

1

Christmas Trees and Fig Leaves

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. 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.

—Genesis 3:7–8

Every year the Christmas trees travel down the highway from Canada in large trucks. The trees look like needles with their branches folded up and wrapped in nylon netting. I usually see the first truckload a week or so before Thanksgiving while I am traveling from parish to parish throughout the Diocese of New Hampshire. I must admit that the first feeling I have is very far from the excitement

and glee I remember feeling as a little boy. Then, my sister and I, upon seeing the first sign of an open Christmas tree lot or the first colored lights festooning a house or a shrub in our suburban Minneapolis neighborhood, would giggle with excitement for Christmas and begin the countdown of days. It was the glow of the season that captured me, even more than the hope of a new bicycle, sled, or chemistry set. What made Christmas special was the sense of being in the presence of the holy, which back then was conveyed to me, believe it or not, by the particular way red and blue and green lights would reflect off white snow. That glow would give enough light for me to aim my sled toward the bottom of the run in my neighbor's backyard. It's hard to conceive how stringing lights on the evergreen trees in the yard was all it took to convey to me the presence of God, a presence that I could enjoy for hours in the dark and the cold. That's all it took: colored lights on Christmas trees.

Nowadays it's different. I'm middle age, middle class, with debts, mortgages, college tuitions, a cramped schedule, lists of chores and shopping, and difficult conversations to negotiate. Seeing a Christmas tree can bring with it a certain sense of gloom, of portent: I won't be able to fit it all in. I won't be able to afford what's asked of me, either emotionally or financially. Add to this that sighting a Christmas tree or hearing Christmas carols at the local supermarket shortly after Halloween brings the sense that time has slipped by once again, a whole year, and what is there to show for it? Far from the childhood glee and exhilaration, the dread that a Christmas tree incurs is real.

After some reflection, I have discovered that the annual feeling that the Christmas tree stirs in me is more existential than just the seasonal blues or the SAD—Seasonal Affective Disorder—that can come with a northern winter. Perverse as it may seem to the consumer-driven

Christmas industry that bids our hearts be cheery, I have come to the conclusion that contemplation on the origin of the old Tannenbaum can bring us to remember the experience of shame. Acknowledging the dynamic of shame may remind us of how our having fallen out of God's warm glow has been met with the restorative infusion of love in God's taking on our flesh in Jesus, the event we await in Advent.

To see how this works will require us to go back to the events that took place, as the Creation story goes, around the Paradise Tree in the Garden of Eden. It is not very well known, far less celebrated, that December 24 is the Feast Day of Adam and Eve. Rarely seen as deserving veneration, these two are in a sense exiled from the family history of humanity for having disobeyed God in the Garden and for introducing sin into the mix. But on the eve of Christmas, their exile is lifted, and they, along with the Paradise Tree, which is the object of their temptation, are allowed to come into our homes. It doesn't take too much imagination to see how the brightly colored glass bulbs hanging from our fir trees resemble the fruit that was forbidden.

Paradise

Let's go back to that first story in our family history. If one searches the opening three chapters of Genesis looking for some indication of what it was like for Adam and Eve to be in that blessed state before the Fall, one might be surprised at how little we can say. Any emotional and psychological descriptions of that blessed state are absent. We can infer that they are in a state of bliss and contentment, but there is really no explicit indication that they are, in fact, happy. The best clue that we can take of some positive feeling from either of them comes from Adam upon his introduction to Eve after he wakes from

that mysterious divine anesthesia needed for the extraction of his rib. “Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh . . .’” (Genesis 2:23a). This “at last” would indicate some relief at no longer having to tend the Garden alone. It’s as though Adam is saying, “Finally, after all this time, I have someone to talk to who can understand me because she shares what it means to have flesh like mine!” But even that might be a projection, an insertion of our own experience, into the Bible passage. Again, the Scripture is quite silent about the inner life of our spiritual ancestors. The only thing we can say for certain, based on what the Bible actually says, is found in the following verses: “And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25).

