

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Grant Park, Illinois
The Third Sunday after Pentecost, June 10, 2018
Genesis 3:8-15

Then 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. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me —she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

So 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. And 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."

Smack went the ball into the vase. Crash went the vase onto the floor. Kssshhhhhh the glass shatters into a million pieces and bounces all over the room. Tommy and Joey looked at each other with their jaws just about touching the ground. Mom had warned them about playing ball in the house because they might wreck something and guess what? They did. Their rough play broke great grandma's Waterford crystal vase. They were guilty and knew it. What would they tell mom that had happened?

Our Old Testament lesson this morning focuses us on two people who had done something far worse than ruining an expensive vase. These people directly disobeyed a command God had given them. They knew what they had done was wrong. They were ashamed and afraid of what God would say and do to them. What should they do? Moreover, what about you? What should you do with your guilt when you do something wrong? This is going to be the focus of our sermon this morning.

What Should I Do with My Guilt?

- I. Don't try to hide it
- II. Confess it to God
- III. Receive his promise of forgiveness

Did you catch where our Old Testament lesson came from? It comes from Genesis and it plops us down right in the middle of the worst chapter written in human history. The first two chapters of Genesis reveal the way God created the world. It was big and spectacular. He spoke and the earth was formed. His words placed stars into the sky. They formed seas and animals, but when it came to man God took his time and with his own hands he formed and fashioned the first man Adam and his wife Eve.

God created Adam and Eve and he placed them in the Garden of Eden. It was pure perfection filled with harmony between God and man. The world was perfect, but sadly chapter three introduces us to the ruin of creation. The verses right before our lesson detail this ruin. They show us how a serpent came and questioned God's command not to eat from a certain tree. He got Adam and Eve to believe a lie and they ate the fruit which God said not to eat. Their disobedience brought sin and shame into the world.

This sad story happens right before our lesson picks up this morning. **"Then 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."** Adam and Eve know they have directly disobeyed God and his command. They are filled with shame and fear because they feel this new emotion called guilt, but they aren't certain what they should do with their guilt.

Adam and Eve heard God coming in the garden and they instantly know what they want to do with their guilt. They want to hide it. How? They try to hide it by literally hiding themselves from God. They scurry into the woods and try to prevent God from being able to see them because they hope that if God can't find them it means they won't have to own up to what they did because God can't confront them about what they did wrong.

Adam and Eve are hiding in the trees. They are scared and afraid. Will God find them? What will he say to them? They know they are guilty, but they don't want to face it. It hurts too much to admit what they have done. How often in your own lives don't you know the exact turmoil which has flooded Adam and

Eve's heart? Where you have done something which you feel guilty about, but you're afraid to admit you've done something wrong because it hurts too much?

Maybe it is the time when you're talking badly about someone behind their back and they actually hear you. Or when you think no one is looking and you help yourself to something which isn't yours and you turn around and are caught red handed. Or the shame of having something on your screen which you shouldn't and your spouse or boss or parents or teacher catches you right in the act and you can't deny it. What do you do with your guilt?

Adam and Eve tried to hide their guilt, but all their hiding did was to create turmoil and trouble in their hearts. God knew the trouble and turmoil which was storming in their hearts. He didn't like seeing his beloved creatures struggling and stressed by their sins. What does he do to relieve the guilt and turmoil? He reaches out to them in love which only a creator can have for his created. **"But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'"**

"He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.' And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"

The Lord seeks his creatures out. He knows what they have done and in love he reaches out to them. Yes, he confronts them in their sin, but he gives them a chance to confess what they have done wrong instead of zapping them into a carbon spot and sending them to hell and starting over with someone else. What does God want you to do with the guilt of your sin? He wants you to confess it rather than trying to hide it.

What should you do when your loose tongue gets you into trouble? Or you are caught stealing? Or are looking at or reading things you shouldn't be? God wants you and me to confess our sins. He doesn't want us to hide it. He doesn't want us to try and cover it up. He wants us to confess our sins and admit we are guilty. How come? It is because confession is the first step towards forgiveness. Confession means I recognize I need forgiveness.

I don't know if you realized it or not, but Adam and Eve did confess their sin. I know at first glance it doesn't sound like it. Adam blamed Eve (and God by extension) for what he had done while Eve blamed the serpent. Yet, did you notice what they both admitted and didn't deny? They both admitted to God that they ate the fruit which God had told them not to eat. They didn't deny it or cover up this key fact. They both imperfectly confessed their sin.

How did God respond to their confession? **"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."** God responded to their confession by issuing the very first promise of a savior. Yes, Adam and Eve's confession was imperfect, but God responded with perfect love. He would send a savior to remove the guilt which had flooded Adam and Eve's hearts. He would make things right with God.

He would remove the guilt of sin by winning a victory over the serpent who had deceived Adam and Eve. This first promise gives us a glimpse at what would happen. God's promised savior would crush the serpent's head while the serpent would strike at the savior's heel. The New Testament allows us to see the way God fulfilled this promise. Jesus is God's promised savior. He has won the victory over Satan and removed the guilt of our sin, but it cost him because he needed to suffer and die to win forgiveness.

Satan certainly struck at Jesus' heel. Jesus was beaten, whipped and hung on a cross while suffering the pains of hell which our guilt has earned us to ensure you and me never would have to experience them. Our confession demonstrates the fact we know we need a savior and a love for our savior. The reason God wants us to confess our sins to him is because he wants to comfort us with his soothing message of forgiveness which he provides to us through Jesus' death and resurrection.

What does God want you to do with the guilt of your sin? He wants you to confess it and then to be comforted by his love for you. He wants your heart to be at peace because it is filled with the love and joy only his forgiveness can provide. He wants to lift away the burden you feel because you bad mouthed someone. His forgiveness removes the guilt you have from stealing. His forgiveness removes the shame and provides healing for people who look at inappropriate things on screens.

God's forgiveness is wonderful, but man is it hard to confess what you've done wrong, isn't it? Wouldn't you rather hide the bad you did? Or explain away the words you said? Or deny you were taking something which isn't yours? Or cover up what you shouldn't have been looking at? How often don't we refuse to accept responsibility even when caught in the act? What makes it so hard to just come clean and confess what we've done?

It's hard because you and I are sinners who don't like admitting we've done wrong. What can change our hearts? Only God's love for you can change your heart. **"But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'"** God can reach out to you in a variety of ways. He might do it through a concerned parent or friend. He could speak to you through the words of an elder or pastor. What is his whole goal? He wants you to understand the depth of your sins before him.

The amazing thing is God won't leave you twisting in the guilt of your sin. Once you have heeded his call to repent of your sins God will immediately reassure you that you are forgiven in his sight. How can we know he will do this? The savior he promised Adam and Eve is your savior too, **"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."** Lord, thank you for our savior. Amen.