



Sermon – February 27, 2022
Dr. Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered This Week

Genesis 3:1 – 6

Matthew 4:1

Let's open our Bibles together. We're going to be back in Genesis chapter 3 starting in verse 1 this morning. And if you're a guest with us today, whether in the room or watching online, welcome home. We come to God's word because it is the only way by which it is well with our soul might actually be true. If you remember the last time we were in Genesis 3, we saw the way that satan works in our lives to lead us astray. That he brings about a doubt that tests our devotion. And what we're going to notice this morning is that he builds upon that doubt by tempting our desires through deception. I want you to know this morning, at the end of our time, during the response time, I'm going to invite you to come and join me at the steps to pray. To turn our hearts over to the Lord, to help us fight the sin that so often entangles us. And I want to challenge you to be readying your hearts for that even now. And speaking of prayer, after I read our word of Scripture this morning, we're going to take a moment to pray especially for what's happening in Ukraine right now. I don't know about you, but I've been burdened to watch what's unfolding over the last week. I remember back in 2019 I was at the State Department in Washington, D.C. at an event on International Religious Freedom. And I met a believer from Romania who was doing amazing gospel work in Romania and in Ukraine and the surrounding region and just got to hear story after story of God's faithfulness. And I can't help in this moment but think of men like him. Our brothers and sisters in Christ unsure of their safety, unsure of what's coming next and our hearts ought to be burdened for the way that this is effecting, not just that country and the world, but also the advance of the Gospel. So we're going to pray to that end after we read now beginning in verse 1. We're going to read the first 6 verses and this morning we're going to focus especially on verse 6. Let's see what the text has to tell us today.

¹Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the tree of the fruit that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴But the serpent said to the woman,

“You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

And here's the key verse for today.

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Let's pray together.

Father, in this moment, we are praying that You would ready our hearts for Your word. That by the power of Your Spirit You would change us. But even now, God, we are burdened by what's going on in the world around us. And in this moment, God, we are praying especially for what's happening in Ukraine. This invasion that's taking place. This loss of life. This loss of peace. This moment of crisis and uncertainty, God. You are the giver of peace. You are the one that can bring wars to conclusion. You are the one that can bring healing. And we're praying even now that You do exactly that, God. Even as we pray for those refugees. As we saw this morning, over 300,000 people already fleeing from Ukraine, seeking safety, not knowing where they're going, how they will provide. Lord, will You provide for them? Would You care for them? And Lord, we know that even in this event is unfolding Ukraine, its effects are transforming and impacting people around the world, God. And in the midst of this instability, we are praying for Your comfort, for Your provision. That in this moment of uncertainty or anxiety, the people would not look inward towards themselves but upward to You, God. And most of all in this moment, Lord, we are praying that even as we feel the effects of the brokenness of this world, the wars that rage around us with flesh and blood, would it remind us, God, that there is a spiritual battle taking place even now. Not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and the powers. And we pray especially for Your Gospel's advancement both in Russia and in Ukraine and these surrounding regions. Would You comfort the believers there? That they can trust You even when life seems in danger? Would you give them the words to speak? That they might have courage, might have conviction, might have comfort. And that Your Gospel might go forward. I pray especially for the Ukrainian Baptist Theological Seminary and our friends there. That You would help them continue to faithfully train the next generation of leaders. I pray for Baptist churches around that country, Lord, to be the place that doesn't run in the midst of chaos and uncertainty but that people can turn to. Because Your word is their only hope in the midst of the storm, in the midst of the war, and in the midst of our uncertainties in life. And as we turn our hearts to Your word now, God, would You change us forever by the power of Your Spirit so that we might walk in a manner worthy of the Gospel. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

As the Winter Olympics have come to a conclusion, just in the past week, the main headlines that have come from the games haven't been so much about who won medals, but who didn't. And in particular, I'm thinking about an American skier by the name of Mikaela Shiffrin. Maybe you're not familiar with her, but she's a two-time gold medalist. She's one of the most decorated skiers in American history. And there was all sorts of hope that she would bring home the gold again. Competing in six events. What seemed like it might be a dream moment for her, though, soon became a nightmare. Because on her first run, about 20 or 30 seconds into the run,

