



AbundantLifeChurch

SIMI VALLEY

Sunday, August 30, 2026 - A Tale of Two Trees - Pastor John Henry Raskin

Big Idea: The whole story of Scripture can be seen through two trees: the forbidden tree where humanity seized independence from God, and the tree of life ultimately opened to us through Jesus Christ, who was hung on the tree of the cross.

The First Tree	The Second Tree
The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented humanity's desire to define good and evil apart from God.	The tree of life represented life received as God's daily gift, not something seized by human will.
Adam and Eve reached out to take what God had forbidden, bringing sin, shame, death, and separation.	Jesus stretched out His hands on the cross to bear our guilt, punishment, curse, and death.
The way back was guarded by cherubim and a flaming sword.	The sword fell on Christ, and the temple veil was torn from top to bottom, opening the way back to God.

Key Scriptures

Genesis 2:8–9; 2:15–17; 3:22–24 — God planted the garden, gave humanity life, warned against rebellion, and guarded the way to the tree of life after sin entered the world.

Zechariah 13:7; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24–25 — The sword and curse fall on Christ, who bears our sins on the tree so we might live for righteousness.

John 14:6; John 6:54–57; Revelation 22:1–2, 14; Revelation 2:7 — Jesus is the way, the life, and the One who gives His people the right to eat from the tree of life.

Sermon Summary

God's expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden was not cruelty, but mercy. If sinful humanity had eaten from the tree of life after rebellion, we would have been locked forever in death-like sinfulness. God guarded the tree because He loved us.

The tree of life teaches that life is not something we possess; it is something we receive from God. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil reveals the heart of sin: the desire to decide right and wrong apart from God.

At Calvary, the two trees meet. Jesus took the harvest of the first tree—guilt, shame, curse, wrath, and death—and became for us the tree of life. Through His death, the way back to God is opened.

For Reflection

- Where am I still trying to define good and evil for myself instead of surrendering to God?
- Am I feeding on Christ daily through His Word, prayer, trust, and obedient love?
- What would it look like this week to drop the old fruit and receive life from Jesus with an open hand?

Takeaway: Every day we stand between two trees. Repentance means dropping the fruit of self-rule; faith means receiving life from Jesus, the One who took the sword for us and opened the way home.

A TALE OF TWO TREES

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we used the story of Jesus' first miracle in the Gospel of John to reveal the identity of Jesus as Creator God in Genesis.

There is something comforting and beautiful in knowing that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is truly Creator God, and that He is full of loyal love for mankind.

Considering that Jesus is the living word of God... One of the things that I attempt to do from this pulpit is to reveal the thread of Jesus that begins at the beginning and runs all the way to the end of Revelation in His Word to us, the Bible.

Today the Spirit put it on my heart to speak about how and why the God that made us and loves us, had to separate us from Himself after our rebellion in the garden,

and what He has done and is still doing to bring us back into right relationship with Him in the garden paradise forever.

It's really a story of two trees.

Let's go to Genesis to see where the story begins.

GENESIS 2:8-9

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And then a few verses later, same chapter, God gives Adam (which is the Hebrew word for mankind) His first command.

Genesis 2:15- 17

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Now I should point out here something that many people miss in this piece of scripture...

That when it says that God made every tree in the garden good for food and that the tree of life was in the midst of the garden we can infer with clarity that Adam and Eve ate freely from the tree of life before the Fall.

I won't belabor the rest of the story right now, because you've heard it in various versions all your life.

But long story short God banished Adam and Eve out from the garden when they had eaten of the tree of which he commanded them “do not eat”.

Before he banished them however, God shed the first blood in the garden as a kindness to them by killing an animal and giving them the skins to cover their shame, which was the result of their disobedience.

Then we see this curious scripture...

Genesis 3:22-23

22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” — 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

This is the second time in the scriptures that we see the Lord God refer to himself as Us, the first being in Genesis 1:26, when God said, “let Us make man in our own image”.

The reason I mention this here is because although man was made in God's image, he was not God, but a special creation meant to work alongside God to fulfill His purposes.

Satan's most effective lie was to imply that the reason God withheld the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from Adam and Eve was because if they ate of it, they would be like Him and that He was threatened by that.

But here is what that temptation was really offering...

It was not offering information, like Adam and Eve simply did not have enough knowledge yet.

In the garden, they were already receiving everything they needed to know from God.

Satan was offering them the right to decide for themselves what was right and what was wrong — without God who is the only righteous moral judge.

Satan's lie was prophetic however, in this sense...

We did become gods of our own lives when we ate of the fruit of that forbidden tree.

God knew that we were going to bring our own ideas of what is good and what is evil into His good world and pollute it with greed, violence, idolatry and well... pollution.

Now I want to point out here that God was not, is not and never will be threatened by anything that His creations do.

He is also not surprised by anything that happens within His creation.

So, if God is not threatened by human beings who are trying to be like God and have broken His one commandment and eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil...

why would He then not want them to eat any more of the fruit from the Tree of Life?

And the answer is again that it is His love for mankind.

