**Wednesday Morning Devotion On May 22, 2024**

**Passage: Genesis 3:1-14**

*There is a bioethics professor named Peter Singer at Princeton University who is a passionate advocate for animal rights. However, while he shows great compassion for animals, his views on fetuses are shockingly harsh.*

*Most pro-choice advocates oppose abortion after six months of pregnancy, but Professor Singer goes so far as to argue that it is permissible to end a life at any point from conception until 28 days after birth. He justifies this by claiming that, during this period, the intelligence level of a human is no higher than that of a dog, pig, or fish, and therefore, it cannot be considered murder.*

*When you hear such statements, you might imagine someone who looks as fierce and sinister as a demon. However, if you see a picture of this professor, he appears to be an ordinary, kind-looking person. His controversial views stem not from malice but from his strong belief in evolution theory.*

*According to the theory of evolution, humans are merely evolved animals. The only thing that differentiates humans from other animals is intelligence. Therefore, Professor Singer argues that intelligent animals should not be mistreated, and humans who lack intelligence should not receive special treatment. By similar logic, he also supports euthanasia for the elderly and the sick.*

*If humans are nothing more than evolved animals, the only moral principles that matter are survival of the fittest and the law of the jungle.*

*Evolutionists who exclude God from their worldview can discuss ethics and morality, but they cannot provide a compelling reason why humans should be ethical. Without God, ethics become merely a tool for the strong and wealthy to preserve their own interests.*

*Concepts like the sanctity of life, equality for all, and democracy all originate from Christianity. These ideas are based on the belief that God created humans in His own image and that humans are valuable enough for God to sacrifice His son, Jesus. America's current prosperity is a result of relying on God.* *Some may believe that America can remain prosperous without God, but history shows otherwise.*

*Nations that once served God and then turned away from Him have often fallen to second or third-rate status. The future of America is concerning.*

*We need to pray for our nation.*

**What is the identity of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?**

Some Christian sects interpret the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which were in the center of the Garden of Eden, as metaphors.

According to their interpretation, the trees symbolize people. They claim that the Tree of Life represents a person who speaks God's word, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represents a person who speaks Satan's word. Therefore, eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil means listening to and accepting Satan's doctrines, not eating actual fruit.

These sects view the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as doctrines mixed with both good and evil. They argue that people without discernment find it difficult to distinguish right from wrong. They also use the 'Parable of the Weeds' from Matthew 13:24 to support their claim that the Tree of Life was planted by God, but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was planted by Satan.

However, this interpretation is quite far-fetched.

What does the Bible actually say?

Firstly, the Bible clearly states that God created both the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

**"The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—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." (Genesis 2:9)**

The Bible describes the trees that God made as "pleasing to the eye and good for food." Among these trees were the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God made both trees beautiful and good for food. The claim that Satan planted these trees is not found in Genesis or anywhere else in the Bible. It is merely a forced interpretation by some sects.

Secondly, the Bible reveals that the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil provides remarkable knowledge to people—it opens their eyes to know good and evil, like God. This fruit does not mix good and evil but allows for a clear and bright distinction between them.

This level of discernment is beyond human capacity. When the serpent tempted Adam and Eve, it said:

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

Eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil means becoming aware of good and evil, not consuming falsehood. However, the issue is that humans cannot handle such knowledge.

**What does the Bible say happened after Adam and Eve ate the fruit? (Genesis 3:6-7)**

**"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. 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."**

After sinning, Adam and Eve developed a new awareness about parts of themselves they previously didn't see as shameful. They realized they were naked. What they had thought was not a flaw, turned out to be a flaw, and what they thought was not shameful, turned out to be shameful. Seeing themselves through God's pure eyes, they realized how ignorant they had been, leading them to cover their bodies with fig leaves out of shame.

Fourthly, God’s command not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil indicates that humans are not permitted to set or judge the standards of good and evil. In other words, the ultimate judgment of good and evil belongs to God alone.

Humans are not perfect enough to be the standard of good and evil. We are flawed and weak. Thus, the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is beyond human capacity to handle.

Despite this, many people today claim that only they are right and others (especially those who disagree with them) are wrong. This is a very dangerous attitude.

Fifthly, let’s see what God said to Adam after he ate the fruit. Genesis 3:22:

**"And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”**

The word 'us' here is used as a majestic plural, expressing God’s presence that humans cannot fully comprehend. Thus, saying that Adam became like 'one of us' means he gained knowledge of good and evil like the Triune God.

Sixthly, God rebuked Adam and Eve because Adam disobeyed God’s command and sought the knowledge and judgment that belonged to God.

**"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)**

One of the key explanations about the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is that it was the fruit of the tree God commanded them not to eat from. Adam disobeyed God’s command and tried to become like God by eating the forbidden fruit. This is clear disobedience, and the essence of sin is disobedience.

Romans makes it clear that Adam's crime was not about consuming falsehood but about disobedience.

**"For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)**

The first 'one man' refers to Adam, and the second 'one man' refers to Jesus. Therefore, the claim that the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil represents Satan’s doctrine and falsehood is completely unfounded. God commanded not to eat the fruit not because it was false, but because the ultimate standard of good and evil belongs to God, not humans.

Ultimately, our task is not to judge by ourselves but to obey God’s word in all matters. The life of a child of God is centered on obedience. The life of Jesus can be summed up in two words: obedience and service.

So, what do we obey? We obey God’s word. That is why God gave us His word. How can we dare to meet God and receive revelations directly? Hence, we are given the Scriptures. We are to listen, read, and meditate on this word and obey it. We are to judge all things by the standard of God’s word.

As believers in Jesus Christ, saved and made children of God, we should view the world from the perspective of God's kingdom.

What standard are you using to judge events in the world today? When an incident occurs, by what standard do you interpret it?

**Sects will naturally interpret things through the lens of their doctrines, but we should interpret the world’s events through the lens of God’s word.**

We must live by the standard of God’s word, not by the standards of politicians or celebrities we favor, but by the standard of God’s word. If God says to do something, we do it. If He says not to, we don’t. This is obedience. In essence, it’s very simple. Do what God says to do, and don’t do what He says not to do.

I pray that we all live as obedient people who bring joy to God, in the name of the Lord.

**Prayer to Start a New Day:**

Heavenly Father,

As we begin this new day, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude for the gift of life and the blessings You have bestowed upon us. We thank You for Your unending love, Your grace, and Your mercy that renews us every morning.

Lord, we ask for Your guidance today. Help us to start this day with a heart that seeks to obey Your word and live according to Your will. Just as You commanded Adam and Eve to follow Your instructions, help us to listen to Your voice and follow Your commandments.

Give us the wisdom to discern right from wrong, and the courage to choose the path of righteousness. May we see the world through the lens of Your truth and not be swayed by the doctrines of the world that lead us away from You.

Strengthen us, Lord, to be like Jesus in our obedience and service. Help us to love others as You have loved us and to serve them with a willing heart. Let our actions reflect Your love and bring glory to Your name.

Father, we surrender our plans, our thoughts, and our actions to You. Lead us by Your Holy Spirit in everything we do today. When we face challenges, remind us of Your word and help us to stand firm in faith.

Thank You for Your word that lights our path and guides our steps. May it be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path today and always.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.