

“The Terrible Twos and the Wonderful Son” Gen 3:8-15

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

Today we have for our meditations this very ancient testimony that speaks about the events that took place during the very early days of humanity. The event that we are focusing today is what is known as the Fall.

Perhaps you know that the early chapters of Genesis are probably the most disputed chapters in the Bible. They have been under attack and scrutiny and critique for a very long time.

Even many self-identified Christians have given in to what is understood as more enlightened and scientific views – that all these early chapters are just old and naïve stories.

Then these people who are so smart in their own eyes use their usual weapon, and it is not reason, no, it is ridicule, to put down those who still attach great value to these chapters.

They say things like: “You don’t really believe that... talking serpent... eating the forbidden fruit... being cast out of the garden of Eden... you can’t live in the 21st century and still believe things like these.”

What do you believe about these events? Our church believes, teaches and confesses that these events that are recorded in the first chapters of the Bible are God’s own revelation to us.

This is how the Triune God who speaks to us through His written word has revealed to us what happened back then. What we read today is God’s own testimony, His own message to us.

It is interesting, many who are wise in their own eyes, sneer about these chapters, considering them too simple for their great intellect and knowledge. However, today there are more and more intellectuals, who are not Christians who pay more and more attention to these early chapters of the Bible.

Why would they do that? Because if someone is honest in their inquiry they realize that there is great wisdom and insights about humanity and our problems found in these seemingly simple, but incredibly deep and rich verses.

The truth is that every human being who has lived long enough on this wonderful planet observes and understands that something is wrong with us, and with the whole society. It is one of these universal experiences.

But then people may have different ideas about what is wrong and what should be done to make it right. Some will blame the lack of education for everything that is wrong. If only we could educate people better, we would solve all the problems of the world. Really? Incidentally the German nation was the most educated in the first part of the 20th century. How did it go for them? Millions and tens of million dead.

Some will believe that it is different kinds of oppression that is to be blamed. Some think that the rich is to blame. Some think that the Church with its sexual ethics is to blame. Some think that men are to blame. Some think that the white people are to blame. And so on.

If only we could get rid of all these oppressors... then the humanity, or whatever is left of it, would flourish. During the last century we sow these ideologies trying to build paradise on earth... which ended with hell and tens of millions of people losing their lives.

In each of these theories or ideologies, there is a bit of truth, there are many things that we could improve in society, but the problem with all these theories is that they tend to blame – the others. “The problem is not in us, it is in others.”

And this is where we can see the beauty and the power, the wisdom, the truth and the insight that the first chapters of Genesis reveal to us. They too tell us, but this time from God’s own perspective, what is wrong with us and where the solution is.

On these two things we’ll reflect briefly, – what is wrong with us and where the solution is. How does the book of Genesis reveal what is wrong with us? First, the Bible is clear that the problem is not in others. It is in us. In me. In you. In every human being.

These first chapters of Genesis nail what our problem is. We want to be like gods. Yes, we. I want to be like god. You want to be like god, every human being desires it. But what does this mean to be like gods?

Remember, the true God is the Creator. When He created everything, He looked at it and said: “It is good. It is good.” And after finishing His work of creation, He even said that “it is very good”.

Good in this context means – it works. It functions according to God’s design. Good is what God has intended for us, for our lives, so that we could lead

blessed lives in fellowship with Him. Evil is what doesn't work, what doesn't do good for us and separates us from our God.

Now, this is how Genesis explains, what it means to be like God, that is, – to know what is good, what functions, and what is not, what doesn't. Our problem is that we don't want to listen to God, when He tells us what is good for us, what works.

We believe, all human beings believe that we know better. That we are like gods. You can start by looking at two years old. What is the problem with two years old? You know that we often call them the Terrible Twos. Why do we call them that way?

Because they believe that they know everything better than they parents do. They want to do everything their own way. And it is terrible. Because the truth is that they don't know, but they also don't want to listen.

And we as adults are not much different in our relationships with our Father in heaven. It is particularly clear today, when thanks to the rapid development of different human sciences, we know what works, and what doesn't.

What works have been known since the very beginning. Most people would know this summary as the Ten Commandments. Except that most people, even those who know about the Ten Commandments, don't understand what they really are about.

