

Sermon Texts (Genesis 3:1–6; Matthew 27:37–44 ESV)

¹ Now 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?’”
² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”
⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.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.”
⁶ So 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.

³⁷ And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.”
³⁸ Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.
³⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads⁴⁰ and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”
⁴¹ So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying,
⁴² “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.”
⁴³ He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”
⁴⁴ And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

Devilish Temptation: Adam Succumbs; Jesus Resists

Everyone loves to receive glory for the things they do. Athletes show off in front of their fans when they make a good play. Actors and singers hope that they win awards for the work that they’ve done and even become upset if they think that they deserved to win an award but didn’t. We can even see this desire for receiving glory at the earliest stages of a person’s life. When a child does something good or impressive and those around them start to clap and cheer for them, you can see a smile spread across their face, and they may even try to replicate what they just did so that they will be cheered for again. Because of how much we love to receive glory, it’s no wonder that this desire is what the devil used to cause the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, to fall into sin.

Adam and Eve were the crown of God’s creation and were given the task to rule over his creation. There was only one thing that God told them not to do, which Eve repeated back to the

devil, who was in the form of a serpent, when he first began his attempt to lead her into temptation, “You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die” (verse 3). By following this command, Adam and Eve gave glory to God. But Adam and Eve weren’t content with giving glory to God alone. They wanted glory for themselves too. So, when the devil said to Eve, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (verse 4–5), they fell for the devilish temptation and ate the forbidden fruit, thinking that doing so would give them the knowledge that would make them worthy of glory. But when they did, they didn’t become like God and receive glory like he had; they instead fell into sin, falling as far away from God as they could.

Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered the world and corrupted everything in it. That means we are deserving of God’s wrath and punishment, for we have inherited the sin of our first parents and have sinned throughout our lives. God has revealed to us in his Word the commands that he wants us to follow, which are summed up with the Ten Commandments. By following these commandments and resisting the temptations to disobey them, we give glory to God. But, just like our first parents, we want glory for ourselves and are often willing to disobey God to get it. We want to receive glory for the work that we do, for the talent that we display, for the words that we speak and sing, and in our quest to receive glory for these things, we don’t give a second thought to God or to the people that we have to ignore, push aside, and even sabotage to receive that glory that we think we rightfully deserve. By giving in to the devilish temptation to chase after glory, we don’t show love to God or our neighbors, which is what the law demands. So, while we think that we deserve glory for the things that we do, the things that we do actually make us deserve eternal punishment in the fires of hell.

While anything that we do can make us deserving of hell if it is done with sinful intent, no good thing that we do, regardless of the intent, can get us out of hell, which is why God promised to send us a Savior, Jesus Christ, a promise that he first made to Adam and Eve after they ate the forbidden fruit. The Son of God would not seek glory for himself but would humble himself by coming down from his throne in heaven and becoming a man. He would give his Father glory by resisting every temptation and by carrying out his will to go all the way to the cross, where he would die an innocent death on the cross in our place. On that cross, Jesus would crush the head of the serpent, the devil (Genesis 3:15), and save us from our sins.

But the devil wasn't going down without a fight. While Jesus was suffering what we rightfully deserved on the cross, the devil tempted Jesus to seek glory for himself by abandoning his mission and miraculously coming down from the cross. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, it seemed as though everyone wanted to give him glory for the miracles that he was performing. In fact, after Jesus miraculously fed five thousand men, not counting women and children, with just five loaves of bread and two fish, the people wanted to force Jesus to become their king (John 6:15). But now, everyone seemed to be against him, wanting him to die. The chief priests, the scribes, the elders, the people who were passing by, and even the robbers who were being crucified with him were all mocking him. "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself" (verse 40)! "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (verse 42). "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (verse 40). "[L]et him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him" (verse 42). As the crowd said these things, it was as though the devil was right there along with them and saying these things to Jesus himself.

Jesus had the power to do as they said, and it's possible that doing so would have caused at least some of the people to want to give him glory again. Receiving glory for the miracles that

you can do certainly sounds a lot better than suffering and dying for the sake of others while everyone mocks you, especially when you have done nothing to deserve any of it. So, we wouldn't blame Jesus for coming down from the cross. In fact, it would probably be satisfying for us to hear and read, since all those people who got him put to death in the first place and were now mocking him would be proven wrong and humiliated. But if Jesus gave in to this devilish temptation, then we would be doomed.

If Jesus came down from the cross, you would still be a slave to your sin, you would still seek glory for only yourself, with no desire to seek repentance, and you would one day go to hell to pay the punishment for your sins for all eternity. But Jesus didn't give in to the devil's temptation. He remained on the cross so that you would be freed from your sins; so that, through faith in him, you would resist the devilish temptation to seek glory only for yourself; and so that you would one day go to heaven to live with him forever. Jesus remained on the cross because he loves you, and because Jesus did as his Father willed by remaining on the cross, he undid the sin of Adam, who went against his Father's will.

But while Jesus has crushed the head of the serpent and has saved you from your sin by putting your sin to death with him on the cross, your old Adam, your sinful nature, doesn't want to stay dead. It still wants you to receive glory for yourself no matter what you have to do to get it, and the devil works through that sinful nature to continue to tempt you. But through the faith that the Holy Spirit has given you, God leads you to repent of these sins and trust in the forgiveness he won for you. He gives you the strength to resist these devilish temptations and give him glory by doing so.

Even though God gives you that strength, there are still times when things seem helpless. But in those times, God points you to the glory of his Son dying for you on the cross. On the

surface, there doesn't appear to be any glory in someone dying a gruesome death on a cross. But it is what Jesus accomplished by his death on the cross that is glorious. On that cross, he paid the price for all your sins. On that cross, he won you the glory of heaven. You don't need to earn any glory for yourself, because Jesus already earned all the glory for you.