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Lent 1A
Peace, Seattle
March 13, 2011 epk
Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

EVE ON OPRAH

Whether you're of the mind to understand this story metaphorically, symbolically, or literally, the point is: Adam and Eve's story is our story—a story about human purpose, human freedom, and human limits.

It's the kind of story that gives us the human predicament in a nutshell—all the possibilities—and all the propensity to bungle it up. It's the kind of story that leads us to look ourselves squarely in the mirror and confess: WE ARE IN BONDAGE TO SIN AND CANNOT FREE OURSELVES.

The tension between our life's purpose, the freedom we've been given to pursue it, and the limits we experience along the way is so doggedly familiar to us, that we don't know whether to laugh or to cry.

The story is as ancient as human consciousness itself, and yet as contemporary as….say… an hour with OPRAH.

[Two chairs are moved to the floor of the chancel. CUE APPLAUSE (sign) as Bob Dillon's "Everything is Broken"[1] plays on sound system, Oprah comes out to applause and stands by her chair (stage left) acknowledging the audience. As the applause dies, so does the music, and she begins her lines.]

EVE ON OPRAH

OPRAH: Thank you! We've got a few surprises for you today… Our first guest is here for the very first time, yet…you all know her—or think you do. Her story headlines the opening chapters of the #1 selling book of all time. And today she's going to take us behind the scenes. A remarkable woman with a remarkable story, won't you please welcome...**EVE**!

[Cue Applause]

EVE: **[Eve waves as she comes in, she and Oprah hug, and then she takes her seat.]**

OPRAH: Eve, what a journey you've been on! For centuries your story has been passed down through Genesis for all to see…the story of the woman who had it all—location, lifestyle, lifemate—a true Paradise—and who gave it all up for...well, for what?

EVE: Most people think that I—that we—gave up the Garden for one alluring piece of fruit, but that's not the whole story. People seldom look at the larger story, they only remember the parts that appeal to them.

OPRAH: Tell us what we've been missing.

EVE: I guess the place to start is with the whole idea of PARADISE. You won't find that word anywhere in the opening chapters of Genesis, in fact, it doesn't occur even once in the entire Old Testament.

[1] The lyrics for "Everything is Broken" follows at the end.

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OPRAH: Wait…are you saying there's no such thing as PARADISE?

EVE: Nothing of the sort, Oprah, I just want to point out that this notion of PARADISE as a place of uninterrupted bliss where you lay by the pool waiting for someone to bring you another pina colada is dead wrong.

OPRAH: Say more.

EVE: Long before the snake shows up, even before I make the scene, Creator puts ADAM in the garden to "TILL IT AND KEEP IT." ADAM has a full-time job! If you think he's just laying in a hammock waiting for the next meal to drop in his lap, you're mistaken.

OPRAH: Fascinating. So ADAM has a job…a purpose. But he's all alone, right?

EVE: Not all alone, the animals of Creator's unfolding world are there, too, and Creator, of course, but there's no fit partner with him…

OPRAH: And that's where you come in.

EVE: That's where I come in. CREATOR has this idea for completing the picture, and I'm the expression of it.

OPRAH: A friend, a true partner, someone to till the Garden with, to share life's dramas with—someone to love!

EVE: Exactly.

OPRAH: It sounds like the perfect love story. But we all know things didn't stay that way… What happened?

EVE: Creator gave us tons of freedom; lots of permission to be and to do. And Creator did not look over our shoulder—like some helicopter parent. Everything we needed to thrive was freely given. But there were limits, too.

OPRAH: Limits? As in DO's and DON'T's?

EVE: It's a bit more complicated than that. Anyone who pays attention to how the world is put together can see that there are boundaries for everything and everyone. The fundamental elements of life on every scale, from the orbits of planets to the DNA instructions that power living cells—all have limits. Without these limits, life as we know it couldn't exist.

OPRAH: [To audience] OK people, hold on to your hats—we're going deep here!

EVE: The point is, ADAM and I had tremendous freedom, but Creator also set some limits.

OPRAH: Such as The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil…

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EVE: That's the one everyone seems to remember.

OPRAH: Enter the snake…

EVE: Enter the snake. When the snake began its whispering campaign—this is a confession Oprah—I was flattered. His questions seemed genuine, and I thought—why not share what I'd been told? I was happy to oblige. But the more we talked, the more I became captive to the serpent's suggestion that limits were meant to be tested.

OPRAH: You don't think human beings should test limits?

EVE: It's not that we shouldn't test limits…after all, a probing mind is one of the things that separates our species from the rest of God's creatures. ADAM and I had to do a lot of experimenting in order to keep the Garden going. Testing limits in and of itself isn't wrong; it's just that even with everything we could possibly need available, I became obsessed with the one thing Creator had told us we should have no part of.

OPRAH: Eve, don't take this the wrong way but…did it ever occur to you that maybe you ought to get ADAM's input on what was happening with the snake?

EVE: Of course! I told him I was having this interesting conversation with a new acquaintance. He wanted to know more. When I told him, he was intrigued, but cautious.
BE CAREFUL, was all he said. I assured him I would be.

OPRAH: When did you realize you were in over your head?

EVE: The day it happened, I had this premonition—this flash—just before I reached the tree, that things could turn out very badly, but when I actually touched the fruit, and nothing happened, that premonition was buried under a flood of other feelings–the enticing color and texture of the fruit itself, the weight of it in my hand—the anticipation of what it would taste like—the delight and wonder it evoked—I can't fully describe how I felt…

OPRAH: I think we all know what you're talking about…

EVE: …But the actual taste of the fruit—and this is what so surprised me—the actual taste was nothing like I expected. At first it was wonderfully sweet, with rich, meaty texture and tangy edge to it. But the more I chewed it, the more bitter it became, until I had to spit it out altogether.

OPRAH: The story goes that you gave some to ADAM…

EVE: I did. I wanted to know if he was going to have the same experience I did. So I gave him some. I studied his face as he took a bite and reacted, first, to the sweetness of the fruit, and then, to its horrible bitterness, until he, too, spit it out.

He dropped it like a hot potato, then looked at me—his cheeks flushed, his eyes filling with tears…I knew then what a terrible mistake we'd made.

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"WHAT HAVE WE DONE?" He said it over and over again…
"WHAT HAVE WE DONE?"

Everything changed in that moment. And we've been trying to recover ever since.

OPRAH: [After a pause, looks to audience]
Don't go anywhere. ADAM is here, and when we come back, we'll hear his side of the story.

[Cue Applause—sound track up with Dylan's EVERYTHING IS BROKEN. Oprah and Eve stand the bow, then take their seats in congregation.]

Everything Is Broken

Bob Dillon

Broken lines, broken strings
Broken threads, broken springs
Broken idols, broken heads
People sleeping in broken beds
Ain't no use jiving
Ain't no use joking
Everything is broken

Broken bottles, broken plates
Broken switches, broken gates
Broken dishes, broken parts
Streets are filled with broken hearts
Broken words never meant to be spoken
Everything is broken

Seem like every time you stop and turn around
Something else just hit the ground

Broken cutters, broken saws
Broken buckles, broken laws
Broken bodies, broken bones
Broken voices on broken phones
Take a deep breath, feel like you're chokin'
Everything is broken

Every time you leave and go off someplace
Things fall to pieces in my face

Broken hands on broken ploughs
Broken treaties, broken vows
Broken pipes, broken tools
People bending broken rules
Hound dog howling, bullfrog croaking
Everything is broken

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