

## Communion Meditation

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Home Moravian Church, February 22, 2026 (First Sunday in Lent)

Why did Eve eat the fruit?

Why does anyone eat anything? We eat because we must eat to survive; and in general, the things we must do to survive are also things that feel good, so that we will keep doing them. To eat something both tasty and nourishing is a desirable experience.

Learning what is tasty and nourishing begins in infancy. As soon as a baby can pick something up, into the mouth it goes. Putting things into the mouth does more than teach a child what's good to eat; it gives a child information about the world.

Eventually, we come to understand that not everything that tastes good is good for us. We might say it's a sign of maturity when our mouths water more at the sight of a beautiful plate of fresh vegetables and fruits than they do at the sight of a chocolate cake. Crisp apples, soft pears, bright green leaves of spinach, home grown tomatoes... We can reach for these with confidence that they will both delight and nourish.

When Eve saw "that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes," it sounds like she saw *health*—not danger. Maybe she wondered if she had misunderstood the rules. As the story is told, when God told Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve had not even been created; so Eve must have gotten the news secondhand. Maybe she looked at the tree and wondered: Did Adam get that wrong? If I see something healthful and nourishing, shouldn't I reach for it?

We can relate. These days, we're bombarded with advice about eating healthy food. We're told to eat things like salmon or walnuts because they are good for our brains. Wouldn't we reach for a tree whose fruit was not only good for food and a delight to the eyes, but "was to be desired to make one wise"? If we put it in our mouths, it will give us information about the world.

Note: The serpent didn't actually say the fruit would make Eve wise. The serpent said it would make Eve "like God, knowing good and evil." But I suppose that knowing good and evil is what wisdom is. It's what King Solomon prayed for, in 1 Kings 3: "Give to your servant therefore an understanding mind ... able to discern between good and evil." And God was pleased to be asked. God was happy to grant wisdom to Solomon, who wanted it, specifically, so that he could better govern the people.

But back in Genesis, God was reluctant to let the new humans "know good and evil." As a parent, I think I get it. You want to protect your children. Knowing good and evil means recognizing that the world contains both; and if that's wisdom, well, then, wisdom is painful.

I have long thought that God's command not to eat from that tree was an act of compassion—God's desire to shield God's creatures from pain. And God keeps trying. As soon as God realizes Adam and Eve have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God hustles them out of the garden—specifically, God says, because now they might eat from the tree of life, and live forever. God does not want humans to live forever with the knowledge that the world is full of good *and* evil. The only one strong enough to live forever with that knowledge is God.

Why did God even put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden? Wouldn't it have been easier not to give us the choice to know? Yet, even while hoping to shield

humanity from pain, God provided what would nourish our growth, and gave us the choice of how much to grow. As we grow, we make more and more choices about what gives us life.

Often, those choices come with pain.

Eve saw that the tree was “to be desired to make one wise.” If wisdom is knowing good and evil, then wisdom is seeing the world as it is, and having the discernment to know what is, and is not, right. What should, and should not, be. *This is what Solomon prayed for.* But Solomon had a big support staff to help him deal with a foundational truth: Once we know there is evil in the world, we’re scared. We’re scared because we know evil is out there and we think we’re on our own. We think we’re helpless. When I read that Adam and Eve made loincloths to cover their nakedness, I read that as their realization that these fragile bodies needed something to protect them. They felt helpless because they thought they had only themselves to depend on. Until they saw that God would still care for them. That knowledge, like nourishing fruit, would help them survive.

The fruit of the tree was not poison. Wisdom is not poison. Wisdom is *nourishing*. Over and over, the Bible insists that wisdom is *to be desired*. But wisdom comes with the risk of pain, and the reality of loss. It comes with knowing that the world is mortal, fragile, and often at the mercy of evil. Each of us will come to a time when we no longer have to live with that knowledge. But while we’re here on earth, is there something else we can eat to nourish us, something that will fortify us, something that will strengthen us to live in this world with all its good and evil, joy and grief?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples and said, “Take, eat. This is my body, which is given for you.”

We are walking now through the season of Lent. We walk with our shoulders bowed by the knowledge we carry. At the end of this season we will follow Jesus on his walk to the cross, carrying the knowledge that there is evil in this world. We will follow his body to the grave, carrying the knowledge that there is loss. It makes us feel so helpless. It makes us feel so hungry—hungry for love, for safety, for peace.

God knows that we must eat to survive. God knows that we must make choices to grow. God knows that choosing wisdom means choosing pain; and God provides food to help us bear it.

Bread of life, bread of life: We come to your table, heavy with knowledge, hungry for you. Feed us, Jesus. Feed us. Amen.