

**SERMON TITLE-** "What Is Sin?"

**TEXT-** Genesis 3

**PREACHED AT-** Neighbourhood Church

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In the “olden days” the family tradition was that on coming home from church, the father or the mother would ask the children what the sermon had been about.

There was a good reason for this because children, in those days, tended to have a hard time paying attention during the sermons. In those days the skin of children was much more sensitive than it is today and all kinds of itches would develop during sermons.

In addition to that it was very common for severe muscle twitches to seize a child.

Both of these conditions were probably due to the fact that we rarely sat down for more than a few minutes at a time. We didn’t have TVs that you sit down in front of for more than an hour at a time.

Even more distressing was the tendency for mischievous ideas to enter the minds of children during the sermon deliveries- ideas about launching spit-balls with elastic bands, across the sanctuary at friends who seemed to be paying attention.

I know this is true because once upon a time I sat in church listening to sermons and each of these things afflicted me. I am amazed how much children have matured in the 50 odd years since I was a child.

And so we knew that our parents would be asking us what the sermon was about.

The story is told of a boy being asked the dreaded question, “What was the preacher preaching about today?”

In those days children were not as clever as today and even though the question was inevitable- he had not prepared himself for the answer. So his answer was a little bit stock- “It was sin.” Short, sweet and safe.

“And what did he say about it?”

“I think he was against it.”

There was a time when sin was a common theme for sermons and actually for life in general. That’s no longer the case. We rarely hear much about sin any more. As a matter of fact most people don’t know much about it. As a matter of fact- I think that most people don’t know what sin is.

But knowing what sin is- is important because the Bible talks about sin almost more than anything else.

So today, we are going to try to answer the question- “What is sin?”

Call the Sarah Dyck up for her demonstration.

Ask the question- “Who knows what sin is?”

Follow up with-

**Question- What Is Sin?**

That is a hard question but we will try to answer it today.

The Bible story begins with this setting-

**Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden with all kinds of trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Genesis 2:8-17**

**Does that sound like a reasonable instruction?**

Have you ever been given instructions that you didn't quite understand?

Do you know why they would die if they ate? We don't know why, except that was what God said.

When I was younger I remember a rule that we were always being reminded of- "Don't throw rocks near the buildings!"

We of course were allowed to throw rocks- because in those days- that was almost the only fun that boys had. We didn't have TVs, or computer games or even many "story bought" toys.

Mostly we just had sticks and rocks to play with. But the rule was- "Don't throw rocks near the buildings because if you do we will break something."

It was very much like the rule- **"you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."**

So what happens next? You can probably imagine the next step. The Bible explains it in a story-

**Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"**

**The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' " Genesis 3:1-3**

Question to the kids- "Is there anything bad going on here?" "What is it?"

Is there any sin here yet? No.

What has happened?

The answer- temptation has arrived.

**Question- What is the temptation?**

The answer- the idea of having fun doing something we are not allowed to do.

For the children of my day- the idea of throwing rocks at houses was a very big temptation. The fact that we weren't allowed to throw rocks at houses meant that there was something very appealing about it.

Eve knows that eating from this tree is not a good idea because God had said "No!"

But she was being tempted. So far however, she hadn't done anything wrong, had she?

So the serpent came up with another thought-

**"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4-5**

What does the snake say? "God is wrong. You can have fun and nothing bad will happen."

What happened next?

**When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Genesis 3:6**

And that was the first sin.

So what is sin?

Answer- sin is disobeying what we know is right.

I remember going for a hike and coming across an abandoned house.

Guess what we did? We threw rocks at it and smashed every window in it that had not yet been broken.

It was against the rules but we also felt that it didn't really matter- because no one was living in the house. It was abandoned. No one cared. I still remember how much fun that was.

And best of all- nothing happened.

But I have another story as well. There was an old church near the ball field we played at and one evening, we noticed some bats flying out from under the eaves.

Guess what we did? We threw rocks at the bats- trying to pin them against the church. We weren't hurting the church any. It was old and needed painting. So problem . . . the old rule didn't matter.

You can also guess what happened next. I threw a rock and it went right through the only window on that side of the church.

Now I was in trouble. We ran like the wind to get out of there.

**What Is Sin?- Doing something we know is wrong.**

What do you think happened next? I felt terribly guilty. I was certain I would be discovered.

**Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Genesis 3:7**

What happens when you feel guilty? You want to hide. And that is what happened next.

I knew exactly how Adam and Eve felt. Every time the phone rang I wondered if someone was phoning to tell my parents that I had thrown the rock through the church window.

I didn't want to be exposed.

Back to Genesis

**Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" Genesis 3:8-**

**He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Genesis 3:10**

Adam and Eve feel guilty. They want to hide what they did. They suddenly feel naked.

There is nothing like a guilty conscience to make us feel naked. We feel like everyone around can see right through us.

I remember my mother asking me, "Is something wrong, James? You look upset."

I don't know what made her ask the question. She probably asked it many times in my growing up but this time I felt like she knew that I had done something terrible.

**What does sin do?**

**Sin Makes Us Feel Guilty**

God asked Adam a simple question-

**And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Genesis 3:11**

Adam was busted and he knew it. I'm quite certain that if he had had a chance, he would have denied eating the fruit.

That of course is called lying and it is so easy to do and it looks like the perfect solution. We know it isn't and lying just makes things even messier but I don't know anyone who hasn't tried it.

But even in his conflicted state, Adam knew that there was not going down that road.

Instead he tried Plan B. Blame someone else.

**The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."**

**Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"**

**The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Genesis 3:12-13**

Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.

Has anyone here ever tried to blame someone else for what you did? I suspect everyone has.

And that's what sin does- it starts from one thing and then spreads around like dirt on a clean shirt.

And what is sin?

**Sin is disobeying the commands of God.**

The Bible talks a great deal about sin because it is at the heart of almost everything that is wrong with the world we live in. What is wrong with the world goes far deeper than a few broken windows. It ends up with a world full of broken and wounded people.

In some ways, war might be ultimate example of what is wrong with the world. In

war, people who don't know each other spend all their time trying to kill and maim each other. It's crazy.

And that is where sin leads. It looks so innocent to just eat the beautiful fruit from the forbidden tree. There's nothing really wrong with throwing rocks at an abandoned old house.

But sin is not those things alone- it is about disobeying God's commands.

But the Bible doesn't just talk about sin. In fact the main message of the Bible isn't about sin- it is about what to do when we sin.

What happens when you sin? You get the consequences of your action. For Adam and Eve, God had told them that if they ate that fruit they would die- and so they would die.

If you throw a rock and break a window- the window is broken.

Those things are obviously bad but even worse is the spin-off of sin. Sin has a way of getting down into our soul. It starts when we lie and blame each other and then not only is the window broken- but we end up walking around wounded by guilt. That is a terrible way to live.

But what does the Bible say about that?

The Bible has very good news

**If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8**

This verse doesn't sound like good news because it makes us admit that we sin. Who wants to do that? Of course we know it is true and we don't want to be liars as well.

But that isn't the end of the story. Then it goes on to give us some very Good News-

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9**

And that is very Good News. Even when we do things we know are wrong God is willing to forgive us- if we confess our sins.