she fell and skied out of that event. And after that, on two other events, she also fell down. Unprecedented for her. A fall is completely unexpected, much less for that to happen in 3 out of 6 events. It's what she later on called an epic underperformance. Why did that fall happen? Well, people have thought about the parallels between what's taking place with her in this Winter Olympics and what took place with Simone Biles back in the summer when she withdrew from the gymnastics competition. You see, what took place in the case of Shiffrin is that Shiffrin in her own strength wasn't able to stand up under pressure. And that first fall created a repeated rhythm that threw her off the mission she was intended to go for because she couldn't stand in her own strength. And in a very different way this morning, that's what we're going to see unfold on the pages of Genesis chapter 3. That Eve, in her own strength, is unable to stand under the pressure of temptation that Satan brings her. And that that first fall grows into a repeated rhythm that takes her and all of humanity off course from the mission that God has called us to. See, there's a danger when we look at a text like this. It's so familiar. You've read about it in the storybooks. You've heard it preached plenty of times that we might miss what's happening here in Genesis 3. But what we're going to notice this morning is that Genesis 3 gives us the first glimpse into the cycle of sin that shows up throughout the storyline of Scripture. And if we want to find lasting victory in the Christian life, we need to understand the Satan sin cycle. And what it looks like to war against each dimension of the deceptions that he brings in our life.

So notice with me at the start of verse 6. We see the first component of this sin cycle that Satan uses on each one of us. We'll see first the seduction of sin. That's why the text there says;

[6So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desired to make one wise,](#)

So the way that this, this sin unfolds is that the serpent moves Eve from suspicion to seduction. He takes her from doubt to deception. And that deception leads to a disobedience that brings about a fall. And even when I say that word fall, you understand what it means. We think about a fall from grace or a fall from stardom. This idea that someone who was once great has now been brought low. There's this sense of humiliation, embarrassment, failure that comes in there and that's precisely what we see unfolding in Genesis chapter 3. That the sin of Adam and Eve leads to a fall that brings about brokenness, humiliation, and a corruption for the entire world. Now how did that fall happen? Well, what we're going to find here is that it goes through a cycle of sin that doesn't just show up in Eden, it shows up on our doorstep today. And that cycle begins with seduction. See, Satan appeals to our appetites. He lures our longing. He deceives our desires. And what we're going to notice in this portion of the text is that there are three primary temptations that strengthen the seduction of sin.

You'll notice as the serpent walks through these things and as Eve looks at the fruit, each facet of it that appeals to her shows us a different temptation that Satan uses. So look back at the text there, at the start of verse 6. We'll notice first that Satan tempts our appetites. That's why it says,

[So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food](#)

Look at that phrase: good for food. Now is there anything wrong with food? Is it bad? No, it's good. I mean, when I think about the Garden of Eden, it's like an ancient version of Bucees. It's

go everything you could possibly need. And all sorts of things you don't, yet right there in the middle, there's this one forbidden thing. And it lures her. That desire for food is not bad. Her appetites, the pattern of eating and being filled and then becoming hungry again. Eating and being filled and becoming hungry is part of God's creation rhythms. And yet, notice what happens here. Satan penetrates her heart through her appetites. He tries to get her to satisfy her appetites through forbidden fruit. Now I'm just curious by show of hands, how many of you have had your family sometime over the last couple of years in the pandemic order groceries online and go pick them up at the store? Anybody out there do that before? And that can be really convenient, it's helpful, it's great when it works. The problem is, sometimes they don't always have everything you ordered, right? Especially right now when you're having supply chain issues. Then that can create some big problems. And I'm not just talking when you want Dr. Pepper and you have to settle for Dr. Thunder. That's bad enough. But I came across some example of people who had some epic substitution fails when it came to online grocery ordering. So, for example, there was this one person who ordered flowers and instead they got bell peppers. And guys, I hope none of that happened to you on Valentines Day. Or there was another person who tried to order some rapid COVID tests, maybe during the height of COVID, and instead of getting those, he got Hall's sore throat lozenges. I guess if they were out of the tests, at least they could medicate some of the symptoms. And then maybe my favorite of all, a mom had ordered some juice for her daughter and they were out of the juice so they replaced it with a bottle of wine. That's like a Northgate snack time, I guess. I don't know. You just got to wonder, what's going through the head of these workers in those moments. They think that they can satisfy the consumer through a substitution. Satisfaction through substitution. That even though it's outside the design, the intent, that maybe they'll settle for it and it will be good enough. And that pull of satisfaction through substitution is precisely what we see happening here with the work of satan. He tests our integrity by tempting our taste buds. He makes us wonder if we will ever have enough. And he draws us to satisfy our desires through forbidden fruit. And that doesn't just happen here in the Garden of Eden, that can show up in our lives today. So the reason that some of you find yourself repeatedly pulled back to a glowing rectangle, wanting to see elicit images that your eyes should not view. The reason for that desire for forbidden fruit visually is because satan is taking a good desire, the desire for intimacy, the desire for relationship and connection, and pulling you just like Eve to satisfy it through forbidden fruit. The seduction of sin can show up through the temptation of our appetites.

