

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost
Luke 16, 19-31



Imagine you are living during the time of Jesus and are a reporter for the local newspaper. Your job is to report on the events in today's gospel narrative. Read the story and write your eye-witness account of what happened in the space below.

The Jerusalem Times

A hand-drawn newspaper template with a decorative border. The title "The Jerusalem Times" is written in a stylized, gothic font at the top, with a Star of David (Magen David) logo centered between the words. Below the title is a large rectangular area with horizontal lines for writing, resembling a newspaper page. The entire template is drawn with a rough, hand-drawn border.

True or False?

Name: _____



Read the statements below and decide if they are true or false. Color the **T** red if the statement is true. Color the **F** orange if the statement is false. The Bible verses will give you the answers.

Bethlehem was the town where Jesus was born.
(Matthew 2:1-2)

T F

Eden was a place where God planted a garden.
(Genesis 2:8)

T F

Timothy helped Paul and was like a son to him.
(Philippians 1:1; 2:22)

T F

Revelation is the last book of the Bible.
(Check your Bible's table of contents.)

T F

Uz is where Job lived.
(Job 1:1)

T F

Twelve disciples were chosen by Jesus.
(Matthew 10:1)

T F

Hosea is a book in the New Testament.
(Check your Bible's table of contents.)

T F

Friendliness is a "fruit of the Spirit."
(Galatians 5:22)

T F

Ur was Abram's home.
(Genesis 11:31)

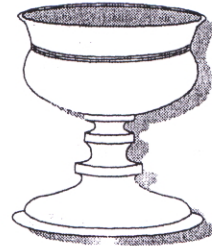
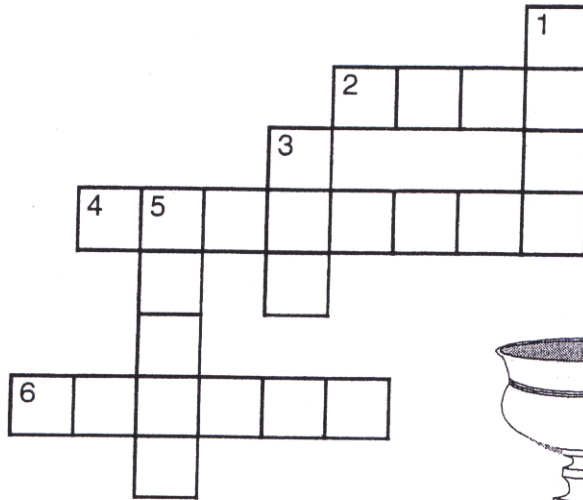
T F

Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt.
(Genesis 19:26)

T F

The Mystical Supper

Hint: You'll find help in Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 & John 13

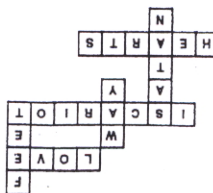


ACROSS

- 2 Jesus told his disciples to ____
one another
4 Jesus said he would be betrayed
by Judas ____
6 Jesus told his disciples not to let
their ____ be troubled

DOWN

- 1 Jesus washed the ____ of his
disciples
3 Jesus said "I am the ____."
5 ____ entered Judas when he took
the bread from Jesus



Adam

It is appropriate and fitting that we begin our meditations during this most holy and sacred season in preparation for the coming Nativity of our Lord in the flesh with the very reason for our remembrance and celebration in adequate anticipation for the enfleshment of the Son of God among us. So we seriously think about Adam whose name means “of the earth.”

Until his sin, Adam was naked and was the happy and fulfilled caretaker of the Garden of Eden. After succumbing to temptation, he tailored his own clothes and became a farmer. Adam was initially God’s perfect human creation and was in harmony with nature and with his wife, as formed of one of his ribs. Profoundly by far, the most tragic story in God’s revelation to us in inspired Scripture, Adam disobeyed God, was expelled from the Garden of Eden in whose surroundings he was then inconsistent and spent the rest of his life at hard labor. His primary triumph was lost as the first born of all creation.

