

**The Rev. Michael C. Fedewa**

Lent 1, February 9 and 10

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

Romans 5:12-19

Matthew 4:1-11

I received the following email from my sister this past week. Its subject was “snow day humor”. She is talking about her son and daughter.

She writes:

*So last night, Mary put her pajama bottoms on inside out to some how ensure that she would not have school today. It did work there is no school today ( I think it has more to do with the snow.) Geoff being the ever concerned brother he is told her that she had to go to confession because that was superstition. He told her she had committed "adultery". I, of course, had to explain to him that his 10 year old sister did not commit adultery...idolatry maybe but not the other.*

Now on the one hand, it is of course very important to be able to distinguish the difference between idolatry and adultery. Especially if you are an older brother accusing your 10 year old sister of adultery. On the other hand, idolatry and adultery may have more in common than one would first suspect. Both are about "loving" inappropriately...whether that “something” is someone to whom we are not married. Or, whether that something is a something or someone whom we worship as a god. Adultery and idolatry are both about improper relationships.

As I got to thinking about this, it occurred to me that in fact each of the 10 commandments are centered in improper relationships. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against one's neighbor*, is about poisoning the truth that must be central in all relationship. *Thou shalt not steal*, or *thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods* both highlight improper relationships with possessions. *Thou shalt not kill* is about how we relate to another's body, another's life. *Honor thy father and thy mother* is certainly about relationships. Even the commandments to honor the Sabbath, and against invoking God's name with malice are about not relating to God in a way that God deserves.

So, then, idolatry and adultery and each of the commandments really do have much in common. All are about being in proper relationship.

Our readings this Sunday, for the first Sunday of Lent are about temptations which effect relationships.

In Genesis, we hear the mythical story that many of us know so well. It is a story that the Hebrew people told to explain the coming of evil into the world. How did evil come to a world created to be very good? In the story the crafty serpent seduces the woman and the man into eating the fruit of the tree. The eating of the fruit is symbolic of the sin of disobedience and how it ruptured the relationship between humankind and God. God is God. And the right relationship is for the man and the woman to be obedient to God. The sin came about when the man and woman wanted to be like God. When they wanted to be rulers instead of creatures, their sin ruptured the relationship with God. And, with that relationship ruptured, human relationships are ruptured as well. The man and the woman have lost their innocence and now they hide themselves from each other and from God. According to Genesis, from this

first broken relationship between God and humankind has arisen all the sin, the war, the murder, the injustices of the world.

From that story at the beginning of Genesis the remainder of scripture unfolds as the attempt of God to restore the broken relationships that sin caused between human kind and God, the humans with one another, and humans with the rest of creation.

Jesus is story of God's last and best attempt at restoring the ruptured relationships caused by sin. In Jesus, God becomes flesh, and comes to earth. In Jesus fully God and fully human, God will finally restore the broken relationship. In Jesus, reconciliation will finally be achieved.

The story today from Matthew's Gospel this weekend is of the temptation of Jesus. In the temptation the devil tries to rupture the relationship between Jesus and God. This scene follows directly on the baptism of Jesus. At the baptism in the Jordan, the voice of God declared that Jesus was the beloved son of God. Now, in the desert the devil tempts Jesus to doubt this relationship. The temptations begin----"if you are God's son". The devil tries to seduce Jesus into questioning if in fact he is beloved by God. If the devil can make Jesus doubt that he is beloved of God, than, he can destroy the relationship between Jesus and God. Perhaps he can convince Jesus to worship him. If he can destroy the relationship of the Beloved Son and God, than the devil has won.

Unlike the man and the woman, Jesus withstands the temptation. He proclaims that one is fed by every word that comes from the mouth of God. The word that he is referring to includes the word that was spoke to him by God at his baptism. This is a word from God that feeds him. He remembers the voice that declared him beloved. Jesus the human one, never gives into the temptation to doubt that he is beloved. In Jesus overcoming the temptation, the relationship between God and Humankind is restored. When that relationship is restored, than is hope that all human relationships can be restored as well.

My friends, in our heart, all human beings hunger for love. Temptation comes when we seek to satisfy that hunger to be loved in the wrong places. We look for satisfaction to our deepest hunger overindulgence in food, in wealth, in possessions, in improper relationships, in alcohol.....in all the wrong places. Only God can satisfy our hunger for love.

Lent began last Wednesday with the reminder that we are dust and to dust we shall return. Today, we are called to remember the basic truth of our existence, that we are beloved sons and daughters of God. We have been tempted to believe that other things can satisfy the hunger we have for God. We have been tempted to forget that we are beloved by God. We have been tempted, and like the man and the woman we have sinned.. We have lost our innocence, and our relationships with God and each other have been broken.

Lent is the time to celebrate the wonderful truth that even though we forgot that we are beloved, , even though we have fallen, even though we have sinned, we are still God's beloved. God has not forgotten that we are beloved daughters and sons. Lent is the time to celebrate that Jesus has repaired our broken relationships and we can begin again. We can be in right relationship again.

So, my friends, as we begin this holy season I invite you to spend the next few moments, repeating out loud. That you are beloved of God.

Say with me, out loud, your name.

Now add to it...you are beloved by God...

Your name..say it...out loud...you are beloved by God....

Say it again...

Your name...you are beloved by God

You are beloved by God

Again....

Again...

Again....

Again....

Again....

Again....

Again.....

Remember, you are beloved by God.

May this truth bless you during this joyful season of lent.