

Temptation, Sin, Death, Genesis 3:1-7

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Introduction

Good morning, my name is Brad and I'm one of the pastors here. Happy Father's Day! I promise you it's pure coincidence that we are preaching the fall of humanity on Father's Day—dads, don't take it personal. Because we want our preaching at Antioch to be guided more by the Bible than by our culture, we're simply carrying on in our journey through the first eleven chapters of Genesis, a series we've subtitled, "Creating Culture". Our hope is that the ways we're affected by Genesis will continue to create fresh, soulful culture in our church.

With that said, please open your Bibles with me to Genesis 3:1-7, which you can find on page 2 if you're using one of the Bibles in the chairs. The title of today's sermon (if you've already seen it on the sermon guide) sounds really positive, right?: "Temptation, Sin, Death". And yet, there will be hope by the end, which is reflected in the main idea, which says, because humanity tasted the forbidden fruit and died, Jesus Christ tasted death for everyone and lived. Here's how the message will break down:

- 1) Temptation → Questioning God - vv. 1-5
- 2) Questioning God + Selfish Desires → Sin - v. 6
- 3) Sin When it is Fully Grown → Death - v. 7

With that said, if you are able, please stand with me to honor the preaching of God's word. Again, today's passage is Genesis 3:1-7. Church, hear the word of the Lord:

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. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Genesis 3:1-7

May the Word preached here today echo in our hearts and among the nations. And all God's people said, *Amen*.

Exposition

One of the most famous tragedies in modern history all started when the makers of a massive luxury passenger boat began boasting that it was literally unsinkable. You probably already know the name of the boat I'm talking about: the Titanic. The story goes that it was designed with all the bells and whistles of the most cutting edge technology (for the 1920s, that is). This would allow it to now only carry more people in style than ever before, but to take on a massive amount of water in the case of an accident, all without sinking. Then on its maiden voyage from England to New York City, it struck an iceberg and immediately began to sink, ultimately killing more than 1500 people.¹

How in the world could a little ol' iceberg do such damage?! After all, the surface of it wasn't even large enough to be spotted by the ship's deck. Well, here's why: [iceberg photo]. If you know anything about an iceberg, then you realize there's a big difference between what's on the surface and what's below the surface. What the Titanic struck that fateful night wasn't just a little ol' piece of ice as it appeared on the surface, but this deadly mass of ice hidden below. It was more than enough to put the unsinkable to death at the bottom of the ocean.

Now, there are a couple of connections I want to make here to the context of today's passage: one to the Titanic and one to the iceberg. First of all, let's remember what we've learned in Genesis so far: chapter 1 reminds us who we belong to, and chapter 2 who we're responsible to: our Creator God. In chapter 1 he commands us from the positive to be fruitful and multiply, and in chapter 2 he commands us from the negative to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, in both chapters, we are offered a soulful, forever relationship with God by freely choosing to obey him. *And* not only is it offered to us, we are also provided with all the bells and whistles we need

¹ Amy Tikkanen, "Titanic," Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Titanic>

to obey him. So, going into chapter 3, humanity is cruising like the Titanic on her maiden voyage. We have no excuse for not completing the journey.²

The second connection, this one to the iceberg, has to do with the command to not eat fruit from the tree of knowledge. Ever thought about how eating fruit from a certain tree doesn't seem like a big deal? Especially not a big enough deal to go to hell for it! Ok, maybe if Adam and Eve killed each other or had an affair with an animal or burned the whole world down, maybe then we could acknowledge how bad their actions were. But fruit? Why is this such a big deal? Well, how we respond to this question determines how we respond to sin, which is departure from God.

I would argue that the most common way people—especially religious people and even most Christians—respond to sin is by dealing with what's on the surface. We might say, 'Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat that fruit, but they did; and so in breaking the command, they broke the relationship.' And that's true. But in focusing mostly on the surface issue—what they *thought* that was wrong or what they *did* that was wrong—we usually focus mostly on trying to put the surface back in order.