“What’s that sound?” The tension in Eve’s voice reflected the new feelings in Adam’s deepest interior. His heart and mind swirled with sickening sensations, ones he wished he had never experienced, born of deepest guilt and the terror of reality and truth.

It all began when Adam took his first breath. The span of time between morning consciousness and gathering enough energy to open one’s eyes takes but a few brief moments. But for Adam, the pre-wakening experience of semi-consciousness must have taken some time. This was unlike anything else that had ever happened before - or has ever happened since - a full-grown, mature and developed man literally sucking in his first gulp of life-sustaining oxygen. As he lay somewhere between sleep and full consciousness, Adam’s first thoughts must have been, “Who am I? What are all those intriguing sounds? Where am I? What is this all about?”

Brushing restful sleep from his eyes, accepting the wide panorama of challenges before him, Adam finally sat up. He looked down at his own chest and legs and arms and saw smooth skin and at first, strong well-developed healthy muscles beneath it. He lifted his hands to his face, bending and stretching his fingers, studying the well-formed sinews. He drew his hands closer and touched his face; the contours of his eyes and cheekbones must have intrigued and compelled him, then briefly to his hair, thick and long as fingers whisked through it.

Adam slowly stood to his feet marveling at the power he felt within as he tightened the muscles of his legs and stretched outward as far as they would extend, lifting his newly discovered arms skyward. He could not comprehend that as soon as he subconsciously even wished to do

something, his musculature would respond. He drew in an even deeper breath as he became conscious his involuntarily shaped thoughts were working and expressing themselves in the working of his physical body. And it was perhaps only then that Adam saw something of the breathtaking beauty of his own body contrasted with the surrounding richness of nature about him.

The foliage was lush in verdant green and indescribable myriad colors of the plants and flowers in which he unexplainedly found himself. The fully orchestrated sounds of songbirds and animals filled his head with sheer ecstasy and overwhelming delight. "I am alive" he almost whispers to himself. He takes another deep breath and thinks, "Life is great!" He begins to walk slowly at first, then transforms into a jog and finally into dead run. Almost like a child turned loose, this man finally pulls up and spins around, his arms spread wide in exaltation. He sings and shouts and is surprised to hear the endowments of sound with which he is possessed. What a day of discovery; what a sensation of pure delight! All these new experiences fulfill him and make him ecstatic. He is astounded he can express such a wide variety of sentiments, sensations and feelings within himself.

And the sounds and the beauty of the wind whirling about him and tousling his hair are not enough to flood his senses. It is invisible and he can only see its effects. Adam senses and feels an indescribable Presence. Yes, there are loads and loads of living things surrounding him, but this is different, an inexpressible Power beyond himself. He immediately feels and becomes aware of it. All about him, over there, here, over there and everywhere is the invisible yet unquestionable Presence of a source which he knows is beyond and outside himself. Whoever it is, Adam inherently knows he is not the only one in that garden, yet he is not afraid, so self-possessed is he of stability of mind and soul. He finds comfort in this overwhelming Presence which he can recognize, but not comprehend.

He stops in a small meadow, its soft grass cushioning his feet. The glowing yellow sun warms his shoulders. "Sunshine on my shoulders," he thinks to himself, but cannot at the moment express it more profoundly. He looks up at the trees surrounding him and feels a vague emptiness in the pit of his stomach.

And then, for a brief moment, Adam hears a voice, a sound entirely different from his own and vastly in contrast to the sound of any of the other beings around him. He hears words – a language that take shape and becomes immediate knowledge in his mind. He surprises himself that he understands it so easily. It is a plain communication he readily grasps. The voice is resilient, quiet and authoritative and he immediately recognizes it as belonging to that Presence which surrounds him invisibly. It speaks slowly, yet comfortingly to him "You are free to eat

from any tree in the garden,” the Voice says, deliberately and convincingly, “but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; for when you eat of it, you will surely die.”

