



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 4, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

Advent Midweek 1

Lesson: [Galatians 3:13-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 1a CW

Lesson/Devotion: [Genesis 3:1-15](#)

Christmas Trees The Tree of Rebellion

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

As we are speaking about **Christmas Trees** and trees, it's a blessing to look at our new tree set up here and look at trees out in the world. Often we see the trees but we don't always notice what is under them—the roots. I think there is also truth to that of how it is in our life. There are often things that we see and notice but we really have to get to the root of the issue.

Sometimes you have a pain in your body and you might just try to take pain medicine to dull that pain, but once that pain continues to be there, then after a while (and if you're a guy it might be months) you finally go to the doctor to try to find what the root of that problem is. It's a headache or a pain or some other issue that often we just try to medicate the problem but we don't get to the root. There are all these symptoms, but what is really causing the problem? Or when you talk to a friend or a coworker or a relative, and there are some issues and you're just not getting along, you have trouble and you can just tell that someone is upset, so the way that you interact with people when there is something wrong with the relationship might cause you to ask, "Why are you upset?" There might be some root to the problem, something deep down that needs to be discussed and talked about and maybe apologized for, but if you never address that root issue, then that problem can linger for a long time.

We have some great tree cutters that have helped with our yard and the grounds here. You can cut down a tree and that tree is pretty much gone, but what sticks around?—those roots. They are hard to get out.

As we really look at Genesis here, we see the root of the problem that we're in. Why is life so difficult? Why are there all these problems between people? Why is there death? Why did Jesus even need to come? It goes to the root of the problem, this **tree of rebellion**. You can spend so much time on this deep section of Scripture that really focuses on the heart of sin and the devil and our temptations and how Christ comes to seek after us. Today I want to focus on that idea of rebellion, that tree of rebellion and what the devil does in tempting us and trying to get us to rebel. I think there are several things that the devil does to get us to rebel against God.

Notice that as he is speaking, the first thing he really does is has Eve question God. "Did God really say this?" Our rebellion starts with just a simple question, of questioning God. But what things do we question about God? Do we question God's goodness, God's Word, and God's love? These are all things that the devil is doing. "Did God really say this? Can you trust Him? Does God love you?" He says ⁵**"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened..."** God is withholding something from us—that's what the devil wants you to think about all these things. He wants us to be putting him first and ignoring God and not caring what God says and questioning everything about God.

But notice what he uses. He uses several things to deceive us. Was that tree in itself a bad thing, this tree of the knowledge of good and evil? In fact, theologians will say that tree was the first church in some ways; that every time they walked by it and didn't eat from it, they were worshipping God. They were obeying God and praising God. So it wasn't a bad thing but notice how the devil (what he so often does with us) takes a good thing and turns it into something evil, something that we want to use for our own good. He takes things that are good and he wants us to abuse it. He wants us to be tempted by these blessings that God has given us but to overindulge in them or to be tempted away by them, to go to them instead of God, to put our trust in them. These are all things that the devil uses to get us to stray from God. At the base of it, it's really a question of saying what is best for me. That's what the devil kind of says to Eve. "You will not die when you eat from the tree. God knows that your eyes will be opened. What is best for you?"

Do you know what is best for you? We think that all the time. Whatever age you are, we think we know what is right. As I look around, some of the people that are a little bit older might say, "Did you know what was best in your life? Did you know what God's plan was for you? If you would have done what you thought was best, would you have had all these things that you know God brought about?" And even through the struggles and the difficulties that God brings blessings through, we still sometimes don't even know. God knows so much more than us but the whole point is the devil wants us to say we are best and we know what is right. We make ourselves God. That's the whole temptation. **"...you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** I think it's always important to look at what that knowing is. It's not just knowledge but that

knowing in Hebrew is an experience. Is every experience good? Is everything that you've gone through good? There are some things that you don't want to experience. You don't want to experience war. You don't want to experience some of the pains and terrible things and some of the consequences of sin. Not everything is good. So he deceived them. He used half lies. He said "You will know good and evil." That's true, but they already knew good. Now they were going to experience evil.

This is what the devil did for them and what he does for you and me. He twists God's Word to make you question God's Word and doubt His love for you and to, in the end, place yourself above God. This is the root of sin and rebellion, that we think we should be in charge and we know what is best and when God says "This is good and this is bad," we say "I know what is better." We do that sometimes. Even to parents or teachers—"I know what is better. I know what is right." But God knows what is good and right for us. What is important is that He doesn't just leave us in our state of rebellion.

We see that as they have rebelled and now are filled with shame instead of perfection, God goes out to them and seeks repentance. "Where are you? What has happened? Who told you that you were naked?" But instead of repentance, there is blame. There is blaming of God, blaming of the woman, blaming of the serpent, blaming of everyone else but not taking responsibility. God wants us to take responsibility and say "I've sinned. I've fallen short." And we need rescue.

This is what God promises us. As God seeks us out and shows His love for us, He gives us a promise of forgiveness. We see what that looks like as He says that He'll send that Offspring of the woman. He will crush the serpent's head and the serpent will strike the heel of that Offspring. We'll continue to talk about that promise next week, but we know what that is all about, that Jesus is that promised Seed and that though He will be struck by Satan, though He will have to die and suffer for our sins, He will crush the power of Satan.

Sin is defeated. Death is destroyed. But yet the root is still here. Just like when you cut down a tree and it's so hard to get that root out, we know that the devil is defeated. We know that sin is done away with and death has been vanquished and we will live forever, but we still live with those roots. We live with the consequences and we see loved ones die and we live in a world of sin and pain, but God is making everything new. That is the focus of all this as we'll look at, the Tree of Promise and then the Tree of Life. That though we have sinned and we live in a state of rebellion, God has given us new life through Christ, through baptism and forgiveness. We don't have to fear. God has given us the things to fight off the devil and his temptations to say "I know what God says. I know the Word and I can cling to it. Flee from me, Satan! I am a child of God. I am redeemed and forgiven. Devil, you have no power over me." We can look to our baptism and know we are a child of God, washed and redeemed and forgiven and loved.

So yes, we know this tree of rebellion the devil used to tempt us and he will continue to use things to tempt you. But know though those roots are here, the devil has been defeated. God brought salvation and peace and this is true for you and for me. So cling to that promise. Cling to that hope that there is a Tree of Promise that our Savior will go to. That means that we'll live in a place like the Garden of Eden, with the Tree of Life, where we'll be like Adam and Eve in perfection, living forever but unable to then sin, living with our Savior forever. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.