The problem with this, is that pesky iceberg again. What's happening on the surface when humanity's head considers the fruit and humanity's hands clutches the fruit, it's only a glimpse of what's underneath the surface as humanity's heart *desires* the fruit. Reaching for forbidden fruit may not seem like that big a deal, but beware: there is a deadly mass of ice hidden below.

1) Temptation → Questioning God - vv. 1-5

So enough talking *about* today's story; let's dive into it. Our first point of caution this morning is that temptation leads to questioning God. Read with me in verse 1:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. Genesis 3:1a

If you're reading Genesis out of hunger rather than out of duty, then you'll probably find yourself asking a lot of questions just from this verse alone: who is this serpent, where did he come from, how can he talk, and why is he here? These are great questions. And the experienced Bible reader will quickly recognize, according to Revelation 12:9, that

² Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), Kindle Edition, Loc 1462-1467

this is “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world”.

But if you’re unfamiliar with the Bible, or if you want to enter into the context of the author of Genesis, then honestly, we’re not told here the answers to these questions. His identity and origin don’t seem to be of concern, only that (1) he was a serpent, (2) he was more crafty than any other animal, and (3) he was made by the Lord God.³ Let’s briefly talk about each of those things:

- First, he was a serpent—but why—why not a monkey or a wolf or a goat? Well, we have to keep in mind the purpose of the book of Genesis: to inform God’s Old Testament people who they were and whose they were, so they would know how to live in relationship with their Creator God. What relevance would a serpent have had to them when they read this story? We’re not precisely sure, but we do know they were immersed in a world that viewed serpents as things like:
 - the symbol of fertility gods
 - the picture of both wisdom and chaos because of their complex, writhing motion
 - and the very definition of an unclean animal to be avoided according to Old Testament law. Simply put, to the original readers of Genesis, nothing probably seemed more anti-God than a serpent!⁴
- Second, verse 1 tells us the serpent was more “crafty” than any other animal. Being crafty, or “shrewd” or “subtle,” “carries the idea of...knowing where traps lay and dangers lurk”. It’s not inherently evil, as even Jesus himself later commands his followers to be “wise as serpents”—in other words, to be cautious and discerning rather than childish and gullible.⁵ Ironically, the root word for “crafty” is the same as the word for “naked,” which is used in the last verse of chapter 2:

²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:25

To help us understand the author’s intentional play on words here, “naked” can be thought of as “smooth,” as in “hairless, clothesless, smooth of skin...but someone who is [crafty] is also smooth,” as in a smooth talker. All this to say,

³ Ross, Loc 1510-1518; Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 80-81

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 150-151

⁵ Matthew 10:16

whereas as the man and woman were oblivious to evil, the serpent knew exactly what he was doing. The reason why this is important is it shows that evil didn't force its way on humanity—we *chose* to depart from God by listening to the serpent.⁶

- The third thing verse 1 tells us about the serpent is that he was made by the Lord God. He wasn't an equal to God, which made his actions that much worse, and probably made the situation that much more confusing for the man and woman. He had departed from his purpose to be a beautiful creature bringing glory to the Creator. That's probably why Adam named him what he did: "serpent," a word meaning "shiny" and "enchanted".⁷

And that very likely worked to his advantage as

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" Genesis 3:1b

Seems like a simple question, right? But questions are more than just conversation-starters—they stir the soul. And when wielded thoughtfully, they're a powerful means of ministering to the soul. That's why we're working hard during this series to produce soulful discussion questions for Family Groups. And yet, when questions are wielded wickedly, they're also a powerful means of harming the soul, as we see here. The serpent's question is a case study in perversion.

Jesus will later tell us that this enemy comes only to "steal and kill and destroy".⁸ So think of it in modern terms like a person who is grooming one of your children with evil intent. He draws her over to the backyard fence with an ice cream cone and says, 'Did your daddy really say you're not allowed to come out here at night?' What does that do to the child? It's a perversion without even physical action. In a very subtle way, it brings some things into question: 'Did my daddy really say that?' And, 'Do I really have to do what my daddy says?'

