This morning I don’t want to waste a lot of your time with debates that happen amongst various Christian denominations, so I will just waste a little bit of your time. The debate I am referencing has to do with stories like the one we have this morning concerning Adam and Eve. And the debate hinges on whether or not this really happened; i.e. were there really two people named Adam and Eve who ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and were then subsequently kicked out of the garden? On one side you have what we will call for lack of a better term the fundamentalist side who insist that it did really happen and that if you don’t believe it really happened then you are not a real Christian. On the other side you have what for lack of a better term we will call the liberal side which says that the stories of Adam and Eve are just that, stories made up by some people long ago which try to explain some stuff they did not understand and that these stories are true in the same way that Incan creation myths or Greek stories of Hermes are true. And of course, you have lots of others who are somewhere in between these two polls. I have my opinions on this debate but my main problem with it is that this debate in some ways ends up being more important than God. Sort of like George Orwell is reported to have said that he liked the Church of England more than Jesus. Some seem to like literalness or lack of literalness more than God. If we read the Bible to learn more about God and our relationship with him then what good does a debate about literalness have? It is like the book I recently listened to on Audible were one of the reviewers gave it a low rating because the guy reading the book did not pronounce the German city names correctly. Which was true but that did not make it a bad book. U.S. political scientist and former Columbia University professor once said that, "Academic politics is the most vicious and bitter form of politics, because the stakes are so low." In many ways that is how I feel about literalness debates among Christians and the intensity of the debates because if Adam and Eve literally happened or did not literally happen it does not change the nature of our relationship with God. And if we get hung up on such a debate, we will miss what God is telling us through the text.

So, with my tirade out of the way let’s take a look at a little bit of what we have from Genesis this morning. The part I really want to focus on is the following passage: God asks Adam and Eve, “’Have you eaten from 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 from 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 tricked me, and I ate.’” Whether this literally happened or not we all recognize what is going on. Adam and Eve have done something they should not have done and their reaction is to try and find someone to blame for their mistakes. Because as we all know once you have found someone or something to blame, we are in the clear.

I think this instinct may be the reason why our politics are so tiresome these days because the thing that gets people most excited is not their chosen candidate’s ability to make good and meaningful improvements but rather pointing out how the candidate of the other party is responsible for everything that is wrong with the world. I don’t really want to go into examples because all you have to do is switch on the cable news network of your choice and you should see what I am talking about in the first thirty to forty seconds. The first sin was disobedience and the second sin is trying to say that the disobedience did not really happen. But why is this? Why was the first thing that humanity did after sin entered the world was to try and blame someone else?

To answer that let’s think about sin for a moment because I know that is why you come to church. Sin in many ways is saying we have a better idea than God. In the buildup to the story of Adam and Eve from this morning God had said not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so naturally they decided to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To sin we have to think pretty highly of ourselves because what else would make us believe that we had a better idea than God? But the thing is that when we sin things tend to go wrong, like they do this morning. And when things go wrong, we are left with two choices. We can accept responsibility or we can try to convince ourselves that it is not really our fault. And because, by sinning in the first place, we have already made the leap to say that we know better than God admitting wrongdoing is very hard for us. Because to do so we have to admit that maybe we did not know better. But if we decide against this course of action the most likely scenario is that we will find someone else to blame. Because obviously if it is someone else’s fault, it is not our fault allowing us continue believing that we are awesome. And it is because of this tendency that humility is considered essential to Christianity. Because humility is the only thing that stops this cycle of sinning. The cycle where we sin and then sin again to cover up the original sin.

Yes, certainly we will all sin, that is pretty much guaranteed. We should of course work to sin less and to ask God for his grace in helping us do that, but the fact of the matter is that we will sin. But sin gets compounded when we don’t repent and return to the Lord. When Jesus tells us, “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” he is implicitly talking about sin because sin is an untruth. And so our freedom only comes when we admit that we are sinful because that is the truth. But like many good things in life our nature will fight against this. I for one do not like to entertain the possibility that I could have been wrong. So, I will dress things up and try to pretend that the sin I committed was not really a sin that I committed.

But if we are not humble and do not repent there will be a barrier between us and God, a barrier of our own making but a barrier nonetheless. There is an old episode of The Simpsons where Homer tries to steal a can of soda out of a vending machine and gets his arm stuck. The paramedics come and try to get his arm out but are unable to do so. They finally tell him that they are going to have to cut his arm off to rectify the situation. Just before they are about to do this one character asks, “Homer are you still holding onto the can?” To which Homer replies, “Your point being?”

That is what hanging onto sin by refusing to admit we have done anything wrong is like. We are willing to accept ridiculous and horrible consequences like broken relationships and alienation all so we don’t have to admit we were wrong. Refusing to repent and return to the Lord is like holding onto the soda can and being willing to have our arm cut off. But Adam and Eve whether or not they are literal warn us of such behavior. They gave up paradise for a piece of fruit and blamed anyone but themselves. But it is only in confessing our sins and returning to God that we may be his this day and forevermore.