It’s startling when one thinks of it, really. After all, though the word is actually not used in Genesis, we have come to describe the Garden of Eden as paradise and to think of it as a time and place as close to heaven on earth as we have ever come. This is in the days before poverty, racism, hunger, war, and every other kind of depredation. But the closest we get to a description of what we have come to believe was the bliss before the Fall is that they are not ashamed. Upon first realizing this, one might feel a sense of deep betrayal by the Bible. Part of us might want to say, “What the heck, Holy Writ? Is that all you can say about what it was like for Adam and Eve when they had everything going for them? No expressions of ecstatic happiness? No songs of mirth and exuberance? All you can say is that they were not ashamed?”

It’s safe to say that western culture is keenly interested in the inner life. From the self-disclosive *Confessions* of Augustine, to the “confessional” poets of the twentieth century, to the courageously revealing spiritual writings of Anne Lamott (just to name a few), we are interested in what’s going on in the human heart. We read these writers with

interest partly because we need some reassurance that we are not alone in our struggles in life. But Scripture is often reticent when it comes to the interior world. And so it might be striking that the state of mind of Adam and Eve is not of much interest to the Scripture writers, except by their having registered the absence of a feeling that is so deeply rooted in the human experience—that of shame.

Could it be that our modern interests, or some might say even obsession, in personal fulfillment or purpose, in the avoidance of depression or anxiety—none of which are mentioned by name in the Scriptures—all boil down to the experience of shame? Though we pine for the days of unmitigated bliss that we project onto our dear spiritual ancestors Adam and Eve, the Bible actually doesn't ascribe any other emotion to them besides the absence of shame. Some in my (baby boomer) generation may remember the nostalgic anthem sung after the great "Festival of Peace and Music," better known as Woodstock. As the song went, "We gotta get back to the garden!" as though the lack of porta-potties, the mud, the drugs, the lack of food and water, and the unreported sexual assaults and humiliation that took place in those fields in Upstate New York somehow realized the Edenic ideal. Projection and denial are powerful things.

Disobedience and Awareness

After eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the eyes of Adam and Eve are opened,

... and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening
... (Genesis 3:7–8)

The story is called an etiology; that is, it serves to explain or give a reason for a condition. Woven into the human condition is the experience of shame. To be a human being means to feel shame. The biblical author of this part of the creation story seems to be offering an answer to the pervasive and inescapable feeling that makes us want to hide from our God and our neighbor. After partaking of the fruit of the tree that was forbidden them, they suddenly are made aware of themselves and their vision is made clear about their condition of nakedness.

To use the language that theologians have adopted, they fall from a state of grace, which seems to be akin to a state of ignorance. The awareness of themselves as naked coincides with the knowledge of having disobeyed God. The effect of the disobedience is a sudden vision of themselves *in comparison* to their fellow creature and certainly to God. Whereas, previous to the serpent's temptation, there was no hint that they were separate from God, now they recognize that God is *out there somewhere, lurking*.

At the sound of God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, Adam and Eve panic and run to hide among the other trees in the garden, revealing their awareness of God's judgment and their separateness, even before God expresses disappointment and judgment upon them. Adam and Eve recognize their fall prior to God's stern encounter with them. Their creatureliness—having been created by a creator whom they are not—puts them in a disfavored state and results in their shame. Seeing themselves as naked is seeing themselves as creatures of God, as having been formed of one who is infinitely greater, more powerful, *infinitely more* than who they are. Adam and Eve come upon this feeling all on their own, before God asks them anything about why they are wearing clothes or why they are lurking

behind trees, and before God has expressed displeasure for their having trespassed the commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree.

The Inner Mind

Teachers of Buddhist meditation and mindfulness sometimes refer to the plight of the “comparison mind”—the habit we all have of rating ourselves for better or worse in relation to others. When did you first reckon with the truth that you didn’t run as fast as your sibling, or were not as quick in mathematics as your classmate? And, conversely, when did you first derive a sense of comfort from realizing that you lived in a more stylish and expensive part of town than others, or that your parents’ car was nicer than the cluttered minivan of your friends?