This is very similar to what's taking place in the woman's mind: it's causing her to question (for the first time) the very nature of God and her relationship with him. This is what temptation does. Of course, this isn't all bad, because it gives her the chance to recall God's word and remember his goodness and affirm her devotion to him. But the deadly seed is already planted in this way: the question flatters her a little. Why?

⁶ Kass, 82; Ross, Loc 1510-1517; Kidner, 72

⁷ Kass, 81

⁸ John 10:10

Because to answer it assumes that God's word is subject to *our* judgment; that we can call it good or bad; that we can obey it or toss it aside; that true freedom is being able to do whatever we want without consequence.⁹ In the millisecond it takes for her brain to process the question, this is the temptation rising in her soul.

She responds in verse 2,

*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.' " Genesis 3:2-3*

The woman corrects the serpent, but not with accuracy. And more than that, she seems to already be leaning toward his perspective. Here's how:

- In verse 1 the serpent completely downplays God's provision, suggesting that God commanded them not to eat from "*any* tree in the garden". In other words, to the serpent God is a naysayer, a party pooper. And although the woman doesn't agree with him, she does downplay his provision a little too. The Lord had said, "You may *surely* eat of *every* tree,"—or freely feast on it all,¹⁰ but the woman just says, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees".
- Also, while speaking of downplaying, it's easy to miss this, but the serpent didn't use the personal and relational name, the Lord God. Guess who then follows in his footsteps? The woman drops the sacred name too.
- Another sign that she's leaning toward the serpent is that she adds a rule that God never gave: "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden [which is actually the tree of life, not the tree of knowledge of good and evil—she's talking about the wrong tree!¹¹ But besides that, here's the extra rule], neither shall you touch it". Maybe it was just her way of being extra careful not to violate God's command. But what it does is make God a double naysayer, as though he griped: 'Don't eat—*don't even touch!*'
- The final sign is that she downplays the consequences of disobeying God's command. The Lord had said, "in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."¹² But the woman only says, "lest you die". There's less certainty there. But far worse than that, it makes her reason for obedience primarily to avoid death.

⁹ Ross, Loc 1523-1525; Wenham, 151; Kidner, 72; Kass, 83

¹⁰ Genesis 2:16

¹¹ Genesis 2:9

¹² Genesis 2:17

And that may not seem so bad, but imagine this: a husband comes home to his wife with flowers. She asks, “What’s the occasion?” and he answers, “Just to keep you from gripin’.” Real romantic, right ladies? That’s a far cry from a loving relationship. And if we’re relating to God on the same wavelength, only to avoid judgment or hell, then that is no relationship at all. So, look at how far the woman’s heart has already started to drift.¹³

The serpent then takes full advantage of this, in verse 4:

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. Genesis 3:4

So now it’s no longer a sinister question—this is a straight up lie from the one Jesus would later call “the father of lies”.¹⁴ Although it’s not as clear in English, in the Hebrew the serpent quotes the exact words of God (which, by the way, means he knows God’s words better than humanity) and then he just throws “not” on the front of it, like this: *Not*—“You will surely die.” In other words, he says, ‘Not—There will be consequences. Not—God will keep his word. Not—You can trust him.’ That means the ancient serpent’s first lie to blind the hearts of humanity was this: ‘There is no judgment—that’s totally made up!’ Sound familiar? Has his strategy changed much? Of course not! We are still tempted to buy into this lie, even though our consciences naturally cry out for justice.¹⁵

The serpent then finishes it all off with half-truths, in verse 5:

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 3:5

Will her eyes be opened? Yes, but only to see her weakness. Will she be like God, knowing good and evil? Yes, but not as suddenly divine—in fact, she’ll be dead meat.¹⁶ These half-truths are like the serpent himself: shiny and enchanting on the outside, but on the inside, *deathly* dangerous.