But notice how the text keeps going on here. You'll see in the middle of verse 6, that second, satan also tempts our approval. And where do we see that in the text? Look back at verse 6. It says: and that was a delight to the eyes. So notice what happens here. Eve sees beauty in the fruit. And is beauty wrong? Well, absolutely not. God has created the entire universe in Genesis 1 and 2 and it is beautiful, it is good. And her ability to recognize beauty is at the heart of the way that God has designed her as a bearer of the image of God. But here's what we need to notice. At the heart of our recognition of beauty is the desire for approval. To value or be valued. To affirm or be affirmed. To see beauty or to be beautiful. At the core, that desire for approval that Eve displays here shows us that she is seeking approval from the creation rather than the Creator. And notice what happens with this temptation, this seduction towards sin through the desire for approval. What happens is we seek to find significance through forbidden sources. In this case, it's a piece of fruit. But it can show up in all sorts of other scenarios. That's often how approval works. We try to find our significance, not from God, but from others around us. Mikaela Shiffrin, after she failed, she did several media interviews. And I was

gripped by the way that this desire for approval kept showing up in what she had to say after her failure. So just a couple of things that happened. They asked her afterwards, how does she feel? And her answer was, "I feel like a joke." You can see that her identity's so bound up in her performance that when she fails on the course, it feels as if she's failing in life. But that's not all that she said there. When they asked her how she's processing through things, she said, "I'm pretty much processing everything. It makes me second guess the last 15 years. Everything I thought I knew about my own skiing and slalom and racing mentality, just processing a lot, for sure. I feel really bad." There's this low grade guilt that is captured there. She feels like she's letting other people down. And of course, you know what happens in the world we live in today in a social media environment. Everyone is piling onto her, criticizing her. And the commentators asked her, "How does it feel when these other people are criticizing you?" And listen to what she said about their comments. She said, "Their comments reflect a lot of the things that I actually fear the most about myself. That I've lost touch in this sport. That I should give it up. It's the worst thing you think about yourself and somebody else finds a way to push your buttons." In other words, there's a constant voice outside of her that is telling her that she'll never be enough. She'll never be good enough. She'll never find the significance she hopes for. And what we need to see right here in Genesis 3 is the seedbed for the way that that desire for approval affects all of us. That just like Shiffrin, we can feel that weight of humiliation. To feel like a joke when we fail. And just like her, when we are trying to find success, we can have this low grade guilt that we're letting everyone around us down and I can guarantee you right now, there are people in this room who know what it's like to have that voice inside your head questioning you, pressing your buttons, telling you that you will never be enough, telling you that you should seek your significance somewhere else. See, Eve was pulled towards finding her significance in the beauty she beheld in creation instead of the beauty of her Creator, and that same reality can affect you and I which sets the stage for the third temptation that's there right there in the middle of this verse.

You'll see third that satan also tempts our ambition. So notice there in the middle of verse 6,

[And that the tree was to be desired to make one wise](#)

And so we know wisdom is a good thing. In fact, Paul in Colossians 2:3 speaks about Jesus and said, in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. That desire for wisdom, that desire for power, that desire for success are honoring to God. So what's the problem here? When she sees that the fruit is desirable to make one wise, where is she led astray? See, the problem for Eve and each one of us is when we seek the ways of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, the success of God apart from God. She follows the way of the serpent rather than the way of the Savior. And in this moment, she is gripped by the pull of ambition. And at its core, what ambition is trying to do in each one of our lives is drive us to seek our success through forbidden solutions. To do God's work without doing it God's way. To find world's success through our own means. To find wisdom separated from God Himself. And when we seek that wisdom, when we seek that power, when we seek that success apart from God, it can lead us on a path towards ambition that can pull us away from Him. That's why we should have Jesus' own words radiating in our ears. What does it prophesy a man if he gains the whole world and yet forfeits his soul in the process? You see, the problem here is the seduction of satan is so subtle, Eve doesn't even realize that's what she's about to do. To forfeit the whole world for a bite of fruit. But that's the way the sin cycle begins. Through that seduction of sin. But I want

you to notice now in the second half of this verse we see a second way that the cycle of sin shows up in our life. It's not just through the seduction of sin, but now also we see second, it's the submission to sin. And look at the way this submission of sin plays out in her life. It says in the middle of verse 6,