They are not some arbitrary rules or restrictions, imposed on us to rob us of our freedom. They are the very opposite, they are God's good design for our lives, they are God's wisdom for our lives, they are the framework for true freedom. The only thing that the Commandments restrict is sin.

And the wonderful thing is, they work. Whenever someone is blessed to lead their lives according to God's design, those are blessed, joyful and rich lives. And especially it refers to the first three Commandments, even if many among Christians don't really know what they are and what they mean.

We want to be like gods. We believe that we can ignore the Triune God. We believe we can do well on our own. We believe we can communicate with Him as we choose to. We believe we can reject His invitation, and that there is no need to listen to Him speaking to us.

We believe we can disrespect those whom God has entrusted to care for us, our parents, our teachers, our superiors, our pastors. We know better. We believe we will be better off if we focus on ourselves, rather than focusing on our neighbours. We believe that adultery won't do much harm, so we do whatever our 'pure' hearts desires. We believe that the wealth of this world is the answer to all our problems.

We believe that we need to say exactly what we think about others, especially if they are not present, and that coveting what others have provides great motivation for our lives. What are we like? We are like the Terrible Twos.

Wise and all-knowing in our own eyes. We want to demand our autonomy. We don't want to listen to our loving Father in heaven even if everything He tells us makes sense and is for our own benefit and blessings.

This is what the problem of humanity is. We want to be like gods. We want to believe that we know better than our Loving Father in heaven. We will do it our way, even if it hurts us and everyone else.

This is how the Bible reveals what is wrong with us. It is a very serious problem and it requires an equally serious solution. And in our today's reading our gracious God reveals what His solution is. Let's meet His wonderful Son.

Let's meet Him in the garden of Eden. Remember, what happened right after Adam and Eve had decided that they know better than their Creator, that now they themselves will be like gods.

We can see how many things went wrong right away. Shame and guilt came into their lives. Shame and guilt ruined their relationships with their Loving God and with one another. "This woman, which you gave me, she did it, not me!"

But then, who came looking for Adam? Who called Adam in the garden? Yes, we could say God did. But we need to be more specific. We know that our God is the Triune God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We know that no one has ever seen the Father. We know that the Son is one who reveals the Father. Who came looking for Adam in the garden? Yes, it was the Eternal Son. This changes so much.

Imagine, just a moment ago Adam and Eve had disobeyed God, and as the consequence of their disobedience they will be separated from God, who is the source of all life. It means that with their disobedience they had brought death into the world.

It also means that it will take a great sacrifice to reverse what they had done, it will require the life of the Eternal Son to restore the goodness of God's creation. It is hard to get our minds around this – what Adam and Eve just did, will require the eternal Son of God to suffer and to die on the cross.

And who comes looking for them? It is Him. The Son. This is where He reveals the depth of God's love for His human creatures. He comes and gives the first promise about our Saviour. The Church considers this the first proclamation of the Gospel.

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." On the

cross the offspring of Mary, Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, destroyed the power of the Evil One, He triumphed over death.

However, it came to Him at a great cost, as the Ancient Serpent bit His heel and took His life. The Eternal Son knew what it will require to restore the damage that the first people had done, and He was willing to do.

This is how much you mean for Him. Such is God's love towards His human creatures. This is how the Triune God who speaks to us through His written Word reveals to us our problem and the solutions.

Our problem is so deep, it can't be fixed. We, our old selfish self needs to die, and we need to be born again, we need someone to create new hearts for us. We need someone to create us anew.

And we just happen to have this someone. The loving God who created everything. The loving God who revealed the depth of His love by sacrificing Himself for us. The loving God who give us new life and new identity in baptism, as He just did for Summer.

The loving God who speaks to us, who sends His Spirit to create in us new hearts, who feeds us forgiveness and eternal life in the Sacrament, and who will eventually restore the goodness of His creation.

On that day, we won't be like the Terrible Twos anymore. We will gladly listen to our Father. Our hearts will beat in joyful harmony with His will. And we will live again in close fellowship with the very source of all life.

We will see again the Son who gave up everything to rescue us from death. We will see Him as He is. And this time, no one and nothing will separate us from His love. For this you have His word. Amen.