If we are honest, we know that such comparisons are silently going on in our minds all the time. Our minds are busy making comparisons even while we are sitting in our pews in church: “Who gets to sit up there next to the altar?” “I could read that text from Ezekiel far better than he did!” Or, perhaps even more often, “I am not as put together as the people in this congregation. Compared to all these saints, my life is a complete wreck. What right do I have to be here? Please, God, don’t make me have to say anything to anyone. Let me just sit here and pray. Maybe then I can get out of here safely without being revealed for the fraud and scoundrel that I really am!”

The framers of the Book of Common Prayer seem to have taken all this mental static into account when they chose to open the liturgy of the Holy Eucharist with the prayer that is known as the Collect for Purity:

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by

the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (BCP, 355)

I notice it is becoming more common in the churches that I visit to adopt the practice of inviting the whole congregation to pray the words of this prayer, instead of just the priest. In doing so, it's as though we all move out from our cover behind the trees, where Adam and Eve sought hiding, and we risk allowing ourselves to be open to the One who already knows what is in the recesses of our hearts and our memories.

The passage in Genesis does not dwell on the emotional trauma that accrues to Adam and Eve upon their realization that they are not God and that in each other's presence they would need to cover themselves in order not to be seen as insufficient in their nakedness. There are very few monologues in the Scriptures where a character benefits from an aside, like in Shakespeare when the action of the play pauses to allow the character to reveal the inner workings, doubts and quandaries, or strategy making. However, that reticence of the Scriptures does not prevent us from pausing in our reading to imagine the inner life of the figures we meet there who, over a lifetime of prayer and reflection, become in a real sense part of our own life stories, dwelling in our inner life.

Adam and Eve are a gift of the Scriptures to us. When we read about them, we are actually reading about ourselves, and each time we encounter them, another facet of their story comes to light. Just like when we look at a family photo album and new information is often revealed to the viewer, even though the photograph itself does not change from year to year. We change, and often the people with whom we are turning the pages of the album are not the same. New stories are told and new truths are disclosed in a small detail that is noticed or shared for the first time. Adam and Eve occupy a page or two in

our family album over which it is profitable to pause and reflect. What must have been going through their minds as they punctured the holes in the fig leaves to sew those britches together? I imagine that it was not a shared task, but that each went behind their own tree to learn how to accomplish this chore apart. That is certainly one sorry effect of shame: isolation. Although they had been charged with the stewardship and tending of the garden in the beginning, it probably did not feel like doing chores, but sewing fig leaves together could very well represent the dreadful introduction of drudgery.

Samuel Beckett and O

When sitting at the family album of Scripture contemplating Adam and Eve at the painful moment that their eyes are opened, I find myself alongside one of the most penetrating poets and playwrights of the twentieth century, Samuel Beckett, who offers insight into what happened at that pivotal moment in human consciousness. In his only foray into cinema, Beckett dramatized the terrible burden of the self's need to hide from any observer, whether that observer be a neighbor, God, or even one's own self. Though not alluding directly to the story in Genesis, *Film*² gets to the emotionally complex texture of shame and self-consciousness that would not, I suspect, be far from what the inspired Scripture writer had in mind. One can see in the age-weathered face of the silent film star Buster Keaton the fear and the shame that compel his character, known simply in the screenplay as O (for object), to protect his one field of vision from seeing any other eye, including the eye of the camera, referred to in the script as E.

2. You can see a short clip here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_Esx3oAR6I.

The simple plot involves Keaton's O doing all he can to keep himself from being perceived. Beckett uses the sparse format of his screenplay to dramatize the proposition of the seventeenth-century philosopher and Anglican priest George Berkeley that *esse est percipi*; that is, to be is to be perceived. To state it more fully, our existence relies on our being seen, and our being seen in essence determines our existence. It was this proposition that led to countless late-night college bull sessions around the question: if a tree falls in the woods without anyone there to hear or see it fall, did it actually fall? Berkeley postulated that even if no creature witnessed the falling timber, the omnipresent and omniscient God in whom all things have their being is there, providing the requisite "seeing" conditions necessary to the falling tree's existence.