Adam nods and affirms his eager and willing compliance. He notes the tree to his left and right and the many more before and behind him and decides he is more than willing to conform to the requirements of the message. With all of this surrounding me,” he thinks, and absorbing with humility the attention paid him with compelling reverence, he says aloud, “Why would I miss the fruit of one tree? It’s an easy promise to make!”

Walking to a small bush covered with red fruit, he pulls a berry from a reluctant stem and attentively bites into it. Juice covers his tongue and rushes down his throat, sticking his mouth with a delightful sweet-tart sensation. Eagerly, he duplicates the taste and shoves more of them into his mouth. Who would ever have dreamed he had such sensation of taste to appreciate all of God’s pristine creation!

Then from the woods and skies, animals and birds approach him, as though mysteriously commanded to organize, these living thing, myriad as they are, group by group, surround him and he calls them by name. Once they are named, they scatter, never to threaten or intimidate him. He is at peace with himself and the world.

If a man ever experienced satisfaction by his surroundings or with himself, it was Adam. The perfectly created man was placed into perfectly created surroundings to complement him. They would blend and fulfill one another. They would exalt this man who appeared in their midst in the image and likeness of the Creator. Creatures, vegetation, fruit, even the inanimate rocky landscape would frame his human physical being with respect and reverence. Unquestionably, the presence of God permeated everything and reflected divine glory. Deep in his soul, however, Adam longed for something, or specifically someone else by his side.

“It is not good for you to be alone,” the commanding voice speaks again. “I will make you a help mate suitable for you.” He sits down to contemplate these words which warm and encourage him. He knows the voice and sees God understands his longing and responds to it. First a drowsiness then a complete fatigue overwhelms him. He lays his head down on the soft grass and closes his eyes. In what seems like a brief moment, he slowly once again opens his eyes, snatching consciousness from the midst of restful sleep. As his eyes take focus, he sees a form lying on the earth beside him. His heart races at her beauty, like him in so many ways, yet delightfully different and complementary in so many others ways.

Rising to his feet, Adam instinctively takes the hands of the woman, helping her to stand. Their eyes meet. They smile and gently extend their arms toward each other and they embrace.

Feeling the very self-same warmth of her body against his own, Adam nestles his face on her neck and her presence fills the hollowness of his heart. "A perfect companion," He thinks to himself and is so eager to find words to tell her. They communicate in sounds with values she can understand. "I am Adam," he softly introduces himself. She smiles with understanding as he tells her "and you are Eve."

Taking her hand once more, Adam walks with her into the forest surrounding them. He speaks of his own creation, of the parade of living things that surround them, the taste of the fruit and possibilities of delight and the presence of the awesome One. He assures her she is the perfect answer to his yearning and how fulfilled he is in her presence. He emphasizes the command given him about the fruit of the tree and she expresses understanding and ready compliance.

But later as time goes on, something happens. Something awful, something disturbing, something devastating. What should have been enough became clouded with a new and alien longing. It started with an innocent conversation with a serpent and a fascination of that forbidden and proscribed tree. Whispers of untold pleasure and desire seemed to reverberate within them. Conspiracy between man and woman to blatantly disobey the command of the God who created them welled within. It becomes obvious, if they have all this, why couldn't they have more?

Now totally new feelings appear and dread engulfs them. What they never, never were intended to experience now takes possession of them, eating away at the peace of soul and the joy of heart that once resided there. Gone was the innocent contentment as they experienced overwhelming guilt. And when he and his beloved mate heard the presence of God, their sovereign Creator, walking in the garden they instinctively cowered, ducking behind each bush and plant as if they were being stalked, followed and hunted.

