

“In the Garden of Anxiety”- Genesis 2 and 3
February 10, 2008
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Well its lent. The Good thing about lent is it eventually ends. (When it does end—it will be a lot warmer.) Secondly—it offers us the opportunity to address those things we’ve just been carrying around—hauling after ourselves—sort of like the bowling balls of our lives....and finally— more than anything else Lent is God calling out to us—coming to us—seeking us out—where we are.

Let's go to the beginning—if its not **the** beginning
its **a** beginning or at least **a** story of **a** beginning. A
garden, four rivers, beautiful place, safari type
animals, all well fed with no complaints; trees, plants,
springs, with plenty of much and of course, Adam,
Eve, apples and snakes.

The problem with saying anything about Adam and
Eve is that the literalists think its all true and the

progressives think there are no facts. We hear the story—think we know how it goes and cease to listen to how it ends. The ancients told this story—because it explained how certain things came to be.

Theologians have used it as background filler to explain their issues. St Paul and St Augustine—were two men who clearly needed some longstanding syndrome to hang their flaws—a concept of humanity's fallen nature—and original sin—women

as temptress all nice tidy ways to face their pasts and enable them to carry on with the remainder of their lives. But their baggage aside—what can we hear—what do we see—what can we learn about God and humanity—the creator and the created. That is—what’s the garden got to do with us?

The ancients told this story—this insightful—multi-layered story—as a way to describe and explain—

how it is that discord came to be. How it is that humanity and divinity, creation and humanity are not living in synchronicity. This primordial story of a beginning exists to offer to us a sense that the disconnects of the world and the flaws of our lives are not new. Humanity has been blowing past each other for five maybe ten thousand years. Why? Many reasons but the one I'm most struck by—is one that biblical theologian Walter Bruggemann talks

about at some length. He says, “Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden is a theological critique of anxiety. It presents a prism through which the root cause of anxiety can be understood. They seek to escape anxiety by attempting to circumvent the reality of God.” P 53 (Genesis Commentary) That is—Adam and Eve heard the snake’s words—“if you eat of that tree, your eyes will be opened and you will become like gods—knowing god and evil”. Eat of

that tree and you can be the one who understands all
and you will be the god and you won't have to
depend on anyone else again...you'll be the one who
makes things happen. You'll be in
charge...Somehow even then—that notion of being
dependent—connected and not fully in charge—
unsettled their souls. Think about it if you will—the
times when you have erred—missed the mark—
sinned—how many times did that involve you

deciding that you could settle everything down in your life—if you'd just take some agency and control. Stop ditzing around with these other people—frequently ones we love—but never as smart as we are in that moment--How many times—do those willful take charge actions lead to a disconnect with someone else? All because we're not so sure we can tolerate the ambiguity of our lives anymore.

How often do we act—take the bite—and then pass it

on? This works individually and globally. Sadaam Hussein—might just have the weapons—better make sure he doesn't use them. In our communities--those people might come in and take over—better stop them. In our personal lives—you might not love me enough—I better get out now....all because we can't sit still. Or as a trusted advisor is wont to say to me—“Bonnie—don't just do something—sit there!”

What might have happened if Eve and Adam had replied—“it seems as if you really want the apple—why don’t you go for it?”

The archetype of anxiety—as seen in the interaction between—the nameless serpent and the prototypes of humanity. It’s something to think about.

Let’s move further down—in the story.

They've eaten, they are aware—so anxious that they string some leaves together in an attempt to cover their butts—literally. God appears—walking in the garden—during the breezy part of the day. Don't you just love that image of God strolling through creation with the wind in God's hair? God calls out to Adam—“Where are you?” Does God do this because Adam can hide from God? God just isn't up on the comings and goings of creation? Or as a

midrash says, “Is God calling out—a way—to open the path for Adam to fess up to what they’ve done?”

Does God call out—to reestablish the relationship—regardless of the breach—because there’s nothing like a heartfelt conversation to reduce the free floating anxiety. God comes to Eve and Adam—to start again. To personally tell them—how things are going to change—because there are consequences.

But not impersonally decreed from on high—but in

person—face to face. God could have sent them the cosmic e-mail—but there's God—strolling through the garden doing God's best to restart the connection.

You may be saying—well yes—but god still throws them out of the garden. Yes indeed—but the last thing God does for them—after the fiery cherubim at the gate. God sits down and makes them a decent pair of clothes. Replaces their leaves with coats of

skins—something to hold up for the long haul.

Because that's the thing—God is never going away.

No matter what we do—or where we do it. God will

be there—calling us back—into connection and

relationship.

It's lent my friends—and God—is on hand.

