

WALKING IN THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

Scripture: Genesis 2:15-17

March 9, 2020

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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."

Several years ago, I found myself standing in the doorway of a small fresh produce market in Jericho. Others from my tour group were in an adjoining shop considering pottery, native garb, or carved pieces of olive wood to carry home as keepsakes. I, on the other hand, had longingly eyed several open air produce markets from my window seat on our tour bus. From the very first sighting, I wanted a closer look at the beautiful produce I had seen on display.

I entered the small shop with the awe of a child on Christmas morning. Boxes stacked high with fruits and vegetables. Heads of cabbage and cauliflower larger than basketballs, beans, broccoli, corn, tomatoes and grapefruit the size of cantaloupes! Oh the glorious, mouthwatering smells!

I could not read the signs. I did not recognize any of the labels as similar to those we see in our grocery stores indicating from which country the product originated. I could, however, read the prices. When I asked the shopkeeper how they were able to import such a variety of fresh foods at such reasonable prices he smiled his toothy grin and said "My friend, we do not import. It is from here we grow it! All from Israel!"

More than half of Israel's territory is classified as true desert or near desert. Israeli farmers and agriculturalists have made reclaiming the soil, innovative water management, and developing new and sustainable ways to grow food a priority. As a result, Israel is not only agriculturally self-sustaining, they have also developed a very lucrative produce export industry. Additionally, Israeli agriculturists share their gleaned knowledge with farmers and agriculturists from all over the world. In essence, Israel, which is slightly more than one-third the size of West Virginia, is feeding their population of over 8.5 million people from food grown on a land mass equivalent to less than one-sixth of West Virginia with plenty left over to share.

This evening as I write, there are people, some right here in the town where I live, settling down for the night with a growl in their bellies they cannot quiet. In many places in this world, there are people alive tonight who will not be alive when I wake in the morning only for lack of a sip of clean water and a bite of nutritious food. Tomorrow will be the same. We have the knowledge to change this. Men and women with a God-inspired drive to solve our world's hunger problems are willing to share what they've learned, and yet, every day we find reasons to hinder their progress... economics, greed, tribalism, denial, apathy...

God has blessed us with curiosity, wonder, and an ache to learn and discover. God has scattered far and wide answers to questions we have not yet thought to ask. How things work.

How things break. How things hurt. How things heal. How things grow. How things die. The gifts of Curiosity and Knowledge were not the fruit of that tree in the garden. Understanding how knowledge can be used to do good or to inflict harm was the fruit chosen that day.

Prayer: Loving God, we understand the fruit was picked and the bite consumed long ago. We thank you for the gift of your Son who has rescued us from certain death and has delivered us to life eternal with you. Empower us, we pray, through your Holy Spirit, with the wisdom to see clearly the opportunities placed before us every day to choose good. Teach us we pray to recognize and shun evil. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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