



Two Trees, One Choice

Opening Questions:

Do you have a favorite tree? If so, which one? If not, which trees do you like? Why?

Read Genesis 2:8-3:24

What stands out to you most in reading the passage? What questions do you have about the passage?

Before today's message, how did you understand the meaning of the two trees specifically named in Eden: The Tree of Life and the Tree of Good and Evil? How do you understand them now?

In the message, Pastor David said "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil wasn't about knowing good from evil but about defining what's good and evil. So, the choice to eat from the fruit of that tree was a choice to take God's place, a choice to be our own god."

- In what ways do you think humans clearly try to choose to be their own God?
- In what way do we do it that are less obvious?

In Genesis 3:14-19 God pronounces three different curses.

- How do you understand a curse?
- How do you see these curses playing out in our world today?
- How does understanding sin as a curse over all creation affect our worldview?

Pastor David made the point that Genesis shows us that "Oftentimes the choice we have to make is between what seems good and what God says is good."

- Where do you experience the tension of this choice in your own life?
- How do you know when something that seems good isn't actually good? Give real examples.
- Are there things that seem good to you but the biggest reason you know they are not is because God has said they are bad? What are those things for you?

Application:

While sometimes it isn't clear what the right thing to do always is, a lot of times it's clearer than we want to admit. Is there anytime in your life where you knew there was your way and there was God's way and you tried to make it more complex by choosing your way?

Is there any place in your life right now where you are at a point of decision between your way and God's way? What is it? How can the group pray for you?

Prayer

- Share praises and prayer requests with one another.

Guided prayer: God, put on our hearts the people, situations, and promises that you want us to circle in prayer. Inspire us to keep praying, to help us persist in prayer, and to remember your great love for us as we ask, seek, and knock. Amen.



People are like...Trees

Opening Question:

What trees did you like to climb as a kid? Did you ever fall out of a tree?

Read Genesis 1.

In the message, Pastor David shared a pattern of understanding the 6 days of Genesis where days 1-3 are connected to days 4-6.

- Had you ever seen this before?
- Does it change the way you understand the Genesis 1 at all?
- What was the key connection Pastor David was drawing out for our series on Trees?

Read Psalm 1.

Take a few minutes and read the Psalm carefully again. What observations do you have? What questions come to mind?

Verses 1-2 say: Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

- There are 3 descriptors of what the 'blessed one' doesn't do. What are they and what do each one of them mean? Give an example of each behavior from everyday life.
- There are 2 positive behaviors of the 'blessed one' described in verse 2. What are they? What does these looks like in everyday life?

Have you ever experienced a shift in your understanding of how we experience happiness?

What does happiness look like for you when you are going through a tough time?

What kinds of thing make you the most unhappy?

Application:

The main takeaway from Psalm 1 given in the message was that if we want to live a blessed, happy life we need to be next to God, connecting to God in his word and way.

Taking an inventory of your faith practice, where do you think your next step is in becoming like the Psalm 1 tree? Or, is there a practice that has especially helped you be like the Psalm 1 tree?

Prayer

- Share praises and prayer requests with one another.

Guided prayer: God, give us wisdom from the tree planted by streams of water. Where we are planted well, root us deeper. Where we need to be transplanted, move our hearts and help us to see the way. Let us flourish and grow more and more in you and in your word. Amen.



The Burning Tree Bush

Opening Competition:

As a group, divide into two teams. Get a piece of paper and a pen and in 60 seconds write down as many trees as you can think of. In the next 60 seconds, write down as many trees as you can think of in the Bible.

What was your main takeaway from the message?

Did you learn anything new, or has your perspective been challenged?

Read Exodus 3:

Take a minute and make observations. What do you see? What questions do you have?

What do you think you would have done if you saw a burning bush tree?

Moses shows reluctance in saying yes to God and God's call over his life. What are his hang-ups? Can you relate? Have you ever said the same thing to God in some way?

How does God speak to Moses' reluctance? How has God spoken to you in your reluctance?

If you were Moses, which of God's commands in verses 14–22 would have made you the most anxious? Why?

Application:

Pastor David, in pointing out that the burning bush is a burning 'tree' bush discussed how this story is part of the tree/God/choice motif in the Bible and teaches us a number of things about God.

- Thinking about the message and Pastor David's challenge, do you see any theme or pattern in your life that comes to mind?
- Do you see God's grace in your life in failed choices?
- Do you see any place where God has brought you to a tree and is offering a choice?

Prayer

- Share praises and prayer requests with one another.

Guided prayer: God, we give you thanks for your grace, and that you are a God of grace. Remind us of us that in times of failure. Let it spur us on to choose your way. Amen.



