**February 26, 2023 Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7**

***Come Home Running***

**Scripture:** *Genesis 2:15–17; 3:1–7 NRSV*

*(15)The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. (16)And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; (17)but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."*

*(3:1)Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (2)The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; (3)but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" (4)But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; (5)for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (6)So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. (7)Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.*

**Notes:**

1. ***Abundant*** ***Provision***; the vast provision of God.
   1. God has provided abundantly for ***humanity***.
   2. God has created a ***boundary*** for humanities well-being.
2. ***Blame*** the Serpent.
   1. The role of the serpent is to ***tempt*** Adam and Eve.
   2. They all fixate on the ***boundary***.
   3. Humanity is to ***trust*** God.
3. ***Blame*** the Woman
   1. ***Both*** Adam and Eve choose to violate God’s boundary.
   2. The humans realize they are naked; they ***hide*** from God.
4. God still seeks ***relationship*** with humanity.
   1. Take ***responsibility*** for our own actions.
   2. ***Confess*** your sin and ***run*** to God.
   3. Allow God to take your sin and ***redeem*** you.
5. God continues to ***pursue*** us.
   1. This story would have ended differently if Adam and Eve had ran ***toward***God instead.
   2. Come out of ***hiding***, unburden yourselves from your shame.
6. When we hide ***sin*** from God, we hide ***ourselves*** from Him.
   1. We cannot be provided for when we’re hiding, cloaked in ***shame***.
   2. ***Face*** God with your sin, and humbly ask for ***grace*** and ***mercy***.
   3. Run toward God who is already running toward us, so we might ***renew*** our ***relationship*** with Him.

**Script:**

Sin, we define it as a willful disobedience against a known command of God. Do you remember the first time you did something and realized it as a sin? I remember the first time I realized that my actions were sinful. I remember the astonishment at what I had just done, knowing I wasn’t to do it. I remember the feeling in my gut as I worried about the repercussions. I remembered the fear in my mind, as I considered what my punishment might be.

Sin is sometimes treated as a taboo subject. People don’t want to be confronted with or talk about sin. Yet most of us readily agree that sin is a reality in our world; greed, violence, and poverty are just a few examples, examples of the sin that exists in our world. Even if we don’t like to talk about our own sin, we can be quick to point out the sin in the lives of others. The challenge for us is to recognize and admit that sin is something we also fall prey to and participate in.

Lent is a season for confronting our own sin. That’s why Genesis, where sin entered the world, is an ideal place to start this forty-day journey because this story is not just about Adam and Eve and sin entering the world. It’s a story about ourselves. It’s an age-old story we see play out over and over again about humanity choosing our own way over the ways of God. Lent is the season when we confront our sin so we might move into a deeper relationship with God.

Today we begin our Lentin journey in Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-7. We will look at the first man and woman. We will look at the introduction of sin into their lives. And we will see the effect it has had on all of mankind since. Turn with me to Genesis chapter 2 as we begin our reading for today.

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What does this story point us to, and what is it all about? The main point of our passage today is that the Lord supplies our every need it’s called Abundant Provision. It’s easy to start discussions of this text with the prohibition. The one thing Adam and Eve are *not* allowed to do but as we read this passage the emphasis is actually on the vast provision of God. They are free to eat from *any* tree in the garden *except* that one: apples check they are good; peaches, check they are good; brussel sprouts, check they are good. God has provided abundantly for humanity.

There is only one tree, out of the vast abundance of trees, they are not permitted to eat from. God has created a boundary that is for the well-being of humanity. One tree that they are not to eat from. The boundary is: if they eat from this tree they will die. Whether death will be immediate or at some point in the future that is not clear in the text, nor is it important. What’s important is that a consequence for disobedience certain death—has been articulated. This boundary is ultimately about trust: Do Adam and Eve trust that God wants what is good for them? Do Adam and Eve trust that the provision of God is enough? Do Adam and Eve trust that God knows what He is doing?

Adam has been placed in the garden to tend and care for it. Even this purpose demonstrates extravagant provision. He doesn’t have to plan and plant the initial garden; he is simply placed in one that already exists and asked to care for it. Tending the garden gives him the opportunity to live out the creative nature of the image of God. His work is rewarding and fruitful. Caring for the garden leads to even more abundance.