In Beckett's film, the primary character O seeks to avoid the agony of being known. *Film* is essentially a chase flick. O's frantic hiding within the crumbling urban landscape, his scurrying away from any observer, could be exactly what Adam and Eve do among the trees of the Garden, no longer a Paradise. They seem to be running away from anyone who can possibly see them, including themselves. In fact, both the first and last frame of Beckett's short movie is the rather discomforting image of Buster Keaton's eyelid opening. We stare into the dark abyss contained within his iris. It's a threatening image, perhaps for the same reason that the Collect for Purity may initially be threatening to someone worshipping in an Episcopal service for the first time: no secrets are hid.

Potential threats to O in *Film* include: a clergyman, a woman encountered on the street, a picture of a Near-Eastern deity identified in the script as "God the Father," a parakeet, a goldfish, a dog, a cat, O's own reflection in a window and in a mirror, and a pair of ovals

resembling eyes that are carved into the backrest of a chair. All these perceptions are horrific to O because to be seen is to be confronted with the terror of being itself. Even photographs of himself as a child on his mother's lap, as a student, and as a groom are all intolerable reminders of an unreconciled and tainted past. The film ends with O having failed to avoid confronting this scrutiny of him, by himself. The divided self longs to cover one's eyes and to be blinded from any awareness of memory, self, or presence. To be perceived is not only to be, but it is being itself that is a terrible thing when shame and fear are so acute.

Self-Discovery

Beckett's short movie is, of course, an overstatement of the feeling of shame and the fear of being discovered, even by one's self. It's a caricature of shame and fear and seems dated to the heyday of existentialism when people relished in absurd drama, smoked French cigarettes, and wore black turtlenecks. But watching Keaton's performance, in the light of the Genesis account of the eye opening of Adam and Eve, causes me to remember those times in my life when even the prospect of being seen horrified me. Once, while driving in the car with me and passing a local high school at the end of the school day, my daughter, not far in age from being a teenager herself, remarked, "It's an awful time. I feel so bad for them. You don't even want to be in your own skin." Of course, such a statement, said in confidence between family members when sweeping generalizations are permissible, is probably not universally true, but it did speak to her compassion for the American adolescent and the agonizing scrutiny that many feel. This horrifying scrutiny could be dramatized as easily by a teenager as it was by the aging Buster Keaton. Like teenagers, Adam and Eve are not

comfortable in their own skin and so they are compelled to manufacture new skins for themselves.

I have access to this feeling. As a teenager I was stricken with acne. Not knowing how it was caused or inflamed, it seemed to appear on my face with suddenness similar to the startling fall of Adam and Eve. As I recall, I was not the first to notice the pimples and purple blemishes on my cheeks and forehead. The awareness of being afflicted, of having to pay attention to my appearance, came to me when someone at the school bus stop greeted me in the morning with, “Wow. You got zits.” I can recall the scalding humiliation pouring over my scalp, and my first response was the urge to hide. Simultaneous with that feeling was the unmistakable perception that the relationship I had previously enjoyed with my schoolmate was now one of accusation and finger pointing.

The carefree days of riding a bike together and exploring the ponds and woods in our as yet undeveloped landscape instantly evaporated. It wasn't clear who was at fault. My first reaction was that the appearance of my pimples was the offense, that I had insulted my friend. It may sound strange, but I confess that it took a long time to come to understand that that encounter, in which I came to see myself as a flawed human being, was not about what I had done but was rather a moment of entering, falling, into an awareness of the human condition. A healthier ego, a more robust and guarded self-esteem, may have decided to return the remark about the zits with something equally stinging. Later in my adolescence, I confess, I returned such comments with more than words, resorting even to physical violence. Looking back, those ugly encounters only exacerbated my sense of isolation, of there being an iron wedge between me and my friend. We've never recovered.

Eyes Wide Open

This small story raises more complications. My skin eventually changed and returned. But the shaming of others based on their complexion continues, in fact flares up repeatedly in our nation. I am a white, middle-class, and privileged heterosexual male of western European descent. Though it is not easy speaking about it, it's clear to me and many others that these attributes contributed to my being elected to serve in a place of some power in The Episcopal Church. After one session of the "Meet and Greet" events when candidates for bishop are taken around the diocese to make statements and answer questions about their potential episcopacies, one gentleman approached me to ask who shined my black shoes. When I told him I shined my own shoes, he expressed his approval of me as "a regular guy." I was the only straight male on the slate of nominees that would follow Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay man to be elected as a bishop. As of this writing, out of 131 active bishops in The Episcopal Church's House of Bishops, only eleven are women. Though the demographics of our nation will soon find that people who look and speak like me will be in the minority, the leadership of our church is still, by a wide margin, made up of predominantly white males.

