**Genesis 3:8-15** June 13, 2021

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 *Genesis 3:8Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” 10He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” 11And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” 12The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” 13Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

 *14So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

Dear Friends in Christ,

 “I’m going to listen for God’s voice on this.” It’s the sort of thing people tell pastors fairly often. If the people you are around know that you are a practicing Christian, you have probably heard it too. Christians know that God is in control. We also know that he has the right to give direction. I’m glad to hear that people want to know what God thinks.

 A woman wades through debilitating disease and commends her life to God saying, “I’m going to let God lead me through this.” A man weighing career options says, “I’m waiting to hear which way God wants me to go.” Kudos to both.

 In our reading today God speaks, but a little differently. He speaks directly to two people—there could be no doubt that God was talking to them because they were the only two people in the whole world. And he, God, wasn’t speaking in riddles through prophets or in words written long ago in the Bible. He was literally standing in front of them speaking with a clarity and nearness that we hunger for in our relationship with God. As God speaks, will they listen? Will we listen? As the story unfolds, we pray,

**“Lord, Give Us Ears to Hear!”**

**I.** This meeting was supposed to be a joy. It happened in the place where God planted the first man and woman, the Garden of Eden. We have no idea how long they had been in the garden—days, months or years—and so we leave that bit of conjecture unanswered. But it seems fairly certain that God had visited Adam and Eve before, maybe often. On this particular day he was visiting his children in the late afternoon or evening. It was his joy to see them. Even though, as God, he knew all that was going on, he still loved to be in their presence.

 But what had been designed as a joyful hour of fellowship could not happen that way. Like a young man planning to surprise his girlfriend, showing up unexpectedly, and finding her holding someone else’s hand, this meeting could not be a joy. You see, Adam and Eve had betrayed their relationship with their Creator. The one and only request he had made of them to show their affection, they had dishonored it.

 The Bible has 1,189 chapters in it. So this reading in chapter number three, right here at the very beginning, is foundational. There are *many* things that this Bible reading could focus on, many important topics, many persistent questions, maybe even questions you wish I would address today but I’m not going to just because we don’t have time. We focus on listening when God speaks.

 So, let’s set the stage. Think back to, or if you can’t remember it, imagine a time before air conditioning, when sitting on the porch was a thing. It’s July or August. The summer sun lowers in the sky. It’s still warm but the heat of the day has passed. Just then you catch the first breeze of the evening. It feels heavenly. The mid-day laziness passes and you start to want to talk, to share a joke, tell a story, that’s when the Lord chose to stop by and visit with Adam and Eve.

 But it couldn’t a pleasant visit. Adam and Eve had betrayed him, so God would have to confront them.

A. Yet before God can say anything, ***“[The man and his wife] hid from the Lord God in the trees of the garden.”*** It’s a pattern of behavior that will continue throughout these eight verses. It’s a pattern of behavior that will continue throughout human history. We avoid God when he is going to say something we don’t want to hear. When God asks where Adam is… [In the Hebrew, when he asks, “Where are you?” God asks it in the singular. Let that be a reminder to men that while the husband is to be the leader in a family, he also will be held accountable as that leader.] When Adam realizes he can no longer hide, he answers. But his answer is an excuse. ***“I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was…*** underdressed—way underdressed.” Never before had his lack of appropriate apparel been an issue. And never before had he known fear. Adam’s excuse was pretty bad, because it gave away more than it hid. God asks more questions and Adam does the first “throw someone under the bus” move of human history. ***“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”*** How clever! Adam’s first lie wasn’t very good, but he is quickly learning to lie well. Not only does he deny responsibility, but he blames his wife, *and he blames God!*

 Adam is a lost cause, so God questions Eve. Since there is no one else to blame, Eve, so to speak, kicks the dog, or here, the snake. She blames the snake, the one through whom Satan had been speaking. That’s how God’s plan for a joyful evening with his children went. It makes a parent’s heart bleed.

 All these clumsy lies would be funny—and they kind of are—except that something really sad is going here. God is talking with them about their eternity, their relationship with God, even with each other, and they are so busy trying to justify why they did what they knew they weren’t supposed to do, trying to avoid admitting to any more than they have to, and trying not to acknowledge any guilt whatsoever. This is behavior that destroys relationships, marriages, families. And it is destroying Adam’s and Eve’s relationship with God.

 **Lord, give us ears to hear when you confront us with our sin!**

B. On the other side, ask yourself why God does what he does. Is God in the garden ignorant of what had happened, or is he there because he knew exactly what had happened? Does God ask Adam, “Where are you?” because Adam was so good at hiding? Or was there another reason? Why does God ask in verse 11, ***Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”*** God obviously knew exactly what had happened. But why ask questions? The same thing when he asked Eve, ***“What is this you have done?”*** He is God. Does he need to question the witnesses to piece together the truth like some sort of murder mystery detective?