So, to help bring us full circle, let’s return to the example of the man speaking to your child over the fence. Now, not only has he brought into question the very character of her daddy and her relationship with him, he has planted seeds of doubt in her little

¹³ Ross, Loc 1526-1531; Wenham, 151; Kass, 84-85

¹⁴ John 8:44

¹⁵ Ross, Loc 1535-1539; Kidner, 72-73

¹⁶ Ross, Loc 1540-1547; Kass, 86-87

heart: His whispers, ‘Your daddy didn’t say you can’t come out here at night. He knows that when you do, you’ll have so much fun, and he doesn’t want you to have fun.’ What has the man just done? He’s tempted her in a way that makes her question her daddy. And what happens next in her soul may make the temptation almost irresistible.

2) Questioning God + Selfish Desires → Sin - v. 6

This brings us to our second point of caution, that questioning God plus selfish desires leads to sin. Only one verse in this point, so let’s read part of it together:

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... Genesis 3:6a

It’s crazy to think how slowly the story has moved prior to this, but now how rapidly things happen once the serpent’s work is finished.¹⁷ And take note of that—the only ones taking action from here on are humans. What is it that causes the dominoes to fall so rapidly and easily? The author gives us these three clues:

- The woman saw that the tree was good for food—that means it appealed to her physically through hunger.
- The woman saw that it was a delight to the eyes—that means it appealed to her emotionally through beauty.
- And the woman saw that it was to be desired to make one wise—that means it appealed to her spiritually through desire.

John the apostle would later describe this as “the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life”.¹⁸ Another way to put this that might sound even more familiar to you—the forbidden fruit appealed to her head, her hands, and her heart. What the temptation has awakened in the woman is not just desire, but *selfish* desire. It has begun freely departing from God. And since your desires only belong to you, no one else is responsible for them. James, who provided the inspiration for the breakdown of today’s passage, he laid it out this way:

¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. James 1:14-15

¹⁷ Wenham, 153

¹⁸ 1 John 2:16; Ross, Loc 1550-1553

To experience temptation itself is not sinful. But when it meets up with our selfish desires it “conceives” James says, and just like conception in the womb, if it’s stirring *in there* it’s going to eventually come *out here*.

And that’s exactly what we see in the rest of verse 6:

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. Genesis 3:6

Questioning God combined with selfish desires has given birth to sin. And whether you acknowledge it or not, this ancient labor and delivery is the same drama we act out every day in a million different ways. That’s why there’s an overwhelming number of people in this room who have an ongoing battle with some sin that’s probably hidden, probably debilitating, and probably despaired of ever overcoming.

So you can respond a couple different ways: one, you can keep trying to change the behavior (—let me know how that works out for you!) or you can deal with the desire underneath the behavior. Warning if you do that though—you may face some serious questions. Where did this desire come from? Why did God allow me to have it? If he’s the loving Lord God that he says he is, then why didn’t he protect me from such temptation and perverted desire in the first place? Don’t you think the woman ever thought that? It’s like the analogy of the little girl being preyed on at the backyard fence. We can’t honestly consider that analogy without facing the question, where was her daddy to chase the man away?

Ever thought about that in regard to this story? Where was God? Two quick answers:

- One, to go down the path of accusing God of not being there to protect his daughter would mean, ironically, buying into the exact same original lie of the serpent.
- Two, perhaps the better question is, where was the man? As God’s image-bearer and the one from whom God created the woman, wasn’t he given the responsibility and the ability to protect his wife? Thus far the woman and her temptation, desire, and sin has been in focus—but we learn from the text that the man was there beside her the whole time. Yes, the woman may have been deceived, but the man didn’t even have to be—he sinned willfully.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ross, Loc 1561-1563

3) Sin When it is Fully Grown → Death - v. 7

And so God was there, offering the man and the woman everything they needed to remain true to him. But they chose to depart from him anyway. This brings us to our final point of caution, sin when it is fully grown leads to death. Read with me in verse 7:

⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Genesis 3:7

Just as the serpent had spoken in half-truth, so the eyes of the man and woman were immediately opened. But not to the omniscience of God. The first thing they were opened to was their own nakedness.²⁰ What does this mean?

