

Sermon for the Third Sunday after Pentecost

“And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God.”

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Why do you hide?

It is a curious thing. Adam and Eve sin, and in sinning, they see that they are naked. In Hebrew, the word ‘naked’ and the word ‘cunning’ are the same. There is a play on words here. Adam and Eve see that they are naked. Adam and Eve discover that they are cunning.

They eat of the fruit, and their eyes are open, and seeing their nakedness, they also discover their cunning; they are smart; they are sharp, slick; they can work the situation.

They sow for themselves *clothes of fig* leaves to cover their nakedness.

Not only do we see the first sin, but following the first sin, we see the first human contrivance, we see the first human invention: the sewing needle. And with it, we see the first human creation, clothing.

They are naked, but they are cunning, and through their cunning, they devise a scheme to cover their nakedness.

With the first sin comes immediately the first attempt to hide that sin.

With that first attempt to hide that sin comes the first attempt to hide from God.

Having been deceived, man enacts a deception.

So it is written *‘they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the Garden.’* ‘Among the trees’ ‘The tree of life’, ‘The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.’ Now they have known good and evil by eating of the

tree, and knowing evil, they have become evil; and becoming evil, they hide their sin; and in hiding their sin, they hide themselves.

What is it to hide? It is to become invisible to another. So it is that our First Parents became invisible to God. Thus the Most High asks: *'Where are you?'*

What is it to hide? It is not only to become invisible to another, but it is to make the other invisible to you. So it is that God became invisible to our First Parents. Thus Adam responds: *'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid.'*

'I heard.' No longer does he see God. Adam only hears Him.

Do you see God? I do not mean do you see Him working in your life. I do not mean that you discern His plans and designs. I do not mean that you understand His ways. Do you see God, with your eyes, as one would see a man *walking in the cool of the evening in the garden?*

'No one has ever seen God.'

'For all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.'

You cannot see God, for you have hidden yourself, and to hide is not only to make yourself invisible to another, it is to make another invisible to you.

Why do you hide?

Because you have sinned.

Why have you sinned?

'Because the serpent deceived me, and I ate.'

And in being deceived, in sinning, you became cunning; and in becoming cunning, you too have made for yourselves clothes; rags to cover your wickedness before the eyes of others.

In this regard, do not be deceived. It was not Adam and Eve alone who ate of the fruit. You too ate of it. Indeed, you and I, and all the rebellious children of men eat of it daily, for *sin is crouching at the door*, and every day it calls to us. If to eat of a tree is disobedience worthy of damnation, do you think that your little sins are any less damnable?

Do you think it no small thing when you speak ill or insult your in-laws, your family, your wife, your husband, the bad driver on the road, the incompetent waiter at your restaurant, the useless priest at your church, the deadbeat beggar at your street corner? Verily, I say unto you, *'Whoever says "You fool!" shall be liable to the hell of fire.'*

Do you think it no small thing when you gossip, when you spin a tale about your neighbor for your amusement, when you make your friend an object of your own selfish entertainment? For the Lord commands *'whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is beautiful, think on these things.'* Yet untruth, dishonor, injustice, impurity, hatefulness, ugliness, these haunt your thoughts, these lace your conversation. Do you think these but harmless chatter? Verily, I say unto you *'If anyone thinks himself religious, but does not bridle his tongue, this person's religion is worthless.'*

And I speak not of hatred, of divisiveness, of adultery, of jealousy, of avarice, of envy, of pride; for what need is there of the Law to accuse you of these great sins, when you are condemned already by the least? *'For whoever keeps the whole law, but fails at one point is guilty of it all.'*

And why do you sin, in so many small ways, in so many great ways? *'Because you saw that the sin was good, a delight to the eyes, and able to make one wise.'*

Now you hear these things, and think 'I may do some of these, but they are harmless, and if not harmless, they are well deserved; and how dare he accuse me of the others!' How could you think otherwise? For *you sew for yourselves a garment of fig leaves*. It was man's first invention to create a shroud for his shame, and it is an invention which has never fallen out of use.

You may have hidden your sin from your neighbor. You may have even fooled yourself. But *'God is not mocked.'* *'For no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.'*

Stand before the Lord then, and tremble. Kneel before his righteous throne, and be afraid. *'For on the day that you eat of this tree, you shall surely die.'*

For you were with Adam and Eve in the Garden. You were with them in disobedience. You were with them in their eating, in their sinning, in their

deceiving, in their cunning, in their hiding. Therefore, in your nakedness, hide with your first parents among the trees, and confess your sin. *'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'*

Now hear, even as Adam did, even as Eve did, the judgment of the Almighty.

'And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring, you shall bruise his heel, yet he shall crush your head.'

'And the Lord God said to the serpent...'

What kind of judgement is this? For man, having sinned, the serpent is cursed. For man, having disobeyed, the snake is to be crushed.

Does this seem to you strange? If it does, then you do not know your God.

For in love He created man, to be loved was man created. It is true, man disobeyed, because he was deceived, for a *strong man entered his house and plundered his goods*. A loving father does not destroy the children for having been robbed by a *strong man*. Rather, he destroys the robber.

This is *'the wrath of God revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness.'* That Christ, the stronger man, shall enter the house of fallen mankind, and bind the strong man, and cast him into the pit of unending fire. And that house shall The Lord also destroy; the abode of the devil will be made to nothing, and *his head shall be crushed*. But that this house to be destroyed was once ours, fret not, *'For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.'*

'Now the Lord God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and he called to the man and said to him "Where are you?"'

[Why do you hide?]

Do not hide in shame, as our fathers did. But come forth from the midst of the trees, and stand before the Lord who is mercy. Kneel before the God who is salvation, *'Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.'* *'For all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter.'*

For by the victory of Christ, Our God, the serpent no longer speaks deceptions against us, he no longer testifies against us in the courts of the most high:

'For the King that trusts in the Lord shall glory, but the mouth of him that speaks lies shall be stopped.'

Glory be to the God of Our Fathers, forever and ever.

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Genesis 3:8-15; 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1; Mark 3:20-35.