Adam and Eve

[Sometimes to tell a story properly, you have to go back to the beginning. It's a bit like tracing the branches of a tree back to the trunk. If you start at the edge of a tree, first there are leaves, then twigs, then branches and then you get to the big central trunk that keeps the tree alive. Sometimes it is the same with a story, you have to go right back to the trunk of it, to the part which keeps the story alive.

This is a special Advent tree called a Jesse Tree. It is named after a man called Jesse who was the father of King David. You will hear about both Jesse and David in one of the stories of the Tree. King David was the greatest king in Israel and everyone expected that the Messiah, God's special chosen one, would be part of David's family, so they called the Messiah 'a shoot from the stump of Jesse'. Christians believe that this 'shoot' is Jesus. We are going to use this Jesse Tree to trace the story of Jesus right back to the beginning of the world, and then up through the branches of the people who carried the story of God's love until we reach the day when Jesus was born.]

When anything new begins someone is there, right at the beginning. This is the story of those who were there at the beginning of the world. Their names were Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman.

Long ago God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden called Eden. God asked Adam and Eve to look after the garden: they were to dig the soil, trim the bushes, plant new seeds and watch them grow. Adam and Eve were learning about how to take care of the whole earth. They were practising in this special garden called Eden. There were many fruit trees in the garden with wonderful sweet heavy fruits hanging in their branches. Adam and Eve used to pick the fruit and eat it. Perhaps there were apples, oranges, cherries, pears, figs and coconuts; perhaps there were all sorts of wonderful fruits which we have never seen or tasted. There were certainly two fruit trees which we have never seen. One was called 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' and the other was called 'the tree of life'.

Now God had allowed Adam and Eve to decide for themselves how they would live in the garden of Eden. He had asked them to take care of the garden, but he had only told them one thing which they should not do. God told Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was a beautiful tree with beautiful fruit, but God told them that if they ate this fruit, they would surely die.

Way back then, when the world was new, there was a cunning serpent who could talk. The serpent came to Eve and said, 'Has God really told you not to eat any of the fruit that grows on the trees in this
garden?” ‘No,’ Eve replied, ‘God only told us not to eat the fruit of that tree there – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – because if we eat it, we will die.’ The serpent shook his head. ‘God lied to you, you know. That fruit wouldn’t kill you, it would give you knowledge. God doesn’t want you to eat the fruit so that he will always know more than you, but that’s not fair, is it? Surely you want to know as much as possible, so that you can care for the garden properly? Why don’t you try it?’ Eve looked at the tree and at the fruit hanging from its branches. It did look very special and very good to eat. Why would God keep it all to himself? Why couldn’t Adam and Eve eat it and become wise too? It suddenly seemed very unfair. Eve reached out her hand, picked the fruit and took a big bite. Just at that moment, Adam came along the path. ‘Eat this,’ said Eve, ‘come on, I dare you!’ Adam ate the fruit which Eve gave him, even though he knew it came from the forbidden tree.

What happened next? Well, Adam and Eve didn’t drop down dead where they stood. The fruit didn’t poison them. But things began to change, all the same. Adam and Eve began to feel shy and to have secrets and to blame someone else whenever things went wrong. For instance, when God came into the garden that day, they ran away and hid from him. God knew that they must have eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and he asked them about it. Adam said that it was Eve’s fault, because she had given him the fruit to eat. Eve said that it was the serpent’s fault, because the serpent had talked her into trying the fruit. Everything was going wrong, and everything was someone else’s fault.

God decided that Adam and Eve could not be trusted in the garden of Eden. If Adam and Eve now ate the fruit of the tree of life, then they would live forever, but they would spend forever hiding from God and blaming each other for things which they had done wrong. It was no good telling them not to eat the fruit of the tree of life, since God had told them not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and yet they had eaten it. God sent Adam and Eve out of the garden and put an angel with a large flaming sword to guard the tree of life.

[We hang this symbol of a fruit on the tree to remember Adam and Eve. This is a sad story about Adam and Eve letting God down, but it is also the story that begins all the other stories on this tree. Adam and Eve were sent away from their home and from the tree of life, but Christians, Jews and Muslims all believe that God continued to love Adam and Eve and their children and their children’s children; that is why there are so many more stories to tell.]

A moment to wonder

I wonder if Adam and Eve used to think about the Garden of Eden after they left it?

A prayer

As green as a healthy tree, the story of God’s love keeps growing. We remember Adam and Eve, who made a mistake and let God down. We pray for everyone who is tempted to do the wrong thing. Amen.