

Text: Genesis 3:8-15

Theme: Spiritual Hide and Seek Is No Game

Date: July 25, 2006 (Pentecost 3)

In the name of Christ Jesus, dear Christian friends,

How many times haven't you witnessed a group of children gathered in the neighborhood, a park or a campground. The one designated covers his/her eyes and begins to count: ONE...TWO... THREE etc. until he/she gets up to EIGHT... NINE...TEN; ready or not here I come. At the count of ten the eyes are opened and the hunt begins for by now everyone else has disappeared from sight. Carefully and quietly, the search is underway, under bushes, behind trees, in the hope to find where all are hiding. By now, you have probably figured out the scene just described. It's your classic game of hide and seek. The object of the game is to hide and stay hidden from the person who is "it." If the person who is "it" isn't able to find you, then you win. But if he does find you, then he wins and you lose. Hide and seek can be an enjoyable childhood game.

Our text for today describes a similar situation. However, it's no game and no one is laughing. Adam and Eve were trying to hide from God. They were hiding from God because they were afraid. And if God had not searched for them and found them, Adam and Eve would not have been declared the winners. They would have been the real losers, forever lost in sin and doomed to eternal death. Because we are children of Adam and Eve, each one of us has inherited Adam's sin. We were created in the image of our sinful parents. Because of our sinful thoughts, words and deeds, we try and hide from God and his Word. In our sin we do not want to be found. But God's Word reminds us today that unless we are found we will be lost forever. On the basis of God's Word for today, may the Holy Spirit teach us to know that *Spiritual hide and seek is no Game.*

1. We hide because of our sin

The account of the fall into sin is a familiar one. Satan approached Eve in the Garden in the form of a serpent to tempt her. God had planted two trees in the middle of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were free to eat the fruit of every other tree in the garden, but God commanded them not to eat of that one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent insisted that God wasn't being honest. He was keeping something from them. Satan told Eve that if she ate the forbidden fruit, she would become like God, knowing good and evil. You know the rest of the story. Eve did eat the fruit. She gave some to Adam, and then their eyes were really opened. They felt guilt and shame because they disobeyed God's command. And even though they realized a meeting with God was inevitable, they still tried to hide among the trees of the garden.

Apparently, Adam and Eve were content to wallow in sin for the rest of their lives because they had no desire to confront God and confess their sin to him. The Lord had every right to strike them down, to make a crater out of the place where they were standing. God could have scrapped his plan for a perfect world and started over, but he didn't. Instead of using brute force, God called out to them with a simple question: WHERE ARE YOU? As always, God was looking out for the best interests of his people. He didn't ask them where they were because he couldn't find them. He knew where they were hiding and he knew why they were hiding. God called out to them with this question because he wanted to give them the opportunity to come forward and confess what they had done.

Sin may have been new to Adam and Eve, but it already had a firm grasp on them, and it wasn't about to let go. Adam replied: **I HEARD YOUR VOICE IN THE GARDEN, AND I WAS AFRAID BECAUSE I WAS NAKED, SO I HID.** This was the perfect time for a confession, a golden opportunity to fall down at God's feet and beg for mercy. But instead of coming clean, Adam replied with a half-truth. He was afraid. That much was true. That's why he was hiding. But he was not afraid just because he was naked. He was afraid for his life because of what he had done.

God was not about to accept excuses, but he remained patient. He asked two more questions to get to the heart of the matter. Number One: **WHO TOLD YOU THAT YOU WERE NAKED?** And Number Two: **HAVE YOU EATEN FROM THE TREE THAT I COMMANDED YOU NOT TO EAT FROM?**

These questions gave Adam yet another opportunity to confess. Even though the sin was still fresh in their minds, Adam and Eve were already set in their sinful ways. They were too stubborn, too proud to admit their sin, so they made excuses. Adam went first: THE WOMAN YOU PUT HERE WITH ME—SHE GAVE ME SOME FRUIT FROM THE TREE, AND I ATE IT. To paraphrase, Adam was saying: "Yes God, I admit it. I did eat the fruit, but it's not my fault. Eve is the one to blame because she gave it to me. And because you created her, God, you're really the one who's responsible for all of this." See one sin gave birth to others. Adam went from disobeying, to denial, to blaming his wife, to blaming God himself.

Eve wasn't about to be outdone. She was just as sinful as Adam was, and she gave an equally sinful response: **THE SERPENT DECEIVED ME, AND I ATE.** In so many words, Eve tried to tell God, "The devil made me do it." But the serpent didn't force Eve to take the fruit. And Eve didn't force it down Adam's throat either.

