**GENESIS 3:8-15**

**OFFERING FORGIVENESS**

 The serpent had contradicted God’s warning that eating the forbidden fruit would cause death. He deceived the woman into thinking that God had withheld something from her of great benefit that she could get by eating of this forbidden fruit. He promised her that she would rise above the creaturely position that God had given her, and that she would become like God.

 However, disobeying God didn’t bring her the great joy that she had expected. Instead, eating of this forbidden fruit brought great shame and guilt to both Adam and Eve, and then it would bring suffering and death to both them and all of creation. It brings death’s shadow to us. We think death is a natural part of life, just like we think sinning is a part of being human. As the saying goes, “To err is human”. However, neither death nor sin were ever meant to be. They’re not part of what it means to be human. They’re a corruption of humanity, something to be overcome, and nothing to be celebrated or excused.

 Yet, that’s where we begin our text. Adam and Eve were hiding from God, and when confronted by God they began with their excuses as to why they broke God’s commandment. Now, God would’ve been within His rights as a just God to destroy both Adam and Eve right where they stood. Destroy them and start all over again. Maybe the next people would get it right.

Yet, God doesn’t do that. God shows His mercy right from the beginning. Adam and Eve are hiding, and God calls to them, “Where are you?” Do you think that God doesn’t know where they are? He knows where they are. What God is doing is giving them a chance to confess, and we see that over and over again in our reading.

They couldn’t undo the damage that they had done, just as we cannot undo the damage that our sins cause by our lies and deception, doing what we ought not to do, and not doing what we ought to do. God would have to fix the damage caused by sin in another way than by our simple confessions. He would have to use another method to restore humanity to Himself so that we could once again have that relationship of walking and talking with God like a casual walk in the garden.

Yet, for starters He asks Adam, “Where are you?” This is the first call for confession in the Bible, and Adam doesn’t pull it off very well. “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” Adam was all of a sudden afraid of God. He had new feelings of fear, guilt and shame.

Yet, God doesn’t condemn him, but instead asks more questions. “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” Again, God knows the answers. He doesn’t ask because He lacks knowledge. He asks because He’s providing the man with an opportunity to confess, which the man only weakly responds to.

Now, as we examine Adam’s weak confession and God’s response, realize that we too have the same opportunity as Adam did. We have the same opportunity to confess before God every day, and at the beginning of every church service, and we also have the same opportunity to hear God’s forgiveness, no matter how weak or pathetic our confessions are, and Adam’s and Eve’s confessions were weak and pathetic.

So what I want to focus on is God’s grace in the midst of our weak confessions and sins that deserve God’s judgment, and not the blame game that Adam and Eve played. Yes, they were caught sinning and they should’ve said what they did wrong – as some people say, “Name it and claim it”. When we sin, we need to say more than a pathetic “I’m sorry”, or worse blame someone else for what we did, as both Adam and Eve did. We need to say that we did such and such, and it was entirely my fault, my whole fault, and nothing but my fault. However, that’s rarely how we confess. Mostly we confess like Adam and Eve did, weakly and with excuses.

The more important question here is, ‘How is God acting?’. God is acting like the Good Shepherd seeking His lost sheep who are hiding, not only physically from God, but also in the words that they speak to God and their attitude towards God. “The woman who you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ‘Yes, God, I sinned, but it’s you’re fault, and her fault.’ Eve made her confession in a similar sort of way. ‘Yes, God, I did it, but it’s his fault!’ “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Yes, both of their confessions are truthful, but neither are taking responsibility for what they did. From our way of thinking most of us wouldn’t forgive someone who confessed to us in such a way. ‘Yes, I told lies about you around town, or betrayed your secrets’, you fill in the blank as to what you did, but you did it because someone else was rude or mean to you, and put you in a bad mood. So it’s their fault. Should that other person then repent for what you did? Crying out that the devil made me do it isn’t really the best way to confess our sins, but that’s often how we react, because we don’t understand the severity of sin.

And because we don’t really understand the nature of sin, and what it’s doing to us, God comes to us in our lost and sinful state. As the Scriptures say, “while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Romans 5:10). So that’s where God turns to. The confessions of Adam and Eve were pathetic and they wouldn’t fix anything that they had broken and so God turns to the only way that our sins can be completely dealt with. He turns to His Son.

Well, first He turns to Satan and doesn’t even give him a chance to confess, but only says, “Because you have done this”. He curses Satan, and tells him that his destruction is coming. This is where God deals with our sins, not primarily in our confessions, but rather in the destruction of Satan and all of his evil ways by God’s Son, Jesus. “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (3:15).

This is the first promise of the salvation that Jesus would accomplish on the cross. It’s repeated again in Psalm 7:16. “His mischief returns upon his own head, and on his own skull his violence descends.” Thousands of years later Jesus would be born of Mary, and when He was condemned and crucified He would receive the punishment that Adam and Eve deserved, and that you and I deserve. He died in our place. His death was torturous, burning like the venom of a serpent’s bite, but in the process He bruised the serpent’s head He inflicted an eternally fatal injury upon Satan. So now, even though we remain sinners, Jesus has destroyed Satan’s power to accuse us of our sins. We have no reason to hide in shame and guilt from God. We’re set free to live with God in His glory forever.

Going back to Adam and Eve and how God interacted with them because of their sin we can now see that God wants to draw us into a conversation and a relationship with Him. God isn’t interested in just exposing our sins, but rather to show us that He still cares about us and wants to bring us back to Him by turning us away from our guilt. By listening to our reasons for why we sinned He’s giving us opportunities to confess our sins.

 When we become familiar with the Scriptures we see that God is willing to listen to our life experiences, and not just have us say that we sinned. Rather He helps us to think through why we did what we did. How has that affected our lives and the lives of those around us? The goal is growth, to reestablish a relationship with God and with others rather than hiding from God and family and friends whom we presently have broken relationships with.

 Lay all of your feelings, reasons, or intentions before God, not excusing the act of sin, not taking away the seriousness of sin, but rather rebuilding the relationship through forgiveness.

In God’s promise to nail the serpent for what he did to bring sin into this world, God is promising to nail your sins to the cross through Jesus His Son. Here God is telling us that He understands our sinful nature, and He promises that He’ll never stop searching for us to claim us back His own son or daughter, offering us grace and hope in the face of our sins and fears. Amen.