She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

This is one of those turning point moments in the Bible. Everything changes here. It's like a hinge and a door rotating upon it. Everything shifts. And how does that shift take place? How does this transformation occur? Well, you'll notice that the sin cycle moves from desire to decision, from appetite to action, from seduction to actual sin. And when that sin comes, it changes everything, doesn't it? But I want you to notice something. The first step that Eve takes towards the sin isn't by feasting on forbidden fruit. Look back at the text. There's a little word there you might overlook towards the end of verse 6. And it's the word took. Do you see it? She took of its fruit and ate. So what does she do before she eats? She takes it. She takes possession of the fruit before the fruit takes possession of her. And that shows us the way that this sin cycle works in our life. So often between the seduction and the sin there's a setup. That satan is moving us to the point where we are ready to take the step to commit that sin. Before she eats the fruit, she holds it. And in that moment, as she's holding it there, she may be sizing it up, looking at it, wrestling, "Should I eat it or should I not?" At that moment, it's not too late. She still hasn't disobeyed God. She could flee. She could fight. She could cry out to God for help. Instead, she takes and then she eats. You need to realize that that same half-step between seduction and sin can show up today. And so often, satan waits for the moment he can set you up so the sin goes down easy. So what happens is when you're pulled towards that same desire for elicited imagery we talked about earlier, what happens is you take that browser on your phone into private mode so nobody knows. You haven't committed the sin yet, but the setup's happened. Or you've taken on too much stress or too little sleep and satan's watching you in action and he creates the circumstances around you to where an outburst of anger is coming. You haven't yet committed it, but you've been set up in the moment. There's all of these ways that that setup can happen. You can be at work. And when you call a coworker over and say, "Hey, have you heard about what's going on with Samantha?" You haven't committed the gossip yet. The sinful sharing of that information, but the setup has taken place. You have taken and now he's about to take you. That's what happens with Eve here and it's what plays out for each one of us. But look back at the text. Notice what happens. As she takes the fruit, what happens next? It tells us that she ate. We don't know what kind of fruit this is. Most people in our day and age think of it as an apple. And just imagine yourself eating an apple. You know when you take that first bite, that crack of the skin that it makes as you sink your teeth into it. And then you've got that juice that explodes into your mouth and maybe even some dribbles down your chin. And in this moment, you can't help but wonder that as Eve shatters the skin of this fruit, does she realize she is shattering the creation around her? And as that juice drips from her chin, does she recognize that evil has now dripped into her heart? Here's this submission to sin. Rather than to submit to God, she is now submitted to the serpent. Instead of submitting to God's design, she submitted to his design and that's where everything changes. And notice what happens. Eve doesn't just sin, she shares. In other words, she doesn't just engage in sin, she enables the sin of Adam. So look back at the end of verse 6 there. She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate. And we don't know what happens here. Maybe this fruit

tastes so good, she's on such a high, she wants Adam to experience it too. Or maybe the guilt hits her so quickly she's brought so low, she wants to take him down with her. Either way, she goes from engaging to enabling, from sinning to sharing. And what happens is, Adam, in this circumstance is surrounded by someone who instead of strengthening him, sabotages him. Which makes us think about today, what kind of people are you surrounding yourself with right now? Are they the kind of people that are building you up in your life or tearing you down? Are they the ones that are strengthening you to follow God's design for your life or sabotaging you? Because this text is showing us that the company we keep shapes the pattern of life that we live. And it's calling us to walk in the kind of community that builds one another up rather than tears one another down. And you can see, when Eve takes a bite, she passes it now to Adam and he takes a bite. Everything about the universe changes. See, their sin doesn't just affect them, it effects the entire creation. It's like an earthquake. The effects of it reverberating out to effect the entire universe. It's like a tidal wave submerging the creation under chaos. But their sin doesn't just affect them and the creation in that moment; it affects all of history from that time forward. You and I are affected by what we're reading about here in Genesis 3. It affects everyone who lives. That suspicion leads to seduction which drives them to sin. That doubt leads to deception that drives them to disobedience. And from that time forth, we see that same cycle of sin playing out in each one of our lives apart from Christ. The reason that some of you feel helpless this morning in finding victory over sin in your life is because of what has taken place here in Genesis 3. You're stuck in the same sin cycle. Maybe you resonate with the words of Paul in Romans 7:19 when he says, "For I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." Is that where you are this morning? Are you exhausted from the battle? Are you tired of fighting? Are you sick of struggling with the same sins in the same ways? Well, that's been true of every person since the Garden of Eden. And what I want to suggest to you this morning is maybe the reason you're stuck in your sin is because you're looking to yourself instead of Jesus for your deliverance. It's one of the reasons why our church is committed every Sunday night at 5:00 to hosting a ministry called Re|generation. We want to help you recover from your sin, your addictions, your pain in the past. Not through yourself, but through Jesus. And it meets right over in our Grand Room, 5:00 every weekend. The reason that we do that is because, if you're the one that got you in this mess, are you really going to be the one that gets you out of it? What we're going to find here later on in the text is that's exactly what Adam and Eve try to do. They try to find their own deliverance from it but it doesn't work. Because satan is undefeated. This world is now enemy-occupied territory. This will be the worst news that we could ever receive if this was the end of the story.

