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Lost in Translation | *Mother of all Gifts*

Genesis 3:20, Genesis 4:1-2

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Over the past weeks we've been in a worship series called Lost in Translation. We've been taking a fresh look at ancient and even well-known texts and looking at them through different windows, different perspectives that have unlocked some treasures for us that may have been hidden from view. However, when we do this, we can have several reactions. It can be exhilarating to find new information or new meanings that can lead us to a deeper walk with God. It can also be frustrating because what we learned, what we thought we knew to be the whole story may not actually be the whole story. We can be troubled even confused. Here is how I think about it.

I grew up in small town Texas. Football was the deal. My world view at that time was football centric. It was Texas centric and then it was America centric. That's about as far as my imagination reached. As the years went by my world view did expand a bit, but I still thought football was the world's sport. We even have the super bowl, what would be bigger than that? And then my when my son was 3 years old we were driving by the YMCA and there were kids out playing soccer and his exact words were, "Where's my soccer game?" In high school I did hear of a famous soccer player named Pele, but really, soccer? In college, my freshman year I was in a dorm with a bunch of soccer players but really, soccer? Weird sport. Who doesn't use their hands? Football was the number one sport in the world. But my son wanted to play soccer so we signed him up and I asked some other parents about this weird sport called soccer. I happened to ask a French Canadian dad named Claude and he began to tell me things that I had never heard before. Things like, the rest of the world doesn't call this sport soccer, it's football or futbol. What? They stole our name. And by the way, a regular season game between rival futbol teams like Barcelona versus Real Madrid dwarfed our super bowl by millions and millions more people. What? My world view

expanded, and I have learned some new things about the world that I didn't know before. It wasn't what I was taught growing up, but why not learn some new things about the world. And while I still enjoy American football, I have also found futbol to be quite amazing.

This is how we are engaging with scripture. We were all taught things when we were growing up but the amazing thing is that we are all still growing up and there are still things for us to learn about life, faith and our scriptures. And today we are going to do that with one of our most famous characters in scripture, Eve. Last week Pastor Sarah walked us through the part of the story with Adam, Eve and the snake. Did anyone else find it weird that there was a walking, talking snake. A snake that could reason, was rational, was able to make an argument. There didn't seem to be much difference between the snake and Adam and Eve. We are going to unpack that a lot more in this week's podcast, but for today let's focus our attention on Eve. I think we may have lost something in translation in Eve's story. First, try to set aside the notion that this story is a science or lab project. This is a story that tells us who we are and who God is. This story is not or never was intended to be included in a science textbook. Let's set the scene.

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" ² 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 middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not 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." (Gen 3:1-5 NRS)

First of all, let's ask the question... how did the snake know to ask the leading question about whether God had told Eve if she might not be allowed to eat of a tree in the garden? Did the snake know there was a forbidden tree? It sure sounds like it and where did the snake get that

information? All that we know is that God told Adam about the tree. Did the snake already eat of the tree and is that why the snake was more crafty, more cunning than any other wild animal? And by the way Eve adds to the warning that God gave Adam. God didn't say they couldn't touch it. God just says they can't eat of the fruit. And God never told Eve to not eat of it just Adam. Would everything have been ok if Eve was the only one who ate it?

And, where is this conversation taking place? We think it's in the garden, but where in the garden? I think we have imagined this conversation to be right by the forbidden tree, but Eve gives it location as if they are not right by the tree.

And then how much time goes by before she picks the fruit. Well at least enough time for her to travel to the middle of the garden and stop by wherever they lived to pick up Adam because he was not with her in the conversation with the snake. She had enough time to think about it. Some translations even say that she had enough time to ponder. This was not an impulsive act. This was a choice that had been thought through.

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. (Gen 3:6 NRS)

Now let's stop here and ask another question. What was God thinking by planting a tree in a garden with beautiful fruit that would give wisdom, the wisdom to know the difference between good and evil and then tell them not to eat it? When has that ever worked? Once you tell someone not to do something what do you think they are most likely to obsess over? The very thing you told them they cannot have. So, who is the original tempter here. Is it the snake or God?

And, one more question if you head and heart aren't already spinning... wouldn't you want your creation to have the benefit that the tree gives – to know the difference between good and evil? The

answer to that question is context. If you are going to be in the garden forever you wouldn't need to know the difference. However, outside the garden you would, why? What makes us different than all the rest of creation? What makes us different than wild animals? It's the knowledge of the difference between good and evil. It's not just the difference between right and wrong. Is it wrong to cheat on a test, yes. Is it evil no. Is it wrong to cheat in the financial markets that leads thousands of people to lose their homes or to lose their life savings? Yes. Is it evil? Yes. And that is what makes us different than wild animals. We know the difference.

That is the gift that Eve gives to us. But it is also the burden. We have this wisdom to know the difference and the burden to live goodness out in our world and to reject evil.