SO we blame the Serpent, it’s all his fault. We aren’t sure what a serpent is; is it a snake? Is it the devil in disguise? Is it a metaphor for idolatry? (All of these options are argued by various scholars.) What’s important here is not defining a serpent but understanding its role, which is to tempt Adam and Eve to violate the boundary. The benefit of not really knowing what a serpent is, is that we can imagine our own temptations in its place. The questions the serpent asks emphasize the crossing of the boundary. Walter Brueggemann says the serpent transforms the boundary God established. The boundary is meant for the good of humanity, but the serpent transforms it in their minds as something good, something good that God is trying to keep from them.

The Serpent takes the attention of Adam and Eve off of God and transfers it onto themselves. They no longer focus on God but they fixate their attention on the boundary and what they may gain from this tree’s fruit. They have every good thing, and they only have one boundary! Yet, suddenly, they fixate on the boundary: they notice that the fruit is pleasing to the eye, that it is good for food, and that it is desirable for gaining wisdom.

This temptation is a temptation to not trust God and to reorder how things are meant to be. Humans have been placed as caretakers of creation, yet here is creation trying to rule humanity. Humanity is supposed to trust God, yet here they are questioning if God is trustworthy. Ultimately the choice to violate the boundary is the choice of Adam and Eve. They choose to abdicate their caretaker role, instead becoming subject to creation. They choose not to trust that God wants what is best for them.

Maybe we should blame the Woman. In the exchange with the serpent, the “you” pronouns are plural in Hebrew, indicating that both Adam and Eve have been and are responsible for observing the boundary God set regarding the one tree, even if the serpent is only addressing the woman directly. Verse 6 tells us that Adam has been with her the whole time. Ultimately, *both* choose to eat the fruit. *Humanity* has sinned. It is not that one particular person has sinned and then caused another to sin. The choice is made by both Adam and Eve to violate God’s boundary. The shifting of blame begins in verses 12 and 13. Adam blames Eve, and Eve blames the serpent. Their violation of the boundary fractures their relationship with God, and their unwillingness to take responsibility for their actions they shift the blame to each other, which fractures their relationship with each other.

Who is to blame? What would you have done? How would you have felt? We are able to see their shame immediately as they try to hide from God. The humans sew clothes for themselves, why? Because they realize they are naked. It doesn’t take long for their guilt over the sin to turn into shame, which causes them to hide from God.

How might this story have ended if Adam and Eve didn’t hide? We often want to ask what would have happened if the first humans didn’t sin, but an important question to ask is, what if they had admitted their sin to God, instead of hiding from God? These passages have demonstrated God’s abundant provision and God’s trustworthiness. We also see that, despite their sin, God still seeks relationship with humanity, so what if the humans had chosen to run toward God instead of away? Would the consequences have been the same? What if the actual sin here is more about the hiding . What if the actual sin here is the failure to take responsibility for the disobedience. What if the actual sin is less about the disobedience itself?

This idea of hiding instead of confronting our sin is important. Romans 3:23 tells us that “all have sinned.” There is no shame in sinning. We all do it. And we experience the consequences of our sins. But then what? Do we run toward God and confess our sin? Or do we turn away from God. Do we try to hide our disobedience from both God and ourselves? Instead of blaming others, we need to take responsibility for our own actions. Instead of layering ourselves with shame upon shame, we need to confess our sin, we need to turn away from our sin and run to God. Instead of hiding when we feel convicted, we need to allow God to take our sin and redeem us so we can begin to be healed and restored.

Lent is a season in the church calendar that is set aside for the confrontation of sin. 1 John 1:9 states: “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*.” Throughout Scripture we see a God who pursues humanity in spite of sin. In spite of humanity hiding, in spite of humanity running away, God continues to pursue us. In the story of the prodigal son, when the son walks toward the father, the father *runs* toward the son. So we can say with confidence that this story would have ended differently if Adam and Eve hadn’t run from God because of their sin but ran *toward* God instead.

It is a time to stop shifting blame, it is time to come out of hiding, come out from the bushes, and unburden yourselves from the shame we’ve crafted for ourselves. The question isn’t whether we’ve sinned. The question is are we trying to hide our sin from God. When we try to hide our sin from God, we are ultimately hiding our full selves from the presence of God as well. Just like Adam and Eve, God seeks to provide abundantly for us, and we cannot be provided for when we’re hiding in the bushes, when we are cloaked in shame. What if Adam and Eve had run toward God instead of running away from God?

During Lent, may we stop running in the wrong direction. Let’s collectively face God with our sin, and humbly ask for grace and mercy. Let’s run toward the one who is already running toward us, so that we might renew our relationship with God, with those around us, and with creation itself. It’s not an easy process, but we will find a God who is full of love and mercy as we travel these forty days together.