Well, to be naked is to be exposed, to be vulnerable to the elements and to the scrutiny of others. But the animals are technically naked too, and they're cool with it. So what's the problem? It seems as though in reaching out and trying to become God, they have actually painfully realized they are not. They now see the reality of themselves as sexual beings who are completely dependent on something other than themselves—that's not God-like! They also now see that something other than themselves can pass judgment on their bodies and personhood as imperfect and undesirable—that's not God-like!

What we're talking about here is shame. Shame isn't feeling humiliated over something wrong you've done. That's guilt. Shame happens when we have an idealized self-image, and then we don't measure up to it. Therefore shame is something that can only be experienced by someone who is prideful, as Proverbs tells us,

*¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18*

Although this passage is usually referred to as the fall of man, we might more effectively call it the rise of man, as our ancient parents (and now us) swell with pride as though we don't need God. It is our prideful departing from God that's actually our biggest downfall.

No wonder then they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Yes, it's the natural result of being ashamed and covering themselves in order to avoid being

²⁰ Kidner, 74

sized up by others. But it's also yet another way to take God's role of covering themselves.²¹ Pride just leads to more pride.

But something about the description of this brings to mind those movie scenes where a character has just killed someone and they're frantically trying to wash off the blood and clean up the scene and get rid of the evidence. The heart of what their eyes are opened to, is sin and death. Although it may appear as though the serpent wasn't lying about death, the reality is that sin was now fully grown—and the man and woman were fully dead.

- Maybe not instantly physically dead, but they knew it was coming.
- Maybe not brain dead in mental faculties, but it was clear they were now internally divided against themselves.
- Maybe not spiritually dead to the extent that their souls were removed, but they had no doubt their child-like relationship with God in a garden saturated with his presence was gone forever.²²

Thus, any of God's Old Testament people who read this story would have been confronted with these real, deadly consequences of departing from God. And the same should be true for anyone with eyes to see today.

Conclusion

Hands down, this should be *the most depression-inducing* story in the Bible. There are some things here that the Bible takes of deepest seriousness. One is that this *actually happened*. And the reason why it's so adamant that it actually happened is because it makes sense of why Jesus actually happened. In fact, we can try our best to understand Genesis 3 without Jesus, but in doing so we'd probably end up with modern Jewish thinking: that the death of humanity was only physical death, and therefore the soul can be salvaged through penitence and obedience to God's law. But if Jesus actually happened, then it proves that the death of Genesis 3 is so bad that *nothing-nothing-nothing* could salvage it besides the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in our place.

It's like the ol' iceberg again. Because the problem was the deepest desires of the human heart departing from God, then the response couldn't be to just put things back

²¹ Wenham, 153-154

²² Kass, 106-108

in order on the surface. If God wanted to salvage his relationship with humanity, he would have to deal with the deadly mass of ice underneath.²³

The amazing thing is, that's just what he did. And that's where this becomes the most depression-killing story in the Bible. Genesis 1 and 2 has shown us the intimate love of our Creator God. And that alone causes us to say with the psalmist:

*³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
⁵ Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor. Psalm 8:3-5*

Even before we messed up, it's hard to believe how much this God loved us. But how much more so after the serpent spread a table of temptation before us and hissed, 'Take and eat'? And then when we broke that fruit from its stem, tore open its flesh with our teeth, felt its warm juice flow into us, and tasted death for ourselves? What is man that you are mindful of us?! Instead of tasting and seeing that the Lord is good, we have tasted and seen that *we are not*. In fact, our eyes are filled with it. But for those who are being given eyes to see, here's what we're starting to see:

