

SERMON

Genesis 3:8-15

God Overcomes Evil

Nunawading and Waverley, 6-6-21

Dear friends in Christ,

From time to time, we will encounter evil. The manse was trashed by criminals, your car is stolen, or someone tells lies about you at work and you lose your job. I have encountered it as a pastor. It always throws me back to God's word and shows me how true his revelation is; and helpful, too. Evil rocks us to our core. It could be embezzlement, which happened in one of the congregations I served. A member of your family brutally attacked. Or a terrible accident caused by negligent driving. We need desperately to hear the good news of God's victory over evil through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible gives us a kind of parable to help us understand some things about evil. It begins with a world where there is trust in God and trust between people. Imagine a world we could safely leave our keys in our unlocked cars! It explains why there isn't this trust. The first human beings wanted to be like God and they ate **the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. The man and the woman discovered they were naked but this act of disobedience had a much profounder effect on them than a mere loss of innocence. Knowledge or wisdom was destructive in their hands for only God can control its beneficial use. It resulted in a catastrophic dislocation within themselves, between themselves, with creation and with their Lord. The evil they unleashed would only grow and heighten the separations and brokenness they experienced.

We see evil in the way the good world our Father provided humanity is polluted and exploited. Relationships break down between neighbours, with people at work. Even within marriages and families, abuse can occur. We hear of spying and cyber warfare, companies held to ransom. Dictators abound; Lukashenka, typical of many, has been in the news recently. There is a deep malevolence within humanity; the account here tells us that every human being is infected with evil to some degree; it can surface at any time.

The man and the woman acted like children when confronted by the Lord. Adam blamed God and his wife; his wife blamed the serpent: "**Who told**

you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree I expressly commanded you should not eat from?” The man replied, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, I ate [the fruit] gave me from the tree.” Yahweh God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” She answered, “The serpent deceived me and I ate [the fruit].” Just like us, they couldn't take responsibility for themselves. The worst of it was that they became afraid. There had been a free and easy mingling between the Lord and his children but that ended suddenly once they failed to trust God and doubted the truth of his word. God looked for them but **they hid in the trees.**

However, God did not curse his children; only the serpent. Yes, hardship and sorrow would be the consequences of human evil but the instigator has to take the harshest punishment. The Father still loved humanity, therefore, he sent Christ to take on the evil, demonic powers at work in this world and Satan himself. After his baptism, the first act of his ministry was his struggle against temptation in the wilderness, where he suffered for 40 days. His first miracle in Mark's gospel was an exorcism. One of his disciples betrayed him. The priestly leaders plotted to murder him. He became the focus of all the evil about him. This was our Lord taking into himself the consequences of human rebellion.

What was so amazing about our Lord Jesus was how he used evil and miraculously turned it into salvation. God came into his world and the people he made killed him. There is no greater evil than that yet it ends with him rising in light and glory and power. People thought they were free to crucify but their acts of evil served a higher plan. We have a prayer that is based on this triumph: **deliver us from evil** because our Lord Jesus made his deliverance available to us. It is quite possible that injustice will prevail but it won't in the long term and certainly meets its end on the day of judgement, when the perpetrators of evil will be held accountable and then thrown into **the lake of fire.**

Our task is to endure in faith and hope but be always ready to confront evil with good for God's love in Christ will triumph over the world and against every adversary. And even in this life, we may find that evil will actually serve us.