 Why the questions? God does not ask questions for the reasons that we ask questions. We ask questions because we don’t know. God asks questions because he *does* know. He asks like a parent who walks into a room, knowing there is a broken lamp and knowing just how it got broken, but still asking questions. There is something to be gained, something to be salvaged, if only the questions will be answered humbly, truthfully.

 Many people like to imagine that they are listening to God’s voice in their lives. But I wonder how many keep on listening when God’s voice sounded like it did on this evening in Eden. Yes, we like to imagine that we are attentive to God’s guidance. And maybe we are. But are we attentive when he confronts us? I’m not sure I’ve ever heard anyone tell me that they are listening for the times when God’s voice confronts them with their sin.

 How does God confront us? Often it is God’s Word. That is God’s most direct method. His word makes it pretty clear what pleases God and what does not. His word speaks here in this sanctuary in every single worship service we have ever had. His word speaks through Word-centered devotions at our homes.

 God speaks through our consciences, as we sit in front of screens, whether television, computer or phone, and after many hours we get this guilty thought reminding us that we are on this world to love him and love others. We start thinking about the time ill-used, and duties neglected. God speaks through our minds that tell us to stop bad habits and beloved sins.

 God speaks through other people too. A loving spouse encourages us to a more spiritually healthy place. A co-worker, who isn’t even a Christian, hears our rant and says, “Wow, that’s not cool.”

 Are you listening when God confronts? And do you know why you should be listening? Because sin is dangerous. A passage in our Bible class this morning reminded us, *“Sinful desires… war against your soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). It’s warfare. Satan wants you on his side, condemned to eternity in hell with him. When God stepped into the Garden of Eden that evening, his purpose was to confront Adam and Eve with their sin, not with the end goal of condemning and cursing them, but of rescuing his relationship with them and of rescuing them. But they resisted. They refused. And so came curses, curses upon Eve, curses upon Adam, curses upon humanity as long as we shall inhabit this earth.

 We all have “what if” questions, and nowhere do people have more “what ifs” than with Genesis chapters two and three. My number one “What if” question that I am going to ask God when I get to heaven—if I am still interested in these things there—is, “What if Adam and Eve, instead of hiding, making excuses and blaming, what if they had come to God admitting, confessing, sorrowing?” It’s a “what if” question, so maybe it isn’t even worth asking. But I have a notion that things would have been better for them and for us because God is loving, gracious and forgiving.

 **Lord, Give Us Ears to Hear when you confront us with our sin!**

**II.**  But that’s not all God came to tell Adam and Eve. If we listen, we will hear more. Here it is and this is way, way better: ***“So the Lord God said to the serpent… ‘I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.’ ”***

 The reason the Lord spoke to the serpent, for those who don’t know, is because the serpent was the one who tempted Eve to sin. “So you’re telling me that a snake tempted Eve?” While the sound came from the snake’s mouth, it was more than a snake. Satan spoke through that snake to Eve. So the words I just read were not, strictly speaking, to the snake, but to Satan who had spoken through that snake.

 God spoke of ***“enmity”*** between Satan and the family of Adam and Eve. Enmity, what is it? Enmity, sounds almost like the word “enemy” and that’s what enmity is: it is enemy-ness. God says that a war will be waged among humanity between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. This warfare is for man’s good, because if God had not taken up mankind’s cause, we would have been lost forever.

 Then God promises the champion who will be victorious on Adam and Eve’s behalf. It would not be Adam or Eve. No, they had proven unable, as every human since born in the normal way has been. But there would be one born of a woman, though not of man, who would be equipped to destroy Satan, who would live so that all the evil Satan brought upon the world would be undone. ***“[Her offspring] will crush your head, [Satan].”*** In this one, not in themselves, they would have hope.

 Think of how gracious this promise was. Nowhere in all the conversation did Adam and Eve move an inch toward God. They denied and excused to the bitter end. They never asked forgiveness. And yet God, in his great love said, “In spite of all the evil you have done. In spite of your total lack of desire to spiritually move back toward me, I have formulated a plan to save you. It will be me, not you, because I love you.” Of course, this one only vaguely promised in Eden, this semi-obscure hope of Adam and Eve is the same as our hope: Jesus Christ, the anointed, suffering, dying and rising from the dead Savior.

 **Lord, give us ears to always hear your promise of our Savior.** Amen.