If His beloved creations, made in His image, had been allowed to partake of the Tree of Life AFTER they had rebelled and eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, then we would have been locked perpetually, eternally in a state of death-like sinfulness. An eternal living hell.

Separated from a God who cannot be in the presence of sin.

A question I have been asked by people who were actively in their sin is this...

“If God didn't want me to sin, why would he have given me free will?”

And the answer I have always given them is this...

Without free will there is no ability for a creation to love their creator.

No puppet or robot is among God's creations.

As it happens, interestingly, these are creations of man and that's a whole other story.

God made human beings in His own image, and He loves us fiercely and tremendously and as it happens, at great sacrifice to Himself.

We'll get back to that.

But for the moment let's go back to the story about the trees...

So here we see that there were two special trees in the garden.

One that God gives to us and is life when we partake of it and the other that brings death when we take it against God's Will.

And now, let's look at what God did to keep us from taking of the tree of life in our sinful state.

Genesis 3:24

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Have you ever been locked out of your own house?

You know the door. You know what's on the other side of it — your bed, your kitchen, everything that makes you comfortable. It is your home.

It belongs to you. It's where you are meant to be. But you can't get to it. You are locked out.

That is exactly where the whole human race has been standing since our rebellion.

Outside the locked door of our true intended home.

After Adam and Eve sinned, we were expelled from the garden, for our own good.

Here is something that you should know...

God did not tear the tree of Life out of the ground. He simply put a guard in front of it.

Just for the record... cherubim in the Bible are not cute chubby little angels like Cupid. I have never been able to figure out where that one even came from...

The cherubim are big scary powerful angels and if that were not enough to keep us out, there is also that fiery sword flashing impenetrably back and forth.

So, let's talk for a minute about what the tree of life really is...

First, we should understand what the tree was not a magic charm.

There is not the faintest hint anywhere in Scripture that the fruit held some chemical property of immortality.

God planted this tree in the middle of the garden that gave mankind eternal Life as a gift.

Not something to be seized or taken by our own will or force but a gift to be received day by day, moment by moment from the Hand of a loving God.

The tree was what the older theologians called a sacramental sign — a visible pledge of an invisible gift.

Adam did not have life in himself. No creature does.

Adam had life because he received it, freshly, daily, from the fruit of the tree of Life as a gift from God who had breathed it into him in the beginning.

And so the tree stood in the middle of the garden as a living sermon, preached to Adam every morning of his innocence: your life is not your own. It is given. Come and receive it again today.

Let me give you another illustration. A baby does not make her own milk. She receives it.

You and I do not make our own air. We breathe what is given to us.

That is what his dependence on the tree of life was teaching Adam every single day:

Your life is not something you own. It is something you receive from God, fresh, every day.

Now let's hold onto that, because everything else in this message hangs on it.

In the Bible, life is never something you possess. It is always something you receive and for which you are grateful.

Now here is another thing that we should be aware of... The tree of Life does not disappear from the Bible after Genesis Chapter 3.

If you turn all the way to the very last book, Revelation, you will find it still standing — in a city, at the end of all things, with the curse finally lifted.

John the Beloved tells us the vision the angel showed him...

REVELATION 22:1-2

And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life,

**which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month.
The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

The Bible tells a story that begins in a garden and it ends in a city, and in both there stands a tree. It is the same tree.

Between that garden and that city lies a great deal of our history... flood and famine, patriarchs and prophets, kings and captivity, a manger and a cross and an empty tomb...

but the tree is there on the first pages of the Bible and the tree is there on the last page, and Scripture never once tells us that it died.

Fruit every month. Leaves that heal.

And God never gave up on getting His people back to that tree. Not for one page of the Bible.

So, what was His plan? What did He do? And how should we respond?

The bad news is that the cherubim and the Sword still bar our way back if we try to get there on our own terms.

But here is the good news.

Five hundred years before Jesus was born, God spoke through the prophet Zechariah about that very sword.

ZECHARIAH 13:7

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,” says the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”

The sword that guarded Eden's gate would one day be commanded to strike — not us, but God's Shepherd. His own Son, Himself, made flesh.

Now look at this too. The Bible even calls the cross a “tree.”

GALATIANS 3:13

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),

1 PETER 2:24-25

who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

Think about the difference between two trees and two sets of hands.

At the first tree, a man reached out his hand to grab something that was not his to take.

At the second tree, the Cross, the Son of God stretched out His hands and let men nail Him there — to take something that WAS ours to take : our guilt, our punishment, our curse.

And at Calvary, at the very moment Jesus died on that tree, something happened at the temple, a few hundred yards away:

MATTHEW 27:50-51

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

That curtain, which blocked sinful people from the presence of God, and which was embroidered with those very Cherubim that we saw at the end of Genesis chapter 3...

Tore completely open...And it tore — not from the bottom up, like a man might tear it trying to force his way in, but from the top down.

Beloved, God tore it open Himself. We did not have to fight our way back in. He opened the door from His side.

That same night, on His way to the cross, Jesus had already told His friends who He was:

JOHN 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Let’s put two verses side by side.

