

TRINITY 1 – 2021

Gen 3:9-15

2 Cor 4:13-5:1

Mk 3:20-35

The first chapters of the book of Genesis describe the unity and harmony between God and creation in the Garden of Eden. Today's first reading describes why some of those relationships went downhill.

The first question recorded in Scripture was asked by God of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. "Where are you?" he said. This question reflects the growing alienation between God and human beings when Adam blames Eve, who in turn blames the serpent for encouraging them to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This act of disobedience also draws attention to the changed relationship between male and female and between humans and the animal kingdom and eventually between humans and the earth itself.

The unity between God and humanity was damaged and Adam and Eve show us that while we are free to choose our actions we are not free to choose their consequences. In the case of Adam and Eve, they were banished from the Garden and the woman was to suffer in the labour of childbirth while the man suffered in labouring with the earth.

The alienation of humans from God is clearly demonstrated in today's gospel which describes the misrepresentation of Jesus by his opponents and relatives who are replaced by those who do the will of God.

Before these encounters occurred, Jesus had been healing the sick and driving out evil spirits. The scribes and Pharisees were becoming troublesome to him and his mother and relatives were worried that he would be harmed so they came to 'rescue' him assuming that he was mad. Jesus left the outside the house.

The debate between Jesus and his religious opponents was about the source of Jesus' power to heal the sick. The Jewish belief was that sickness was caused by Satan and the forces of evil so the Pharisees accused Jesus of being in league with the evil powers. In response, Jesus accuses them of blasphemy because only a power stronger than evil could overcome evil. Jesus could do that because he had been empowered by the Holy Spirit at his baptism so he accuses the Pharisees of calling the Holy Spirit an evil spirit. In St Mark's gospel not even the demons do that. Here then is the unforgiveable sin against the Holy Spirit, namely, to regard good as evil and evil as good. Or as John Milton puts it in Paradise Lost, "Evil be thou my good."

To worship evil as if it is good, or to act on wicked and evil thoughts is to be alienated from God.

To accuse Jesus of being a fraud as the Pharisees did, is worse than thinking he was mad, as his family did. Those who think in these ways will not find any hope in Jesus. This is why

Jesus said that anyone who believes and does the will of God is his mother, sister and brother.

St Paul makes it clear to the Corinthian Christians that a believer's faith expressed in action that is commensurate with the values of God's kingdom will enable him or her to be raised with Christ and continue in unity with him as a member of God's righteous people when we fold up the tent of our human body here on earth.

We can choose to keep faith in Christ or not, but we cannot choose the consequences of either choice we make.

Msgr Harry Entwistle
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