Adam and Eve were responsible for their own actions. Deep, deep down, they knew it. They knew that God would hold them accountable. They knew that they deserved to be punished. They knew that they deserved death. That's why they tried to hide. Adam and Eve's feeble attempts to shift the blame were the first excuses in the history of the world, but unfortunately they were not the last.

Adam and Eve's descendants have learned all too well from their sinful parents. If anything, we are even more eager to point fingers today.

[In this day and age, responsibility and accountability are concepts on the endangered species list.](#) We are led to believe that if we do something wrong, it's not our fault. Blame those in authority. Their laws are wrong. The system is unfair. Blame it on your childhood. You can't help what you do because of the way you were raised. If you wait around long enough, science may find a genetic reason that will explain away any and every sinful behavior. [Excuses, excuses, excuses.](#) Why are excuses so popular? Why do people so quick to blame others? People have to resort to excuses to comfort themselves because, without God in their lives, they have nowhere else to turn. If they can't lay their sins on Jesus, then the only way they can get rid of them is to put them on others. And as long as they refuse to admit that they are responsible, that they are to blame, they will remain hopelessly lost.

[Like Adam and Eve, at one time we were lost in our sins.](#) [We tried to hide](#) from God because we feared his wrath and punishment. Just as God searched for and found Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, [our God has loved us from the beginning and has found us](#) by his grace. God has found us. We have God in our lives, but do we sometimes act like those who do not have God in their lives? God invites us to come to him for forgiveness. Do we rejoice and believe in his invitation? Or do we reject it, thinking that we don't really need it? When we measure ourselves on the morality scale next to the rowdy neighbor, the dishonest co-worker, the foul-mouthed friend, we can become quite comfortable, even complacent. We may not be the best people who ever lived, but we certainly aren't the worst.

[This kind of "excuse me" attitude is very dangerous.](#) If we fail to feel the full weight of our own sin, then we easily lose sight of our need for a Savior. Every sin offends God. Every sin makes him burn with anger. All it takes is one sin to separate a person from God eternally. And when God sits on the throne of judgment on the Last Day, he will not be accepting excuses.

2. God Seeks us out because of his love

[Because of our sin, we try to hide from God like Adam and Eve did.](#) But thankfully, God doesn't let us hide behind our sin. He doesn't let us destroy ourselves. He reaches out and he finds us. Not because we deserve it. Not because we are special. Only because he loves us. God's love for his creation was evident already in the beginning. Even though Adam and Eve had forsaken God, God did not forsake Adam and Eve. Still, sin had its consequences. The first sin ruined God's perfect creation. The first sin meant death for all people. The first sin made life into a painful struggle. But these small consequences were nothing compared to God's judgment on Satan, the agent of sin. In the Garden, the Serpent won a victory, but it didn't take God very long to demonstrate that he was still in control. Moments after sin entered the world, God revealed his plan to take sin away. He promised to send a Savior to destroy the Devil's work. When God sent Jesus, the Seed of the woman, Satan did not give up. He worked even harder. He bared his fangs, and tried to inject Jesus with his poison again and again. He tempted Jesus three times. He turned his own people against him. He caused his followers to desert him.

[On Good Friday, it looked like the Devil had won, but his apparent victory spelled his final defeat.](#) The battle that began with a tree in the Garden of Eden ended with a tree on Calvary. The Serpent struck at Jesus' heel, and Jesus cried out, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"* (Mt. 27:46)? But those were not his last words. In his dying breaths, Jesus declared: *"It is finished"* (Jn 19:30), and crushed Satan forever.

[God promised Adam and Eve that he would send a Savior, the seed of the woman, to crush the serpent's head.](#) This first gospel promise was enough for Adam and Eve. Later in Genesis, God promised Abraham that through his offspring all nations on earth would be blessed. God promised King David that he would establish his kingdom forever. And when the time had fully come, thousands of years after God made the first promise in the Garden, he faithfully fulfilled his promise. Where we could only offer excuses, Jesus offered himself. He took on Satan and won. He took the sins of Adam and Eve to the cross, and they are gone. He carried your sins to the cross, and they are gone. He took your guilt to the cross, and it is gone.

[Jesus' work is clearly laid out for us in the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.](#) It is our privilege to read about Jesus' life, his miracles, his teachings, his suffering, death & resurrection.

[May God's Spirit ever teach us to run to God instead of hiding from him.](#) When we are burdened by guilt, we can go to him and find comfort in his love. We learn to expect good from God instead of the evil we deserve. God made good on his promise to Adam and Eve. God keeps all of his promises, and the blessings are ours. Now God reaches out to us, but not with threats of punishment. He has found us by grace and gives us life through his Son. Amen.