

## Three trees

### ■ READ: A selection from Genesis 3

*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. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. ...*

*Then the Lord God said, "See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.*

### ■ REFLECT:

Everything has begun to unravel.

The birdsong has gone eerily flat; the leaves on the trees are quivering. A deer, browsing in the meadow, suddenly darts into the forest. Death is in the air.

Sin has taken root in God's good world like a noxious weed. Stubborn and pervasive, it seems impossible to rid the garden of it. Now, quite literally, the land will produce thorns and thistles, making daily sustenance into hard labor.

Because Adam and Eve ate the fruit off the tree that God commanded them not to eat from, they are banished from the garden. Exiled. They ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and now they are cut off from the tree of life.

But you might know how the story ends. There's a tree at the beginning of the story, and there's one at the end. At the end, the tree is smack dab in the center of the city, drawing its nourishment from the river that flows from the throne of God. The leaves of the tree have restorative powers: they are "for the healing of the nations" (Revelations 22:2). The people who live in the city have a share in that tree.

So how do we get from the tree at the beginning to the tree at the end? It's by way of another tree—the cross upon which Jesus hangs. God the Son takes up residence in the world, not like a noxious weed, but like a careful gardener, tending his creatures and sacrificing himself on our behalf. Because of his birth, death, and resurrection, we are invited back to the tree. We can eat of its fruit, find rest in its shade, and delight in its beauty. Thanks be to God.

### ■ PRAY:

Lord of life, sometimes your sacrifice takes me aback. Along with Adam and Eve, I'm the one who eats the fruit I shouldn't—but I'm not the one who is punished. Jesus, you took on the consequences of sin, willingly being exiled from the presence of God the Father so that we could be reunited with him. Thank you for inviting us back to the tree. Amen.