What does shame have to do with these statistics? I would describe it as a pall that is cast on all of us, an undifferentiated feeling that not only is there something awry in the system that advances certain persons to positions of authority, but we ourselves are awry for operating within that system. This sense is real, and though therapists, spiritual directors, coaches, and consultants will urge me to let go of my guilt and to pay little if any heed to that feeling, I have come to realize that such a denial is ultimately self-serving and perpetuates the fantasy

that the ground on which we all are playing is even. Unlike the persistent, though eventually treatable, case of acne, the fact that I am granted a significant advantage in this society is not easily erased or mitigated. On the surface my privilege, derived from a “winning” roll of the genetic and ethnic dice, would be the cause for dignity, a sense of worth and a sense of being wholly accepted and honored in the eyes of others and God.

On the other hand, there are moments when, akin to the revelation of Adam and Eve, my eyes are opened and I am brought in close contact with the reality that I am undeserving of many of the benefits I enjoy. If shame brings with it a sense of unworthiness, of being deficient in the eyes of others, then its opposite could be dignity, an attribute Episcopalians promise in our baptismal vows to uphold in every human being. My life in the Christian community has made me aware of how the color of my skin, my gender, my marital status—to name a few of my personal attributes—provide me with advantages in both American society and the Church. Those advantages represent my privilege, my access to power that many others do not automatically have. The injustice of this imbalance is a source of shame. The “dignity of every human being” that we vow to uphold in our baptismal promises is not the same as one’s undeserved privilege.

Recent headlines of shootings by white police of unarmed black men, of women being subjugated to sexual exploitation at the hands of men, of unequal pay between men and women, of institutional hatred directed at those who are not of the dominant race or culture or religious heritage of our society—all spur in me a sense of shame, an awareness of participating in a human race whose bond with God and each other is fractured. This is the power of the story of Adam and Eve;

the account of their fall helps us understand that we share the effect of their disobedience and their sin.

Shame and Guilt

It's here that it would be helpful to make a distinction between shame and guilt. Though I may not be guilty of racially motivated hatred and violence, though I have not condoned sexual exploitation of the defenseless, though I have not espoused hatred against adherents of another religion, my sense of shame is distinguishable from being able to say that I am morally without blame. Though we may not be guilty, we still carry the sense of shame. In a sense, shame runs deeper and is more diffuse than guilt.

Though guilt and shame are no doubt related, I'm not sure how I would fill a Venn diagram to illustrate their relationship. Remorse that stems from guilt says, "I have sinned in a particular way and bear responsibility for the trespass. The guilt for this action is mine, and, even though I may have committed the action with accomplices, I did it, and I feel sorry for having offended and committing the harm." Shame, on the other hand, feels to me more tectonic, and by that I mean it underlies and provides the energy for the sins that may occur in an individual. Occasionally, even in a geologically quiet place like New Hampshire, the sudden awareness that there are dynamics underneath our feet, over which we have no control or influence, jolts us. A minor quake makes us aware of these powers. Shame can work this way—its energy is hidden, lying below the surface of our day-to-day awareness. But an occasion of sin may cause it to erupt, in the same way that an earthquake felt on the earth's crust is the result of forces at play down

below. When we commit a particular sin and are confronted about it, there are times when our remorse is so severe that it exceeds the scale of an offense. In those moments, it could be that deeper forces are being unleashed.

An example could be found in the account of the fall of Adam and Eve itself. For many readers, the punishment meted out by God is preposterous and indicates the arbitrary meanness of a temperamental God. Such severe punishment is, after all, for what—the purloining of a piece of fruit? Eternal banishment for tasting something God probably knew was very tempting? Who is really at fault here? Those who've read St. Augustine's *Confessions*, perhaps the first spiritual autobiography of western civilization, will note that despite committing what we moderns would consider utterly selfish and abominable acts—sexual promiscuity, abandonment of partner and children, intellectual arrogance—it's not any of these things that give him a sense of moral unease. What tips him over the edge and drives him to seek the forgiveness with God? The stealing of a pear! It's this relatively—no, ridiculously—minor offense that sparks the emotional tremor within Augustine that leads him to conversion to Christ and, one could argue, the reams of pages that became his literary legacy (all while functioning as a bishop, no less). For some, shame debilitates, paralyzing all action. For others, like Augustine, for instance, it seems to motivate.

