

Once upon a time, long, long ago, and far, far away, a couple lived in a beautiful garden. The earth was fresh and green. The animals all got along fine. There were no such things as high heels (and mine are killing me), or neckties, or zippers that broke, because there were no clothes.

The couple didn't mind that; they hardly even noticed that they were naked. It was just the way it was—kind of like babies, who don't worry about such things.

Even though the couple were adults, a man and a woman, they were kind of like babies, in terms of their experience and behavior, too. They tended to believe the last person who had spoken to them. When that was God, great! When it was the Snake, well. . .

God had made all the world—the sun, the stars, the moon, the land, the water, and the animals. God had specifically made the woman so the man would not be so lonely. The man was so happy about this! And God had made this beautiful garden, called Eden.

All they had to do was “till and keep” the Garden. It wasn't hard work, but it was work. People don't do that well when they have no word to keep them busy. Useless, lazy, self-indulgent people get in more trouble!

There was also one rule, and one rule only in the Garden—“Don't eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die.”

Just one rule, how hard could that be?

Logically, it should have been pretty easy to keep one rule. Yet, this couple were human beings, with the human tendency to want whatever they couldn't have. They didn't know how good they had it.

People do that. When I was a teenager, I didn't appreciate my youth and energy and life at home with family and parents to look after me. No! I wanted to be older, out on my own, not have anyone tell me what to do!

Later, I realized that it was just great not having to work, work, work for every bite of food, and that bosses and landlords did tell me what to do!

It goes on through life; we fail to appreciate what God gives us at the time, and we yearn toward something else.

So, anyway, here this couple were, Adam and Eve, in this beautiful garden, with everything they needed.

Enter the Snake. Not the kind of snakes we see these days. This snake could walk and talk, and was it evil!

It started a conversation with the woman. “You mean you can’t eat any of this fruit off these trees? Did God tell you that?”

That is a tricky ploy. We still see it. Make up a problem that doesn’t exist, then sell your product. A while back there was a commercial for a boiled-egg peeling device. It was to solve the terrible problem of raw, red hands from the dreadful, difficult task of peeling boiled eggs. Did you know that was a problem? I didn’t, till I saw that commercial.

With the Snake, it was trying to create a problem, and make God look bad, and overly strict, and get the couple to disobey God.

The woman replied, “Oh, no, we can eat all the fruit, except for the fruit off this tree. If we touch that fruit, we’ll die.”

There were some mistakes on her part. Firstly, don’t talk to snakes! Don’t talk to snakes in gardens, or suits and ties, or designer dresses. Stay away from snakes! Stay away from troublemakers and liars and evil folks! Things are hard enough without that.

Also, Eve was stretching things herself. They would die if they ate the fruit, not if they touched it. That was another mistake; she should have told the truth!

Then the snake responds: “You won’t die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you’ll see what is really going on. You’ll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil.” (The Message)

At this point, we may be wanting to yell, “Don’t do it!” the way my niece used to yell at Snow White when she watched that movie, “Run, Snow White, run!”

But, “When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating, and realized what she would get out of it—she’d know everything [she’d be like God], she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate.” (the Message)

Oh boy, here it comes. And let’s not be letting Adam off this one. No, he didn’t converse with the snake, but he ate the forbidden fruit and his wife didn’t have to force or coerce him, or spend a lot of time convincing him. She was not bigger than he was.

As soon as the deed was done, uh-oh! We feel awful as soon as we realize we’ve done wrong, and we make it worse a lot of the time.

Adam and Eve made it worse: they finally noticed they were naked, so they made clothes for themselves, out of scratchy fig leaves. The fruit had not made them all that wise.

Then God comes along, notices the apple peel, or core, or whatever it was. God gives the couple a chance to explain, but they stumble all over themselves.

The woman blames the snake.

The man blames the woman, and even God who made the woman. In the song, it was “Warn’t me, Lord, musta been Eve.”

So much for that love story, and harmony in that marriage!

That’s another thing about sin and disobedience to God. One leads to another and another and another, and can have far-reaching trouble and influence for years and years to come.

If only they could have trusted in God, and believed what God said. Had they done that, well . . .

Now what about the part about death, eat the fruit and you die? The man and woman were not dead—the innocence of their souls was as dead as a doornail, as was their residence in the beautiful garden.

Now, they would have to work hard for a living, and difficulty in their marriage, with Adam lording it over Eve—no more of the equality they had in Eden. And would they ever trust each other again, when, at the first problem, they had acted the way they had? Eve would have increased pain in childbirth. And they would die.

As for the snake, no more walking and talking, and people would hate it.

So, when they ate the fruit, they began to die.

Still, God was merciful. God made them good comfortable clothes, from animal skins, before issuing them their eviction notice from Eden. The couple continued to live, but in a world into which they brought sin.

And God also gave a gift of hope. Life would go on, and evil would eventually be disempowered by one of Eve’s descendants, named Jesus, God’s Son.

And this was done in just the opposite way. While Adam and Eve blamed others for their sins, Jesus, perfect and without any sin in his life, took everyone else’s sins and richly deserved blame and punishment upon himself, and freed

us from slavery to sin and death, through the Resurrection, which we celebrate today, as we partake of Holy Communion.

May we rejoice in this hope.

Amen.

(by Rev. Sally J. DeMasters)