What had they introduced among themselves? "What is that sound?" Eve asks nervously. Never before that had they lost peaceful composure. She hardly can speak, whispering barely at the sounds of the question. But both knew exactly what it was and why He had come to look for them. The unbreakable trust which always existed between God and creation was violently torn apart, ripped asunder in their self-seeking violence and hard-fisted rebellion.

Let us try to imagine what it must have been like for the first time as the fully mature and developed man rubbed sleep from his eyes and not know anything about anything, to be thrust into an exuberant paradise where everything was unfamiliar and new and then to be guided tenderly by a God who made him in his own image. His mind must have spun with possible scenarios of who God is and why He put him in this garden. His existence was an indescribable sequence of extrasensory experiences, like checking into one of those opulent spas we read so

much about, but certainly far beyond their ability to touch the very essence of created glory. Everywhere he looked he saw lavish beauty, compelling insights as he was educated and infused by the Creator to understand this place and that which surrounded him in its relationship with eternity. He who was made to arouse within himself a desire for never ending life which was his destiny, and an appreciation for heaven, had sullied all of it with negative desires. His great longing for a companion was granted him, all he could dream of was his and the affection of his wife was solely his.

Incredibly he wants more and He refuses to be satisfied with what God provides for his fulfillment. His heart is piqued with a hint of discontent. He no longer wants the fulfilling and completing company of the Creator, he wants his own way, to do what he wants to do, to be his own man, to rest on his own laurels. Sin enters and virtue exits. Initially he entertains sin, but then it dominates.

And so the only limitation given him to avoid becomes the very thing he submits to and embraces. Willing to sacrifice his abundance on the altar of his own invited and imagined temptation, Adam, the man who has absolutely everything, loses everything totally and completely. What he was to pass on to his future children as an inheritance is lost. All of this ruin over a silly bite of fruit he was told to forsake and avoid. What a foolish wager, what a waste of paradise, what a silly chance he takes.

The man who has it all takes a chance and loses it all on something shameful and inconsequential. Yet it is not inconsequential because we have nothing as his descendants to inherit, because he squanders and loses it all. He is profligate servant.

The physical consequences of the fall are diseases, hard labor and death. Adam who was meant to never die, curses us with the catafalque cover of our life. These were the natural results of the moral fall, the falling way from communion with God, man's departure from the source of life. Nourishment from the Source of Life and from the constant renewal of all of one's power became weak in man. We are now subjected to illness, weakness of will-power and abject death. Adam introduced all these horrors into our lives. The *Wisdom of Solomon* teaches us, "God did not make death" Wisdom 1: 13. When created, even Blessed Augustine echoes Adam "...did not have the possibility of death." "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and with sin death; death thus coming to all men inasmuch as all sinned" Romans 5: 12. St. Paul calls death the consequences or wages of sin, "The wages of sin is death" Romans 6: 23.

During the coming days, let us ask ourselves, "Why did our heavenly Father make man in his own image? What does it mean to bear God's image? What role does obedience play when it

comes to enjoying the good our God intends for us? And let us think of instances in our own lives that require obedience. How have we experienced God's goodness during such times? Our God saw Adam was incomplete without a partner and he seemed delighted by the woman God made for him. When married couples blend their lives to do God's will, God's initial plan is carried forward. What makes couples who have strong marriages so effective and happy and fulfilled?"

Think about why Adam along with Eve suddenly became aware of their own nakedness after disobeying God. What did their attempt to fabricate clothing for themselves signify? Did they not attempt to hide themselves from God whose company they thoroughly enjoyed before hand? Then, of course, think of the many ways we hide from God when we do something wrong because we love our sin more than virtue.

But remember that finally, in separation and deprivation from virtue, Adam and Eve wise up, as the saying goes, repent and are eventually recipients of the grace and promise of our Creator that reconciliation, based on sorrow for sin would take place, in God's good time.

Let us never forget that the celebration of the promise of our God is about to be fulfilled once again. His Son, in our flesh, comes among us shortly to restore what was lost and overcome what our cooperation with the devil introduced into the world.