

SERMON SUMMARY

“Trusting God Instead of Playing God”

Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7

When Laura and I were foster parents, we quickly learned that children who have been let down often test boundaries. They do this not because they want trouble but because they want to know if you will stay. Our foster daughter did this constantly. I remember buying her a Dora the Explorer balloon as a treat. Moments later she calmly waved as it floated away, as if she expected even good things to drift out of her life. She trusted her own inner judgment that said “do not get attached” more than she trusted love. That led to many power struggles, although what she truly longed for was connection.

I think of those moments whenever I read Genesis 2 and 3. Scripture tells us that Adam and Eve began in a childlike state of innocence and trust. The phrase “knowledge of good and evil” does not refer to morality or omniscience. Scholars explain that it refers to the discerning and independent wisdom adults possess, the ability to define one’s own path. When the serpent tempts them, it is not fear but longing that moves them. They desire to step beyond dependence, to seize autonomy before God offered it, and to become “like God” on their own terms.

Their act is not merely disobedience. It is an attempt to play God. The result is not liberation but a crushing awareness of vulnerability and shame. The burden of defining their own reality proves too heavy.

Modern research echoes this ancient truth. Studies show that major life changes disrupt our inner coherence, especially when we rely only on ourselves. Like Adam and Eve, we often scatter under the weight of self-determination.

Lent invites us to choose differently. Every day we face versions of that ancient tree. In those moments we must decide whether we will trust God’s wisdom or cling to our own judgment. Jesus shows us the better way. In the wilderness, in Gethsemane, and on the cross, he resists the temptation to seize control and entrusts himself fully to God.

Christ does not drift away like a balloon floating out of reach. Christ stays and holds us. This Lent may we release our need for control and rediscover the freedom of trusting the One who never lets go.