



In last week's sermon, we saw how God created a world in which humanity could live naked and unashamed. Meaning, they could live in transparency, love, care – with no threats of hurt or fear. But as soon as Adam and the woman sin, they felt shame. And, from that point in time, humanity has never known the fulness of what naked and unashamed really means. Even in the best of marriages, there's feelings of shame and judgment. What must it have been like before sin? In a post-Fall world, we learn at a very early age that we can't fully trust people. Little children might bite or hit or scream at one another. And, as we grow up, many adults just become more sophisticated in how they treat one another. They might not hurt someone face-to-face, but they will gossip or shun. But, even saying that, we live in a world where there's much abuse and trauma. Gone are the days of "naked and unashamed." Enter the days of nakedness, and we know it.

But why is this the case? We can say "sin," but what does that mean? What *is* sin? Essentially, what we see in the narrative of Adam and Eve's fall, we see that self-exaltation is at the center of sin. Eve was tempted to be like God – in other words, to be at the level of God. And, the temptation is to live apart from God. This is always the essence of sin. **Sin says, "You got this," while making the vain promise to make much of you. Thus, sin is self-centered, and suppresses the truth about God, and self-centeredness means everyone will get hurt.** In the end, sin brings us increased shame. Sure, it may be pleasurable for a season, but in the end, it brings shame between people. And it brings death. This is what we saw in the text we looked at last week, and this is what we see when we look at the world around us.

Yet, sin is expressed all around us. Years ago, I remember watching a movie where a father was talking with his daughter about concerns he had with the boyfriend she had. When the dad asked if she thought it was wise to date this boy, she said something like, "I don't think God would want me to be unhappy." Now, I agree that God wants to give humans his joy, but this message is that my feelings of happiness are the standard – not God. Isn't this what Eve was tempted with? She saw that the fruit was a delight to the eyes. She became the standard. And so we live in a world that elevates us. What makes you happy? Well, then surely God will be ok with that. At this point, don't just be thinking of others. Think of yourself. How do you self-justify? What are things that you say, "Well, God'll be ok with me doing this because x, y, or z. Or, maybe you say, "Yeah, but I'm not as bad as those people over there!"

If you think that way, this message is for you. We're very quick to judge others and very hesitant to take blame ourselves. Why? Because this is part of humanity's response to the Fall. In our effort to self-protect, we also feel impelled to self-justify. We want to self-justify because if we admit wrong, then we feel vulnerable. And vulnerability means I could be crushed. Have you ever felt that way?

This translates not only in our relationships with people, but with God himself. And this is precisely what we see when we move forward in the Genesis narrative. Let's take a few moments to read Genesis 3:8-

13 together: ⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” ¹

The main idea of the sermon this morning is very simple: **Shame breeds fear and excuses.** Already, we know that Adam and Eve have sewed fig leaves to protect themselves from each other. They take matters into their own hands to protect. Now, God shows up. What do we see? Fear and excuses. Is this what God wants for human beings? Please listen carefully. Many people tend to accuse God as though he’s a miser and a killjoy. They think God’s the one who wants to get rid of fun. But look at the narrative. Who is the killjoy? The serpent and our own sinfulness. Sin kills joy – not God. And sadly, if we don’t have the right response to sin, and if we remain self-centered, we will only increase in fear and making excuses for ourselves. As a result, we run from the communion and joy we were made for – we run from God himself.

This past week, I came across a quote that I think aptly describes this text today: **Grace will expose the depth of your sin while it astounds you with the extent of God’s mercy** (Paul Tripp, social media). In knowing more of this Genesis account, we know this is what God is intending to do. To say it more basically, I’ll quote from the hymn *Amazing Grace*: **‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.** Adam and the woman need to not only feel how far they’ve fallen. They need to know against whom they have rebelled. In order to fully appreciate forgiveness, they need to know what they deserve. Isn’t that what Jesus himself says in his ministry when he speaks of Mary anointing Jesus’ feet, ⁴⁷ **Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.**² When you know how deeply and freely you’ve been forgiven, that leads to greater love and awe for God.

Now, you might be thinking, “Why are you saying all of this? Where do we see this in this story with Adam and Eve?” Alright, now we can jump in, and I first want us to see that

1. Shame breeds fear.

It’s not only that shame breeds fear with people, where we see Adam and Eve sew fig leaves to protect from each other. But we move on in this story to see that when God shows up in the Garden, Adam and his wife hid themselves from God’s presence. Adam himself admits to God that he was afraid because he was naked – not simply meaning that God could see his nakedness, but the idea of nakedness implies shame as well. He is shamefully naked. Adam is afraid of God. Is this God’s intention for humanity? Does God want humans to live forever being afraid of him? No! He didn’t create them to cower away from him. He created them as the highest of all beings to ascend to the heights of communal relationship with him and to image forth his glory to others! Yet, fear has controlled Adam and Eve.

