

## LIVING WITHIN THE LIMITS

(Genesis 2: 15-17; 3: 1-7)

Intro: We are constantly faced with:

- Limits.
- Living within the limits.
  - #Limits that are not arbitrary and capricious.
  - #Limits that are imposed for our benefit.

For example:

- Speed limits.
  - #For those of you that are old enough.
    - \*To remember the *Burma Shave* signs.
      - +On the side of the road.
  - #One had to do with speed limits.
    - \*"Angels who guard you when you drive,"
    - \*"Usually retire at 65."
    - \*"Burma Shave."
- Medication.
  - #"Take no more than 2 tablets every 4 hours."
  - #"Do not operate heavy machinery while using this medication."
- Laundry.
  - #"Wash only in cold water."

We ignore the limits at our peril.

### I. God Built Limits Into God's Creation.

#### A. Garden Of Eden.

1. There were limits.
  - a. Before there was:
    - Temptation.
    - Sin.
    - Punishment.
  - b. There were limits.
2. Not man-made limits, imposed by:
  - a. Legislatures.
  - b. Supreme courts.
  - c. School boards.
  - d. Church councils.

3. Divine limits.
  - a. God said to the man and the woman in the garden:
    - “All of this is for you to enjoy,”
    - “Except this one tree.”
      - #“Tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”
      - #“Keep your fingers off of that tree.”
    - “It’s really bad for you.”
      - #“It will kill you.”
  - b. We might wonder:
    - Why would God create such a tree in the first place?
    - Why did God put the tree where they could get at it?
    - Why didn’t God child-proof/adult-proof the Garden of Eden?
      - #My grand-daughter Sophia is getting more mobile.
        - \*She’s not walking yet.
          - +But she’s getting close.
        - \*She pulls herself up.
          - +Chairs.
          - +Tables.
          - +Desks.
          - +Book shelves.
        - \*Anything she can reach.
          - +Fair game.
        - \*My son has some childhood toys he’s kept.
          - +He-Men.
          - +Castle Gray Skull.
            - =He doesn’t want Sophia playing with those toys.
            - =They have been moved to higher shelves.
      - #If there had to be a tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
        - \*Why didn’t God move it to a higher shelf?
          - +Out of reach.
          - +Out of harm’s way.
  - c. Could it be?
    - God:
      - #Made the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
      - #Put it in the garden.
    - So that human beings would learn:
      - #To live with limits.
      - #To enjoy their freedom.
        - \*How can you enjoy freedom?
          - +If you don’t know what the limits are.

- My son has a cat, named Claire.
  - #Sophia loves that cat.
    - \*If we're all in the same room.
      - +Mommy is #1 in Sophia's book.
      - +But the cat is #2.
      - +Daddy's #3.
      - +I'm maybe #4.
    - #Sophia can play with the cat.
      - \*But there are limits.
        - +Imposed by:
          - =Daddy.
          - =Claire herself.
      - \*Sophia can:
        - +Pet the cat.
        - +Hug the cat.
          - =Sometimes it's more like tackling the cat.
        - +Even pull the cat's tail.
      - \*But the cat will not tolerate:
        - +Sophia's hands around the cat's:
          - =Face.
          - =Eyes.
    - #With freedom.
      - \*There come limits.
        - + "You can play with the cat."
        - = "But you need to learn:"
          - "To keep your fingers out of the cat's eyes."
    - #With limits.
      - \*There comes freedom.
        - + "If you keep your fingers out the cat's eyes,"
        - = "You can play with the cat."

4. Problem for the man and woman in the garden.

- a. Not ignorance.
  - "We didn't know."
- b. But wanting to ignore the limits.

B. There Is Always A Temptation To Ignore The Limits.

- 1. We might also wonder:
  - a. Why would God allow temptation in the first place?
  - b. Why didn't God create humans so that they would resist temptation?
- 2. I think it again has to do with freedom.
  - a. If we could never be tempted.
    - We wouldn't really be free.
  - b. If we couldn't give in to temptation.
    - We wouldn't really be free.

