



Wednesday Prayer

2nd Sunday after Pentecost – Vulnerabilities

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” Genesis 3:8-13

We talk quite a bit about vulnerabilities in our trainings with youth – those things that make it easier for someone to take advantage of you. Some common vulnerabilities youth share with us include being naïve, too trusting, wanting to be liked, wanting to fit in, and even just the fact of being young. We talk about how these are not “weaknesses” as people sometimes think of vulnerabilities, but as parts of who we are that are important to recognize and understand. This way, when someone tries to use our vulnerabilities to take advantage of us, we can see it and draw on our inner strength or seek the support we need from others.

This passage in Genesis has been referred to as “the fall of humankind”, “the origin of sin”, or even “the curse of Eve”. Professor of Old Testament Juliana Claassens shares another perspective in that this “increased knowledge associated with the man and the woman eating from the tree of knowledge in this text leads to the recognition of their vulnerability.” They become fully human and are willing and able to embrace their vulnerability. “Failure to do so has led all too often to individuals, and men in particular, to think and act stronger than they really are.”¹ If we are not able to identify and then embrace our vulnerabilities, if we continue to see them as weaknesses to hide, we can either be more easily taken advantage of – or, we can be the one taking advantage of another.

We know that someone who seeks to exploit another person will prey on their vulnerabilities. We also know that we *all* have vulnerabilities, so recognizing these in ourselves and in our young people will help us to better support them.

Creator God, you made us to love and care for one another, and you made us fully human in all our vulnerabilities. Help us to accept these in ourselves and in young people as we encourage them to live into their inner strengths. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director, and community advocate for racial justice.

¹<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-10-2/commentary-on-genesis-38-15-4>