Our Hearts Are Like Trees

Opening Questions:

What was one of your main takeaways from the message?

What is one choice that you enjoy having the luxury of getting to make?

Read Matthew 12:22-37

Making Observations: What event precipitated the interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees? How did people respond after it happened?

What do you think is significant about the title "Son of David"?

What's your take on how the Pharisees responded? Coming from the Pharisees, how significant was their declaration that "it is only by Beelzebul" that Jesus did this miracle?

What observations can you make about Jesus' response to these claims? What questions do you have about what Jesus said? What challenges you most?

One of the themes of this week's sermon was that God wants to be chosen. Where do you see evidence for that in this in this passage?

2 Chronicles 16:9 says "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." If our hearts are like trees, we are sowing seeds that make our hearts apathetic towards God or committed to him. Do you see this in your life? How can you tell the difference? What changes when we are fully committed to God?

Application:

Pastor Silverio mentioned two things we can sow in order to grow in our commitment to God and his kingdom and to see more of his power at work around us: repentance and resistance to apathy.

- What are some areas in you life that are hard to sow seeds of repentance right now?
- What are some things you can do to sow seeds of resistance to apathy in your life? In your family? In our church?

Prayer

- Share praises and prayer requests with one another.
- Guided prayer: God we want to honor you with the words of our mouth and the meditations of our hearts. Come Holy Spirit. Convict us of areas where we need to sow seeds of repentance, and show us where we need to resist apathy. For the glory of your mighty and holy name. Amen.



Love Is Like A Tree

Opening Questions:

What is your "love language" (something meaningful someone can do for you) in the middle of a hard week?

What was one of your main takeaways from the message?

Read John 15:1-11

What words or phrases stand out to you in this passage? What challenges you most?

What titles does Jesus give out in this passage and why do you think they might be significant in understanding our life as a disciple of Jesus?

What do you make of the statements that Jesus repeats in this passage? What question is the word of God asking of us about our lives as we notice the same thing more than once?

Pastor Silverio suggested that there's a similarity in the command that Jesus gives in verses 9 and 10 and the story of God putting Adam in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:15-17. Do you see it too? If so, what is that similarity? What does this detail say to you?

One of the themes in this week's message was that fruitfulness is not necessarily about behaviors or achievements, but more so a sign that the branch is becoming what it is suppose to become. What does Jesus want us to become?

Application:

Pastor Silverio mentioned two things we can do in order to remain in the "agape" love of God: [1] let the gardener be the gardener and [2] make staying connected to Jesus (the vine) more than a priority, make it your passion .

- What are some areas in you life that you need to let Jesus "be the gardener" in?
- What is something you're passionate about currently and why?
- What next step can you take towards making your connection to Jesus your passion?

Prayer

- Share praises and prayer requests with one another.
- Guided prayer: God we want to honor you with the words of our mouth and the meditations of our hearts. Come Holy Spirit. Show us where we have not let you be the gardener or our lives and lead us in the path that keeps us connected to your agape love. In Jesus' name, amen.



When Jesus Cursed A Tree

Opening Questions:

- What is the strangest story or verse you wonder about in the Bible? Why?
- Have you come to understand it better today?

Read Mark 11:12-25:

- What do you think specifically frustrated Jesus about the commerce in the temple?
- Why do you think the leading preachers and teachers of the law responded as they did to Jesus? How do you think you would have responded if you were in charge of the temple and Jesus did what he did?
- Pastor David did not address it in the message, but what do you think is the relationship to verses 22-25 and the rest of the passage? (hint: the temple was on a mountain)

Read Luke 13:1-9:

- What first strikes you about this passage, as compared to our passage in Mark?
 What similarities do you see between the two passages?
 What differences do you see?

Pastor David offered a couple of summary ideas from the passage: 1. God expects fruit from our lives; 2. God's not looking for just leaves; 3. Fruitless trees won't last forever.

- What response do you have to the idea that God expects fruit from your life?
- What is a good response and what is a bad response to this idea?
- How do we reconcile God's judgment on fruitless trees with God's grace?
- How would you respond to someone who doesn't agree with or like the idea of fruitless trees being cursed (Mark 11), or fruitless branches being thrown into the fire (John 15)?

Application:

The message ended with a critical distinction between doing things of faith and doing things by faith. One is leaves without fruit. The other produces fruit.

- Does the distinction make sense?
- Do you see any place in your life that is more leaves than fruit?
- If so, how might God prune (John 15) that area in your life to make you even more fruitful?

Prayer

- Share praises and prayer requests with one another.

Guided prayer: God, you are our life and our source of strength. Give us wisdom to see where we are trying to live without you. Give us grace to live centered on you in all things. Give us trust to let you prune our lives. AMEN.