3. Notice where temptation originates.
  - a. It doesn't come from outside of us.
    - Serpent is not the devil.
      - # "The devil made me do it."
      - \* There is no devil in the Old Testament.
      - # Satan in the book of Job.
        - \* Part of God's heavenly council.
      - # Devil, as we understand it.
        - \* Doesn't appear until:
          - + Intertestamental period.
          - + New Testament.
    - Serpent is one of God's creatures.
      - # Talking creature, to be sure.
        - \* One of two talking animals in the Bible.
          - + Balaam's donkey is the other.
            - = Numbers 22: 28-30.
      - # Talking with the man and the woman in the garden.
        - \* Do you think the serpent planted an idea?
          - + That wasn't already there.
  - b. Temptation comes from within.
    - James 1: 14.
      - # "We are tempted and led astray by our own evil desires."
    - Desire:
      - # Live outside of the limits.
      - # To be more than we were meant to be.
      - # To be like God.
4. As I read Genesis 1-11.
  - a. We have one story after another.
    - God's creatures.
      - # Not content to live within the limits.
      - # Want to be more than they were meant to be.
      - # Want to be like God.
  - b. Genesis 3.
    - Man and the woman in the garden.
      - # Who want to be like God.
        - \* February issue of *The Lutheran*.
          - + Page of cartoons.
            - = Man and woman in the garden.
          - + #1.
            - = Man says to the woman.
              - "So tell me about yourself."
          - + #2.
            - = Man is talking on a cell phone.
            - = Woman says: "Who in the world are you talking to?"

- + #3.
      - =Woman says to the man.
        - “You’ve worn that fig leaf three days in a row.”
    - + #4.
      - =Woman says:
        - “I took a bite for the pectin and fiber content.”
        - “Why did you take a bite?”
  - They took a bite:
    - #Not for the pectin and fiber content.
    - #But so that they might be like God.
      - \*Knowing good and evil.
    - #They got what they wanted.
      - \*Genesis 3: 22.
        - +“Then the Lord God said,”
          - =“See, the man has become like one of us,”
          - =“Knowing good and evil.”
      - \*Up to that point.
        - +All the man and woman had known was good.
  - c. Genesis 4.
    - Cain killed Abel.
      - #He was out of bounds.
      - #He had taken into his own hands.
        - \*Something that was never meant for him to control.
          - =Life of another.
  - d. Genesis 6.
    - We have that peculiar story.
      - #Sons of God intermarrying with the daughters of humankind.
        - \*Giving birth to a race of giants upon the earth.
    - Whatever else that story means.
      - #It’s an example of God creatures.
        - \*Heavenly.
          - \*Earthly.
            - +Not content to live within the limits God set for them.
      - #That becomes the catalyst for God’s decision.
        - \*To send the flood.
  - e. Genesis 11.
    - Tower of Babel.
      - #Why are the people building a tower?
        - \*Because they wanted to go:
          - +Where they thought God was.
        - \*Because they weren’t content to live within the limits.
          - +God set for them.
5. Living outside the limits.
  - a. Deadly.
  - b. It’s a killer.

## II. But It's Not Only Living Outside the Limits That Is Deadly.

### A. It's Wanting To Be Like God.

#### 1. Not:

- a. Fearing.
- b. Loving.
- c. Trusting.
  - God above all things.

#### 2. But:

- a. Loving.
- b. Trusting.
  - Ourselves.
  - Our judgment.
    - #Above all things.
    - #About what is:
      - \*Good/evil.
      - \*Right/wrong.
      - \*Helpful/not helpful.
    - #Look at where that got:
      - \*Adam and Eve.
      - \*Cain and Abel.
      - \*People of Noah's day.
      - \*Folks at the Tower of Babel.
        - +Preoccupied with:
          - =Being like God.
          - =Tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
        - +Ignoring the tree of life.
          - =Ignorance of a different sort.

### B. So God Sent Jesus.

#### 1. One who was:

- a. Not only like God.
- b. But who was God.

#### 2. One who:

- a. Feared.
- b. Loved.
- c. Trusted.
  - His heavenly Father above all things.

#### 3. One who did have a perfect knowledge of:

- a. Good/evil.
- b. Right/wrong.
- c. Helpful/not helpful.

4. One who did not ignore the tree of life.
  - a. Even when it turned out to be a cross.
  - b. When Satan tried to make it look like:
    - Bread.
    - Power.
    - Worldly splendor.
5. Cross of Christ.
  - a. Tree of death.
    - For Jesus.
    - For us.
    - #Dying to:
      - \*Self.
      - \*Living outside the limits.
      - \*Wanting to be like God.
        - +With our misguided notions of:
        - +Good/evil.
        - +Right/wrong.
        - +Helpful/unhelpful.
  - b. Tree of life.
    - For Jesus.
    - For us.
    - #Fearing.
    - #Loving.
    - #Trusting.
      - \*God above all things.
      - \*God's voice.
      - \*God's limits.

Concl: Here we get invited to a meal that is not off limits.

- Bread and wine.
  - #Christ's body and blood.
- Taste and see.
  - #Not for:
    - \*Pectin.
    - \*Fiber content.
  - #But to receive:
    - \*Food of:
      - +Faith.
      - +Forgiveness.
    - \*Bread of life.