

In a garden, in a time beyond our sight, the human race began its journey grasping the fruit that would make it like God, knowing good and evil.

Looking back, though, it seems almost as though we never left the garden, there was evil, there was sin, yes, but the limits of being a creature meant that the evil and the sin of each one was immediate, at hand. The cowboy drew his gun and pulled the trigger, a life was ended. Though a jury might debate whether it was a case of self-defense or of murder, the connections ~~and~~ between the doer of evil and the victims was clear. Indians came to kill and plunder, soldiers returned to remove the ~~red menace~~, no this was no garden of Eden, but I suspect that to them the issues and decisions they faced seemed simple and direct.

How does this compare with a South Dakota Rancher paying his taxes and his money going to hire the man who sits in an underground room down near Rapid City who if the moment comes will push the button that will unlock the flaming monster that will devour millions.

I buy a banana, it is fresh, tasty. It was grown in another land, by a large corporation. In that land poor people look with longing upon the land of their country. An acre or two of that prime land would be a beginning, a hope for the man would can hardly feed his children. But United Fruit Company owns the land to raise the bananas to send to America so that I can keep my children healthy. If I were that peasant, looking through a fence a food grown for healthy North American children, wow would I talk of evil, of sin.

And what of coffee. Good for no one it is. But we Lutherans in our homes and in our churches drink and drink the brew made from this crop from the lands of poor peoples, land owned and profited from by large corporations.

Jesus told a simple parable once, about the farmer with the big crop who decided to retire on it. He put up bigger barns, stored his crop and died that night. Jesus called him a fool, This night is your soul required of you and the things you have prepared, ~~how~~ whose will they be?

I wonder at this story. Is it a warning against retirement, or big

barns?

On this soil Stewards ship Sunday I frankly don't know how to apply this parabel to your life and mine. Be like a bird of the air or a lily of the field, Jesus advised, but never God himself told Joseph to build granaries in the land of Egypt that the grain of the good years might be saved against the years of famine. You store grain and save money and you need it.

The love of money is the root of all evils the saying from 1 Timothy goes. I could tell you not to love money, not to find your security in things, or in wealth. But the words would change neither your heart or mine.

I am confused, from nuclear weapons to people in poor lands being kept from the land to how our buying and consuming affects helps and hinders the poor and the suffering and even our own health, by all of this I am confused.

You will be like God, knowing good and evil. Those were the serpents words. Now I can take my ease, eat, drink and be merry, as if he owned tomorrow, so spoke the fool in the parable.

I have friends who are not confuded. From nuclear weapons to revolutions in South America to what foods and goods we should and should not consume they know the answers. I have other friends who say there are not answers, God is ruling, the world is going the way he wants it to go so let it go along, take care of yourself and your own and let tomorrow take care of itself.

I know one thing for sure, all of those friends are wrong. Those who have all the answers, who can know all the changes needed to make this the kind of world it should be are wrong, and those who say this is just the kind of world God wants it to be are wrong also. Neither of my friends knows the depth of sin and evil in this world and in themselves.

People are not basically good, society is not basically good, sin and evil dwell in you and in me and in all this world. Sin and evil are so great in us that we destroy and what God has no intention of destroying.

Could we blow up the world? could a moment of anger or an equipment malfunction leave this land a desert? Could our greed lead us to ruin the land and water of this continent? Could we poison water needed for life so that



people could no longer live?

We are not God. With our knowledge of good and evil, with our power to harness mighty rivers and the atom, with our ability to turn the desert into an abundant garden and fine land into a desert, with all that we can do we cannot control tomorrow. We cannot even see where what we do today will lead. We can grow the grain, but we do not know whether the grain we grow will rot in our granaries or will feed our starving children.

God gives us freedom over today, over what we do and plan and seek this day. Over tomorrow we have no freedom, no control. The man could have built his barns today or fed his neighbors or sold the crop. Today was his to decide. He was a fool because he thought his today meant power over his tomorrow. We are all that fool.

I go up to the care center, I hear one lament over and over. I never thought it would be like this, they say. I built my life for a tomorrow but this is not it. Betty Ketterling has a sign up that says it another way, By the time you get money to burn, the fire is gone out.

Tomorrow and money and the land and the water. On Soil Stewardship Sunday they all go together. Stewardship in the sense of conservation is kind of playing God. It is taking responsibility for a tomorrow you cannot see.

Seeking justice and a decent life and liveing for people throughout the world, this too is a stewardship as what I do and buy affects people in every land. Here too I take responsibility for a tomorrow I cannot see.

~~I am~~ confused. May God help and lead us all. Amen.

Lord God, we ask that you would lead and guide us. Grant us wisdom and a vision beyond this present moment and this place that our actions might be a blessing for those in all the world and in every tomorrow that you have planned for our world. I think Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.