But I want you to notice something with me. If you want to turn over, before we close, to Matthew chapter 4. You're going to see something different that takes place. You see, Adam and Eve are in the garden, in the abundance of God, they face the temptation of the enemy of God and they submit to the enemy rather than submitting to God Himself. But as Matthew tells the story of Jesus, we come across this experience in Matthew 4, where rather than be in a garden of abundance, Jesus is in a desert absent of everything. Desperate, fasting 40 days and 40 nights, and now the serpent comes to Him and I want you to hear what Matthew 4:1 says. It says:

¹Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

See what Matthew is doing here is he's putting the first Adam side by side with the new Adam. And he is showing us that just as Adam and Eve were tempted in the garden in these three ways,

through appetite, through approval, through ambition, now Jesus comes as a new Adam facing those same temptations. Think about it. That first temptation to turn stones into bread. That's a temptation of His appetite. But Jesus doesn't satisfy His appetite through forbidden fruit. That second temptation, to go atop the temple, cast Himself down so the angels can rescue Him, is a temptation of approval. But He doesn't find His significance through forbidden sources. And then that third temptation, when Satan takes Him to the mountaintop, he shows Him all the kingdoms of the world. He says, "These can be Yours if You will just bow down and worship me." Jesus stands against that temptation of His ambition because He will not seek success through forbidden solutions. Satan was undefeated until Jesus came on the scene. But Jesus changes everything. And in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you and I can find freedom from the sin cycle that has captured every heart since Adam and Eve. It's been amazing to see how quickly things have deteriorated in Ukraine. When we were gathered here last Sunday, there was no invasion going on. In fact, on Monday, here's the way that things played out. We all know that for months, Russia had been amassing troops on the border of Ukraine, waiting for the right method and the right moment to enter that country. And then on Monday of this past week, six days ago, Vladimir Putin declared two vulnerable portions on the eastern part of Ukraine as independent regions, and said he was going to send in some peacekeeping troops in the country to protect them. And then, once those soldiers breached the border, we know what's happened in the intervening days since then. What was dubbed as a peacekeeping mission has now unfolded to a full invasion where they're marching towards the capital of that country, Kyiv, because what Russia knows is that if you can control the heart of a country, you can control the whole of a country. And we need to understand something right now. That's exactly the way that we see Satan at work here in Genesis 3. That's exactly the way that he's at work in each one of our hearts. Think about it. This call to fight sin is a call to spiritual battle. Satan is on the borders of our lives amassing troops against us, waiting for the right moment and the right method to attack. He sees the vulnerable areas of your heart and he claims them as independent so that he might send peacekeeping troops into your life. He promises freedom. He promises deliverance. He promises peace but he can give no peace. And once he enters into your life, once he leads you astray, he is going straight to the capital of your life which is what? Your heart. Because he knows if he can control the heart of a person, he can control the whole person.

What does that mean for us? What that means is that Genesis 3 as it plays out this sin cycle is putting a choice before each one of us. And I love the way that the puritan theologian, John Owen, puts it. The choice that Genesis 3 gives us is to be killing sin or it will be killing you. That's the battle we face. And apart from Christ, we stand no chance. But with Him, we can find everlasting victory.

Let's pray together.

Father, as we ready our hearts to come forward to these steps to pray, I ask that even now you would work in people's lives who need to surrender to you and not to the sin that is entangled them. Lord, I am praying for freedom. That You would set people free. That they could find deliverance from the deception that has led them astray. Lord, so often these temptations pull at our hearts. And I pray instead that You would help us to be captivated by Your word and Your truth. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.