

Matthew 22:34-40; John 15:5-11

My plan for today was to talk about sin and evil. Then I was reminded today is Mother's Day. (pause) Today is Mother's Day. (pause) Guys, Dads, if you haven't done something for Mother's Day by this time I am not sure there's anything I can do to help you out. But I will absolutely pray for you. (pause) Huh. Maybe I can talk about sin and evil today.

For women to become mothers children have to come into the picture. When children first come into the world they are wonderful, innocent and completely dependent on _____? Mommy... Well Mommy and Daddy. (pause) Oh who am I kidding?! When babies come into the world they want their Mommas. Right? Yeah, that's right. The baby has just spent nine months with their Momma. Momma is the only person they know. Dad is just another big person in the room. Babies want their Momma. Babies love their Momma in every way possible. In this way we all start off learning how to love God. Church, what did Jesus say is the greatest commandment? **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind"** (Matt 22:37). Babies are great at this because above all else they love their Mommas. Babies are born good and beautiful in much the same way humanity was created "good" by God (Gen 1:31).

Over the next year or so babies giggle, and wiggle, and grow, and crawl, and cry. All the while babies love their Momma. Then it happens; *TERRIBLE TWOS*. With the terrible twos comes wanton disobedience. If you ever struggle to understand what Original Sin and the Fall of creation are all about stop and watch a two year old have a complete meltdown over the color of their socks, (pause) or the fact Sesame Street goes off at eleven, (pause) or whether to have fruit snacks or goldfish after lunch, (pause) If you've ever I witnessed that kind of meltdown then you have witnessed sin. Now, you may have heard preachers talk about Original Sin as being about the process of making babies, but Oh No. Genesis 3 and the Fall are not about making babies. Genesis 3 is all about two people so curious about what they are not supposed to do they willfully disobey God's command, "Do not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:16,17). The bottom line is they wanted it their way and they were willing to break God's commandment to do it. That's just like a two year old who is willing to throw a big nasty fit to have it their way.

Sisters and brothers have you seen people; do you know people who want what they want when they want it, and they don't care what they have to do to get it? (pause) Maybe they don't care who they have to hurt to have things their way. (pause) How many of their choices put distance between us and God? (pause) How many of those choices hurt the people we care about most? (pause) Maybe BurgerKing is wrong. Maybe it isn't a good thing to have it, "Your way, right away." Maybe it isn't good to get so angry when we don't get the things we want.

So here's the deal. God loves you. (pause) God loves you. (pause) God loves you so much God created you and made sure you started out good. God loves you so much God sent God's only begotten son, Jesus Christ, to die a traitor's death on the cross for each and every one of us. That's God's love for us, but what about our love for God? (pause) Before the Fall Adam and Eve were deeply connected to the life giving love of God. In John 15 Jesus says, **"I am the vine, you are the branches, he who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing"** (John 15:5). When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil they broke the connection with God. Adam and Eve cut themselves and all of us off from the vine and God's nurturing grace and love. It was like a four month old pushing away from Mommy and refusing to eat milk, or drink formula because they have decided to only eat Milkyway chocolate bars. Adam and Eve stopped abiding with God and took all of us with them. (pause) Now,

we can be angry about that. We can be angry that we all carry that original sin. We can be angry that we all carry that original willfulness to disobey. (pause) But the truth is, not a one of us would have made a different choice. (pause) The truth is we make the same choice every day. Brothers and sisters we all carry that original sin today. If you don't believe me stop and watch a two year old have a meltdown. (pause) You just might get a glimpse of why our world is so messed up.

So let's look at the consequence for sin. The consequence of sin is evil. When humanity was created by God we were just like a new born baby in that we were good and we were focused on our Momma's love, only instead of our Mommma's love, it was love and devotion to the Lord God Almighty. Since the fall, the nature of humanity has been inclined, or predisposed, and focused to continually do evil.¹ (pause) Here's what I mean by evil. When we focus on ourselves and what we want we are sinning. My drawing time is not more important than my time with God. (pause) Your tee time at the golf course is not more important than studying God's Word for your self. (pause) Our preferred style of worship is not more important than reaching one more for Jesus. (pause) Nurturing the people in our church who are struggling to walk the paths God has called us all to walk is important. Amen? **Amen**. Reaching out to the people in the community who are hurting and hungry and struggling to get by is important. Amen? **Amen**. Bearing witness to just how good it is to be loved by God is important. Amen?! **Amen!** When we only focus on ourselves then Nurturing our own, Reaching out to care for those in need, and bearing witness to the Love of Jesus Christ all become trash tossed out on the side of the road. (pause) That is evil. (pause) People are hurt. (pause) Children are neglected; abused; and corrupted. (pause) The hope, and assurance of salvation which Jesus Christ came and died to give us are squandered. Darkness no longer creeps in the world. Darkness marches loudly in the open places to be seen/ and honored/ by us. And when we do that we need only look around to find more misery than we can swallow. Many fall asleep in the misery having forgotten the wonders of God's love and God's light. We fall asleep with the sweet venom of the devil's dreams. How forgetful have we become? How much of God's goodness, grace and love have we forfeit when we choose to cling to satan's dream for our lives? How many people have been hurt? How many wrongs have been committed?

Sisters and brothers it does not have to be this way. God is reaching out to us all the time. We call it prevenient grace. God's preventing grace is constantly reminding us of God's love and urging us to choose to put God first. Grace gives us the strength to make a different choice and grace is made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. My brothers and sisters we can do better. We can accept God's grace. We can accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice and live into God's promises. We can choose to put God first and obey God's commands. We can choose to abide in God's love by sharing God's love with others. If we are a part of the body of Christ why are there not more people in our sanctuary? Why aren't our arms reaching out to new people? Why are the words of our mouths and the work of our hands not offering healing and reconciliation and fighting for justice for the oppressed? Why aren't more children taught the love of God and the need for Jesus Christ in their lives? Sisters and brothers the darkness does not have to continue boldly walking among us. Evil does not have to continue holding us captive because it always has. Jesus Christ came that we would be free and so that Christ's light can shine through us and out into the world. What choice should we make? (pause) What choice will we make? (pause) The choice is ours.

In the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen

¹ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House 2016) ¶104. Section 3. Article VII. 67.