And notice here that this fear leads Adam and Eve to do stupid things. They hid. Do they really think God won’t see them? This makes me think of children when they disobey. I remember a couple of times in

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:8–13.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 7:47.

my childhood when I knew I was in trouble, and I ran to hide somewhere. I remember thinking that if I had my covers over me, maybe I wouldn't be seen. If I can't see my dad, he can't see me. But that's foolish! And actually, to live that way only makes the problem worse. What we need is reconciliation. But when we hide away from God, we continue to divide. And we continue to maintain our self as central.

How is God going get Adam and Eve to humble themselves before God and reject sinful fear? The first thing we see is that **God appears in his sin-stripping, humility-inducing glory.** Look at verse 8 again: they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. . .³ How do I get this from the narrative? The phrase **cool of the day** is an interesting Hebrew phrase. The word "cool" actually shows up earlier in Genesis. Do you know where? Genesis 1:2. Let me read it: **And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**⁴ Where's the word "cool?" Exactly. Now, this word could be translated as cool or wind or breath. But this is the Hebrew word for "Spirit." I think it would make much more sense that within this tight storytelling of Moses that Moses isn't going to switch ideas of this word so quickly. The Spirit in Genesis 1:2 who judges the chaos and brings order – and after everyday, makes things good – is the same Spirit who shows up in this chaos. Disorder, sin, shame have arisen. Now, the Spirit descends again. So, I think a better translation of Genesis 3:8 would be, **"They heard the sound of the Lord God traversing the garden as the Spirit of the Day."** Again, the Spirit who brought forth good each day from seeming chaos has now descended on the garden. And when the Spirit comes, he comes in judgment. So, we do get ideas of wind and storm when the Spirit's judgment comes. I think this fits the picture of what's taking place in the garden. God the Spirit is descending on the Garden, in a sense, like a storm cloud.

I think this is a more faithful idea to the context of Genesis 1-3, and I think this fits the original audience who would be reading Genesis. Do you remember who the original audience is? The wandering Israelites. Where would they have seen God's glory descending like a storm? On Mt. Sinai! In that narrative, Moses alone could go all the way to see the glory of God, and the Israelites couldn't even touch the mountain. They stood back. Why? Because they felt and knew their shame. But why did Moses go? Because God called him closer. And, even on the mountain, God protected Moses.

This brings out an important truth when we think about the affects of sin. If you know your security in God, you aren't afraid of his glory – you're drawn to it – even if it's like a storm cloud. But if you know your shame, you hide. This is reiterated in the psalm we read earlier in the service. In Psalm 18: ²⁶ **with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous.**⁵ Take time to read Psalm 18 and see the description of God coming like the storm and riding on the clouds. But we see here that your status affects how you view God. If you have been purified by God. Meaning, if you have been forgiven by him and you are in right standing with him, you see him as absolutely pure. You're drawn to him. But if you're crooked, you're going to judge everything about God and view him negatively.

Having said this, can you imagine the scene now? God is descending on the chaotic garden, like a storm, ready to judge. Adam and Eve run to hide. But God won't allow them to hide. This is mercy. God, in his mercy wants to strip Adam and Eve of self-reliance. His grace is teaching their heart to fear. In mercy, he's exposing the depths of their sin. They haven't just taken fruit from a tree. They have rebelled against the eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, Creator and owner of all of this. They have destroyed his

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:8.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 1:2.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ps 18:26.

beautiful creation. Everything now is shattered. In tremendous display of his glory and judgment, Adam and Eve are becoming more aware of what horror they've committed.

They can't stay hidden. Verse 9 says God calls for the man and asks, "Where are you?" It's interesting, isn't it, that God calls for the man, isn't it? He doesn't call for the woman. He calls for the man. And, in God speaking, he speaks in the singular to Adam (until he directly speaks to Eve). Why is this the case? I believe this shows something about God's created order. Some like to use the word "leadership" when talking about how God created men. They'll say men are the leaders and women are to submit. However, both those words have fallen prey to all sorts of abuse. And, actually, you'll never find the word "lead" connected to the role of husbands in the Bible. Did you know that? Instead, I think some more understandable words in our context are responsibility and accountability. God created Adam with the greater responsibility and accountability before God. Oh, how I wish men would instead think this way. Instead of men saying, "I'm the leader, and you need to submit," I wish they'd say, "God has given me greater responsibility and accountability before him." This ought to change how you behave and act.

