

“Where Are You?”

But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9).

Today’s reading from Genesis reveals information that is absolutely essential to the story of Scripture. In this reading we learn about the first temptation and we witness the introduction of sin into the human experience. We see the curses and consequences connected to the disobedience and fall of mankind. We even hear God proclaim the very first promise of a Savior in Genesis 3:15. Scripture simply makes no sense without this reading. These words set the stage for the entire Bible and in this text we find the key to understanding God’s plan for our redemption.

There are hundreds of sermons buried in this text, but as I have read, studied and taught this portion of Genesis, there is one verse that always catches my attention and it occurs right after Adam and Eve fall from grace. Beginning in verse seven, Scripture records the following: “Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” And here’s the verse: “But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:7-9).

“*Where are you?*” On the surface it seems like a question any father might ask when he suspects that his children have disobeyed him and hidden from his wrath. But this isn’t any Father. In the book of Jeremiah, God says, “I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind...Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him...Do not I fill heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 17:10; 23:24). And over and over again, the Bible tells us that God is perfect in His knowledge. He knows where we are and what we doing. The thoughts and feelings that we carefully hide from others are an open book to God. He is all-present. He is all-powerful. He is all-knowing. He sees what we do behind closed doors, He knows our deepest thoughts and our secret sins, and God is the only one from whom no one can hide. *So what’s the deal with this question?* Well, from everything God has revealed about Himself in Scripture, we can be sure that this question wasn’t for God’s benefit.

Adam and Eve had sinned. They had doubted God’s Word and disobeyed His command. They had rejected God’s righteous rule in their lives and, in the moment of the fall, the relationship between Adam and Eve had changed, and the relationship between God and Man had changed. Where Adam and Eve had once been conscious only of God and of His loving provision, they were now *self*-conscious; feebly covering the shame of their nakedness with fig leaves. And where they had once lived in perfect communion and peace with God, they were now hiding from Him in fear.

In the first words following their fall into sin, God asks Adam and Eve, “Where are you?” And this question is not for God’s benefit, but for man’s. “*Where are you?*” This isn’t a question about physical location; this is a relationship question. In these words, God was forcing Adam and Eve to see the reality of their situation. They were now separated from God (Isaiah 59:2). The relationship with their Creator had been breached. Their innocence and freedom from sin had been lost, their will was no longer free, and this seemingly unnecessary question was designed to show them just how far they had fallen. It was a question of ultimate truth for Adam and Eve...and it is a question of ultimate truth for us as well.

“Where are you?” Today, God asks us this same question. The specifics may have changed and setting certainly looks different from the Garden of Eden, but we are in precisely the same situation as our first parents. In a thousand ways we have walked away from God. We have disregarded His Word. We have disobeyed His commands. We have doubted His promises. We have rebelled against His will. We have sinned, and, instead of owning up to our transgressions and placing our lives in God’s hands, we have exhausted ourselves trying to deal with sin on our own terms.

We justify. We blame. We deny. We hide. We cover ourselves with any and every excuse we can find, no matter how feeble. We do everything in our power to get out of the impossible situation in which we have put ourselves

and yet, after all of our bargaining and after all of our promises, we are no closer to God than Adam and Eve were as they cowered in their hiding place. And that is why God asks the question, “Where are you?”

When we consider this question, we are forced to see the reality of our situation, and honest reflection on this question shows us just how lost and broken we really are. In Romans, Paul writes, “through the law we become conscious of our sin” (Romans 3:20) and that’s what this question is all about. In His Word, God continually asks us, “Where are you?” It’s a question that our sinful nature hates because its answer requires an honesty that we fiercely fight against. The Old Adam (or Eve) inside of us wants to stay in hiding. Our sinful nature despises the light of God’s Word and it grasps and clings to anything that allows us to keep our sin covered up...even things that God intended for our good. We bury ourselves in our work; we overindulge in food or drink or other addictions and distractions that can keep us from looking up. We put on a smile and come to church and pretend like nothing in our world is wrong and in all these things we are hiding and covering the sin that separates us from God and from each other.

“Where are you?” is a question that calls for confession; it is a question that requires repentance; it is a question that desires and demands truth; and an honest answer to this question is the first step toward a restored relationship with God. Our inclination to run and hide from sin makes sense, because even the most ardent unbeliever has a sense of the law and a natural understanding that they are far from perfect. *But there is no human solution to this desperate condition!* No matter how hard we try, there is nothing we can do to change our situation. In Isaiah God asks, “The multitude of your sacrifices – what are they to me?” (Isaiah 1:11). And the truth is that God doesn’t want our attempts to fix the problem. Instead God desires honesty. God desires repentance.

You see, God has an answer! God has a solution! And when we lay down our fig leaves and come out of hiding, He is there with a promise...and it is one that He Himself has already kept. That is why our first reading is so important! In Genesis 3:15, God points to One who will be born of a woman; the One who will crush the head of the serpent and, by His action, bring us into a new and restored relationship with each other and with God Himself. This is what the cross of Jesus Christ is all about! Today’s reading from Romans points to this promise as Paul writes, “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:18-19).

This is exactly what today’s Gospel reading shows us, that in Christ, God has done for us what we could never do! Adam and Eve lived with God in a perfect, lush garden and they lacked nothing. Jesus was alone in the wilderness and was hungry and yet when temptation came, Adam and Eve crumbled and Jesus stood firm. And where Adam and Eve attempted to cover the shame of their sin, Jesus allowed Himself to be stripped of every covering, to be nailed to a cross and to be raised above the earth in the most public way possible as the sinless bearer of *our* sin...and He did all of this for us! And because this is true, today we can answer God’s question “Where are you?” without shame and with complete confidence because *we are with Christ!*

In Ephesians 2, Paul writes, “you were dead in sin...and were by nature children of wrath...But God, being rich in mercy...even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with him...so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:1-8).

“Where are you?” *This* is the question of Lent. It is the question of a God who loves you too much to let you die in your sin and in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, this question has been answered. In Jesus, you can uncover your sins! You can repent and confess to an all-present, all-knowing and all-powerful God who has vowed by His own blood that you are forgiven! “*Where are you?*” You are with Christ! And you will be with Him forever! Believe and share this Good News and live out each day in the joy of your salvation. Amen.

Pastor Thomas A. Eggold