⁹ But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2:9

The Bible teaches us that we weren't the only ones to taste death. Jesus Christ also tasted death. His body was broken, his flesh torn open, and his blood poured out—for us.²⁴ Where our desires sunk, his remained afloat. Where ours departed from God, his stayed. And in choosing the glory of God instead of the glory of man, he chose us. What do you think was happening every time Jesus faced temptation? The writer of Hebrews continues,

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

²³ Kidner, 71-72

²⁴ Ross, Loc 1563-1565; Kidner, 73

Every time Jesus faced temptation and overcame it, yes, he was avoiding sin and defeating death and glorifying God, but also—*he was choosing you*. When the ancient serpent said:

- If you are the Son of God, “command this stone to become bread”
- If you are the Son of God, “worship me and all will be yours”
- If you are the Son of God, “throw yourself down and let God rescue you”
- If you are the Son of God, “far be it that you should ever be killed!”
- If you are the Son of God, “let this cup pass from you”
- If you are the Son of God, “come down off the cross and save yourself”²⁵

Every single time Jesus said no to the temptation so he could say yes to you. And so that you, knowing good and evil, knowing fear, shame, and guilt, knowing life apart from God, could finally, freely, say yes to him again, over and over and over.

Now you see why we come to this table over and over and over. In light of Genesis 3, it makes sense that the tangible reminder of his love that God gives us is food to taste and see as good. On the night that he was betrayed, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, broke it and said to his disciples, “This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me.” He also took a cup of wine, and after blessing it, gave it to his disciples and said, “This cup is the new covenant marked by the shedding of my blood. For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you announce the Lord’s death until he returns.”

Our tradition here at Antioch is to come forward and break off a piece of bread and dip it in the juice. There will be stations here in the front; gluten-free bread will be available to your right. If you’re a baptized believer, come and remember who you are and whose you are. If you’re a believer but not yet baptized, before coming to the table, we would love to help you first come and declare your faith publicly through baptism. If you’re not a Christian, this sacred symbol is not for you, but rather than taking communion, we encourage you to take Christ. He has made himself available to you this very moment. There will be pastors in the back to talk and pray with you about any need you have. As our worship and hospitality servants come forward, instead of me just praying for us, I want to invite you all to stand and pray and announce this with me from my favorite book of liturgies (you will read the underlined portions):

²⁵ Luke 4:1-13; Matthew 16:22-23; Matthew 26:39; Matthew 27:42-43; Ross, Loc 1573-1577

*To gather joyfully
is indeed a serious affair,
for feasting and all enjoyments
gratefully taken are,
at their heart, acts of war.*

*In celebrating this feast we declare that
evil and death, suffering and loss, sorrow and tears,
will not have the final word.*

*May this shared meal, and our pleasure in it,
bear witness against the artifice and deceptions
of the prince of the darkness that would blind
this world to hope.*

*May it strike at the root of the lie that
would drain life of meaning, and
the world of joy, and suffering of redemption.*

*May this our feast fall like a great hammer blow
against that brittle night,
shattering the gloom, reawakening our hearts,
stirring our imaginations, focusing our vision
on the kingdom of heaven that is to come,
on the kingdom that is promised,
on the kingdom that is already, indeed, among us
For the resurrection of all good things has already joyfully begun.*

*Where two or more of us are gathered,
O Lord, there you have promised to be.
And here we are.
And so, here are you.
Take joy, O King, in this our feast.*

*Nothing good and right and true will be lost
forever. All good things will be restored.
Feast and be reminded! Take joy, little flock.
Take joy! Let battle be joined!
Let battle be joined!*

*Now you who are loved by the Father,
prepare your hearts and give yourselves wholly
to this celebration of joy, to the glad company
of saints, to the comforting fellowship of the
Spirit, and to the abiding presence of Christ
who is seated among us both as our host
and as our honored guest, and still yet
as our conquering king.*

Amen.

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the
Holy Spirit, [come], take feast, take delight!*²⁶

²⁶ Douglas Kaine McKelvey, *Every Moment Holy* (Nashville: Rabbit Room, 2017), 112-116

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