Genesis says God guarded “the way” to the tree of life.

Jesus says, “I am the way.”

The One who guarded the door has become the door.

But Jesus does not just open the way — He tells us how we can actually get to eat from that tree of Life.

JOHN 6:54-57

eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

Trōgō is the Greek word for “feeds” in verse 57 — it’s an ordinary, everyday word for chewing your daily food.

Jesus is not talking about taking a single bite one time.

He is talking about consuming Him, depending on Him, the way you depend on your breakfast, lunch and dinner for sustenance — every single day the way that Adam ate daily from the tree of Life before the Fall.

Believing in Jesus. Coming to Jesus. Trusting Jesus, every single moment of every single day.

Feeding on His goodness.

You can’t earn that fruit. You do not grab it. You reach out an open, empty hand and receive it from Him.

The way to the tree of life was opened when the sword that guarded it fell on Jesus instead of us.

And everyone who comes to Him by faith walks right past that sword, through that torn curtain, back into the garden.

So, we have spoken at length about the tree of life.

We should now speak again of the other tree.

What exactly was wrong with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Not that knowledge is evil.

Not that God wanted Adam kept ignorant.

Listen again to the serpent’s promise: **“You will be like God, knowing good and evil.”**

In Hebrew, to “know good and evil” is not primarily a matter of information.

It is a matter of determination — the authority to decide, to define, to sit as judge over what shall be called good and what shall be called evil.

That fruit was an offer of moral autonomy.

It was an offer to move the scepter of control out of God’s hand and into mine — to sit on His throne, to become the one who decides what is right and what is wrong.

And that, dear family, is the essence of every sin you and I have ever committed. Not merely the breaking of a rule. The usurping of a throne.

Now let’s hold the two trees side by side and see the pattern.

From either tree you will have to eat to receive something.

The question was never the fruit; the question was always the source.

The fruit of the first tree was seized against God’s will.

The fruit of the second tree is given because of God’s love.

The first Adam, and we all, stole the right to become gods of our own lives when we disobeyed the one command that God gave us.

but now listen to how Paul describes the Christ, the second Adam:

Philippians 2:6-7

who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Where the first Adam grasped at an equality with God that was never his, the eternal Son — who possessed it by right, refused to clutch it and emptied Himself instead.

The whole gospel turns on the difference between a closed fist and an open hand.

And that is why this still matters to you today.

You can't eat of the tree of life while your hand is still full of fruit from the other tree.

So long as you insist on being the one who defines good and evil for your own life, you are still feeding at the tree that kills.

The fruit of the tree of life is not offered to the self-righteous, the selfish or the self-governing.

It is offered to the surrendered.

That is what repentance is all about.

Repentance is not merely feeling badly about the fruit you are still holding. Repentance is dropping it.

It is the abdication of a throne you were never given.

And faith is the empty hand held out to receive what pride can never take, but is given freely to the humble.

And here, at last, is where the two trees meet.

At Calvary the Lord Jesus took into His own body the entire harvest of the first tree.

He took the guilt, the shame, the curse, the death, the sword, the wine of God's wrath for sin and He swallowed it whole.

And having taken the bitter fruit of the tree of death into Himself, He becomes for us the tree of life.

So, this is what that means for you on Monday morning...

You are still standing every day between two trees.

Every time you decide for yourself what is good regardless of what God has said, you have reached again for the old fruit.

Every time you take God at His word and obey Him when obedience costs you something, you have eaten from the new.

Sanctification is simply learning, meal by meal, to eat from the right tree. The one that gives life. Jesus.

So, for anyone in this room who has never come to Jesus, here is what is standing between you and the abundant life: not a locked door, but a guarded one.

And the only way through is the Man who already took that sword for you.

He is not standing at that gate to keep you out.

He is reaching out His nail-scarred hands to you in love.

Come to Him today.

If you are a Christian, you already have the right to eat from that tree. Now the only question is whether you are actually feeding on Him daily.

Are you devouring His Word, earnestly in prayer, walking out His good works in loving obedience or are you living like the garden is still closed to you.

If that is you, remember what we learned last week. We need to taste and see that the LORD is good.

And if you walked in this morning barely holding on... the Bible says the leaves of that tree are “for the healing of the nations.”

Whatever is broken in you, there is healing on that tree for it. His name is Jesus.

We started today by talking about God’s loyal love for His beloved creation mankind and how even the expulsion from the garden was an act of mercy to counteract the negative effects of our own free will.

Here is how that story begins and ends.

In Eden, there was a garden, a tree, a sword, and a gate that shut behind us.

At the end of the Bible, there is a city, the same tree, and the curse is gone.

And of that city, John writes: “Its gates shall not be shut at all by day, for there shall be no night there.”

No sword. No shut gate.

Only the tree, and the river, and the face of God — because a Man was hung on a tree so that we could eat from one.

Let’s end today with God’s loyal, loving promise to those who choose to Kiss the Son and surrender to Him with their whole lives.

REVELATION 22:14

Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

REVELATION 2:7

To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Let's pray...