Original Sin

It's therefore fitting that Augustine is attributed with developing one of the most complicated doctrines of the Church, that of “original sin.” This doctrine says that the sin of Adam and Eve, their disobedience in

the Garden, is transmitted and spread, contaminating all humanity as though it is a hereditary disease. According to the words of the Articles of Religion,³ original sin, or birth-sin, is an “infection of [human] nature” that remains “in every person born into this world.” Many, including myself, struggle with the doctrine of original sin so described on a number of levels. It tends to locate the awareness of my human limitation—the fact that I am not God and that I am flawed and tend toward gratifying selfish desires—to the physical realm. Original sin is the reason why the “flesh lusteth contrary to the Spirit.” Not surprisingly, therefore, most people who were introduced to the concept of original sin associate it with sex. Adam and Eve saw each other as naked as a result of their disobedience, and the shame that is introduced is primarily the result of their carnality or of their lust. It’s a physical thing. When understood this way, original sin as a teaching of the church, and the shame it can spur, can be used as a means of tainting any kind of sexual attraction that is not within the purposes set forth by certain religious authorities, many of whom have devoted themselves, at least publically, to lives of celibacy.

When seen as an infection of the flesh, the doctrine of original sin doesn’t offer an understanding of us beyond our own individual collection of bodily organs and desires. When original sin, at least in the popular imagination and understanding, is seen only in terms of the desires of the flesh, we are less likely to look at the phenomena of racism, misogyny, pride, fear and hatred of other ethnicities and religions, greed, envy, and all the rest of the full catastrophe of the human condition as connected to the experience of the very first human beings until the present day. I am more attracted to the doctrine of original

3. Book of Common Prayer, 869.

sin when I see it as an attempt, albeit flawed, to describe what we all know is true: humanity, with rare exception, tends to mess things up, royally, and I share that condition. As a man of privilege, with eyes open to the ways I have benefited from the disorder of God's creation, I know I have a responsibility to be aware of my advantage and to do what I can to mitigate, with God's help, the suffering of others. I often fail in this task.

It is with this awareness each year that I pull down the box containing the tree stand, the string of lights, the glass bulbs with their bent paperclip hangers, and the kindly angel to prepare another Paradise Tree. Happily, the angel that I perch on the top won't be wielding a sword of flame to banish my family and me out of the garden of our family room. Instead, she looks rather kindly, with her crimson hoop skirt and the plastic candle with its tiny white lightbulb. Though technically angels are of indeterminate gender, the one on top of our tree, bought for all of five dollars at a St. Nicholas Fair at the last parish I served, reminds me of that reflected glow on the snow-covered hill in my neighbor's yard outside Minneapolis. The angel's eyes are open to my life, to "the hope and fears of all the years" that have transpired since that time of relative innocence when I could sled all night before my mother called my sister and me in to get ready for bed. My sister is no longer with us, and the years since then have shown me a measured share of suffering and sin, much of which I caused myself. Adam is in me after all. With her ruddy cheeks reflecting the varied hues of the tree lights, the angel's eyes are open, but they are not staring at me to accuse or condemn. Her open eyes, which follow me no matter where I wander around the room, tell me that this is a tree behind which there is no need to hide.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- Consider the story of Adam and Eve before and after the Fall, from when they were not ashamed to the moment when they seek to hide. Are there such “before and after” moments in your life?
- How do you interpret the Church’s teaching that all human-kind is created in the image of God? What does that image look like to you?
- How much time and energy do you spend comparing yourself to an image of yourself that is either flawless or damaged? Who created those images of yourself? God? Or someone else?
- How might you invite Adam and Eve, forgiven and thoroughly loved by God, into your Christmas celebration? How might they change how you approach the busy-ness of Christmas?

