

## Genesis 3:8-15

June 6, 2021

“*Where are you?*” After falling into sin, this is the first thing that Adam and Eve hear from the mouth of God. Not, “Where are you hiding?” as if He needs help in finding them. But rather, “Why are you hiding? Where are you in relation to Me? Where are you spiritually?”

The answer is clear. For God had warned them what would happen if they disobeyed Him. “*You will surely die.*” And die they did. They are spiritually dead. There is a chasm of separation that now exists between God and man.

And the man is fully aware of this. “*I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.*” He and his wife hide because of their shame. They dress themselves with fig leaves because their sin separates them even from each other. And they hide from God because they now are self-aware. “Where are we? We are dead, separated from God!”

My friends, where are you? Not physically. Not, where are you on the map? Where are you in relation to God?

The answer you and I give can vary from day to day. Some days we feel confident – keeping the devil behind us, keeping our sinful flesh in check, avoiding the allurements of the world around us. And we may say, “I’m good with God. I’m living the life He wants me to live. Where am I? I am where I’m supposed to be.”

But then, in mercy, yes in mercy, God permits sin to defeat you in order to cure you of your pride, to destroy the Pharisee within you. And when that happens, you see all too clearly the chasm of separation between God and you. You thought you were doing well, laying the bridge of your goodness across that chasm toward God. But defeated by sin, you are now fully aware that you stand with Adam and Eve in shame.

The course they followed was to confess their shame but not their guilt. The man admitted the shame of his nakedness. But he excused himself of any guilt. “*The woman...*” he said, “She is the one who is guilty!” Yet she, too, excused her guilt. “*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*”

Do you see what they are doing? They are naked, exposed before God. But this is unbearable for them. And so they cover themselves with their excuses. It’s all they have.

And it’s all so, so many have today. An excuse, even a flimsy excuse, is how men, and women, and children cover their own sinfulness. No one can tolerate the shame of being found guilty before God. And so the excuse, whatever it might be, is offered up by one and all.

But God does not accept excuses. Not because He is hard-nosed. It’s because He is merciful. He does not permit the excuses of Adam and Eve to stand. Those fig leaves will not do. Blaming others for their guilt will not do either. That is no covering at all. Instead, He covers them with grace. He speaks a word that truly does cover them. It covers their guilt, and your guilt, and mine. He Himself takes the blame. He promises to send the Seed of the woman, who is Jesus Christ, and this Seed, this Savior will be found guilty. He will be punished, with the death of all deaths, for the sin of Adam and Eve, and for your sin and mine, and the sin of the whole world.

Whenever we excuse our sin, we are using that excuse as a bridge to cross the chasm that separates us from God. But every excuse, no matter what it is, will drop down into the chasm of hell, taking with it the one who offered it.

You and I are unable to cover our own guilt. My friend, your guilt is covered by Jesus. He came across the chasm of separation. He crossed that chasm by means of His own bloody cross. And He has come to you. Not to condemn you. But to cover you with His holy, innocent blood. He covers you with grace in your baptism. All your guilt is covered. Every sin of yours is forgiven. Nothing is left uncovered.

And so, drop the excuses. Stop hiding under them. Throw them away confessing the truth: “Yes, I am guilty! I deserve to be punished now and forever. I have disobeyed You, O God.”

And then hear His word to you: “I forgive you. Your sin is covered by the blood of Jesus. Your guilt is taken away. You are forgiven of all your sin.”

This is why we can stop hiding from God. We can come to His holy house with confidence. We can approach His throne of grace in peace. Your God is merciful. He is merciful to you. Your God is a forgiving God. He forgives you.

The man and his wife hid from God among the trees of the garden. But we have a better tree under which to hide. The tree of Jesus’ cross. Here God has brought you in your baptism. Here you live, not in separation from Him, but united to Him through Jesus. Here you are covered every day by His grace. Amen.