eyes”

(Genesis 3:6)

Rev. David K. Groth

“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” (Gen. 3:6).

Collect of the Day: O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

A few years ago some thieves outside of Tijuana Mexico spotted what appeared to be a really sweet deal. They were looking at a new Volkswagen cargo van decked out with a moveable platform in back and little crane. The driver was asleep, and the vehicle otherwise unguarded. Quickly, they overpowered the driver, tied him up, dropped him off in a vacant parking lot, and drove away.

They drove for about 25 miles before they pulled over to investigate what was inside the van's cargo area. Inside they found these odd containers, heavy, made of metal, not easy to open. They managed to pry one open and scatter the contents. Didn't look like much, nothing of interest, small metallic pellets. What they had opened, however, were containers of highly radioactive cobalt-60 pellets used in medical imaging equipment. There's one other thing the thieves found in those pellets. They found death. Though small, those cobalt-60 pellets were deadly. They carried enough radioactive punch to kill anyone who handled them. Death would come within a few days. Although the crooks didn't know it, when they looked into those containers and handled those pellets, they became walking dead men.

Their story isn't so much different from Adam and Eve's. This text comes from the opening chapters of the Bible and describes the origin of mankind from the Judeo-Christian perspective. God created Adam and Eve perfect and good and generously gave them free rein of the garden of Eden. "You may eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for if you eat of it, you shall surely die." All these are yours,

just not this one. Fruit from this one would hurt you. This one would be poisonous to you.

Well of course, that's the one Adam and Eve become fixated on, egged on, of course, by the devil. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" Eve replies, "He said we could eat of all the trees in the garden, but not eat of the fruit of this particular tree, lest we die." The devil says, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it you will be like God!" Notice, the devil accuses God of lying to Adam and Eve and withholding critical information even while he, the devil is lying to them and withholding critical information. To Adam and Eve, it sure didn't look like a dangerous tree. In fact, it was a delight to the eyes. But as soon as they took some and ate of it, they became, in a sense, the walking dead. It would only be a matter of time.

That's how the devil works. He lies. He deceives. He instills doubt. He never, ever tempts people to sin by saying, "Here's a really bad idea, which is going to get you in a lot of trouble." No, the father of lies usually whispers into our ears, "I'm giving you a golden opportunity here. I promise, you're going to love it. It's there for the easy picking. It won't get you into trouble. No one will even know!"

Remember how King David found Bathsheba to be a delight to the eyes, bathing out there on top of her roof. One look and David knew he had to have her. Surely no one would know, no one would get hurt. Easy pickings for a king. But you recall how that all turned out. David's sin led to Uriah's death, and Absalom's (2 Sam. 11ff) and ultimately his own.

Those silver shekels and that bar of gold were a delight to eyes of Achan. They were the spoils of war, booty from the battle of Jericho, easy pickings. What could it hurt if he kept a bit of the plunder? He would bury it in the dirt underneath his tent, and it would just be his own little secret. And yet, that's not how it worked out. His secret was exposed, and Achan was stoned (Joshua 7).

Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, a handsome sum, a delight to the eyes. But eventually his conscience caught up with him, and Judas took his own life.

Indeed, we too are captivated by things that are a delight to our eyes. Maybe it's not in the form of forbidden fruit, but instead a hefty pay check, a substantial sum of money. We might be tempted to compromise our Christian ethics to receive it.

An A at the top of the paper is a delight to the eyes, and we might be tempted to cheat or plagiarize someone else's work to get it. Who would ever know?

Pornography is a delight to the eyes, and there, alone in the house, in the soft glow of the computer screen, you might assume it's harmless, and private.

Of course, we are never alone with our temptations. The devil is always there, just chalk full of bad advice. He lies. He deceives. "You will not surely die" he said to Eve. "Eat this and you'll be like God!" Bad advice.

What's the worst advice you ever received? I grew up next to a small, abandoned gravel quarry. It has some pretty impressive sides to it, that looked more like cliffs. One winter, my older brothers thought it might be fun to take the toboggan down one of those sides. I wasn't so sure about the idea. Part of the slope was so steep it couldn't even hold on to the snow. Nor did it have a nice, smooth ending to it. It just sort of ended. Brother Andy looked at me and said, "Dave, go down standing up. It'll be great fun!" Bad advice. But it was so nice of Andy to let me go first. I don't much remember it, but they say I looked something like a scud missile.

What's the worst advice you ever received? Starting with Adam and Eve, Scripture is full of people who listened to bad advice. The devil is brilliant at aiming his temptations and bad advice at our inward desires. As a result you would be hard pressed to find anyone who hasn't listened to bad advice. Indeed, it would be impossible to find such a person, impossible, until you looked to Jesus.

Among the billions of people who have lived on this

planet, only Jesus managed to resist every temptation and ignore every bit of bad advice. In our Gospel lesson Jesus had fasted for forty days and night. Of course, just when Jesus is most hungry, most weak, most vulnerable, that's when the devil shows up. "Turn these stones to bread" he says. Nice, warm bread would have been a delight to his eyes, but Jesus refused. Instead, he points to God's word. "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Again and again Jesus turns a deaf ear to Satan's lies and temptations (Mt. 4:1-11). When Peter tried to talk him out of going to Jerusalem where he would suffer and die for our salvation, Jesus corrected his disciple and kept right on going (Mt. 16:21-23), for this was the very purpose.

Because Jesus resisted all bad advice, because he followed his Father's will, he was able to be the sacrifice for our sins. On the cross, Jesus paid the penalty of death for your sin and mine. He died to save us from our sin. He died to save us from death. And he died to save us from the devil. He died so we could live eternally. That's grace, which means we don't earn it. We don't deserve it. He gives it to us freely.

And this grace is not just for a select few. His grace is for all people. Jesus himself said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Aren't you glad he didn't say, "God so loved those who are good and decent, that he gave his Son?" Because I've not always been good and decent, nor have you.

Aren't you glad he didn't say, "God so loved those who always resist the devil's temptations that he gave his only Son" because that's not who we are either.

Aren't you glad he didn't say, "God so loved the Germans . . . or the Americans . . . that he gave his Son. No! Jesus said, "God so loved the world that he gave his Son." You are a part of the world. You are therefore a recipient of God's amazing love. In Jesus, God loves you, which means **you** are a delight to his eyes!

He looks at gold and silver and precious gems, and they don't do anything for him. They are not a delight to his eyes. But when he looks at us, poor, sinners that we are, he sees men and women and children he loves, people he created, people for whom he died. He sees people he forgives and people for whom he has plans, people for whom he is even preparing a home in heaven. All the things that tempt and tantalize us mean nothing to him. But we, even we are a delight to his eyes. Thanks be to God! Amen.