Even though Eve took the fruit first, Adam is held ultimately responsible and accountable for the Fall. God says "Where are you?" and Adam responds, confessing his fear because he was naked. By the way, notice how Adam doesn't answer the question. He doesn't say, "Here I am." In fear, he brings an excuse as to why he's hiding. It's as if he thinks that God will understand why he's hiding if he just gives this excuse. But the excuse actually indicts him! Adam reveals something's wrong. And God presses the point: "**Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?**"⁶ This takes us to the second point:

2. Shame breeds excuses.

Adam is caught red-handed. What's he going to do? Verse 12 gets his response: The man said, "**The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.**"⁷ In the more literal Hebrew, Adam's response is: **The woman, whom you gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate** (as quot. in Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, p. 144). God isn't asking for all the details. He's calling Adam to confess. But do you see all the ways Adam seeks to excuse himself so he doesn't feel vulnerable? First, he throws his wife under the bus. Then he reminds God that God was the one who gave Adam the woman (the woman, by the way, that he joyfully received). And then he emphasizes that far from the woman helping, she gave the fruit to him. But, Adam can't get around the confession that he ate. Oh, how I wish we would see how shame and fear affects our confessions. When you're driving on the road and someone drives bad, do you justify your sinful anger and judgment because "they're stupid?" When you feel fear or anxiety or sinful anger, do you justify yourself or do you just say, no matter what they did, I was wrong. Or, do you say, "nobody's perfect," and not care? Hold on! If you are God's child, he's given you the Holy Spirit so that you can grow in obedience, not so that you can tolerate sin. Will you confess or self-justify?

And by the way, confessing sin doesn't mean that others are off the hook for their sins. But, the reality is that we ourselves must not self-justify. We all need God – no matter what others do. This reminds me of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 6 is a famous chapter where Isaiah is transported to the throne room of God and we're given this awesome picture of a throne high and lifted up, and the temple shaking, and smoke filling the temple. Eventually, Isaiah is so confronted with the Lord's glory that he says, "Woe is me." His response isn't, "Woe is everyone else." He believes that he deserves to be condemned by God because

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:11.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:12.

he himself is a sinner. What's interesting about this is that in chapter 5, Isaiah's prophecies are judgments to others. But once Isaiah is confronted with God's glory, he points the finger at himself. But after the Lord says Isaiah is forgiven, Isaiah is ready and willing to go and tell others of God's message of judgment and mercy.

God is calling Adam to confess. And that's always what God is calling people to do. No more self-justifying. Confess. If you don't confess, you don't admit your need. But at least, even to a very small degree, Adam admits. And then God turns to Eve: **"What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."**⁸ In modern vernacular, God's question is more like, "What were you thinking?" There's an emphasis on the utter foolishness. She, like Adam, rules under God's rule to bless all creation and expand the expression of God's glory over the earth. Yet, instead, she ate.

But here's something so intriguing. Her response. While it follows a similar pattern as Adam's in emphasizing the serpent first, her response is more honest. Actually, when the New Testament talks about Eve, they say these exact things: the serpent deceived her. While I am not sure on this, I think that Eve actually might have a true confession here. If God's question is more like, "What were you thinking," she's explaining. And the word "deceived" is not a word that is so much an excuse as it is a sad admission. It means that she fell prey to deception. She's responsible for that. If this is the case, then I think that we see in this narrative that woman may have been first to rebel, she's also first to be vulnerable before the Lord - thus being an example and help to Adam. This would fit New Testament teaching that says that the woman faith can have spiritual influence in her husband.

Whatever the case may be, we see that God doesn't simply want to judge. He wants to restore relationship. That's why he's calling for confession. Do you know this is what God wants with you, too? So many times in the Old Testament, God reveals his glory through smoke, fire and storm. Whether on Mt. Sinai or with Isaiah or with Elijah on the mountain or when God descends on the tabernacle or the Temple. But do you know that every time he does this, he does so in order to speak mercy to those who deserve judgment? Then we enter into the New Testament. God's glory is revealed in Jesus, and when Jesus goes to the cross, taking people's sin on himself, and when he dies, we're told there's an earthquake. God is speaking! Judgment was placed on Jesus, and mercy has come. If you turn from your self-justifying and excuses, and confess.

But you say, "if I confess, then I'm vulnerable before God who is my Judge! He'll kill me! He said the punishment was death!" And what's so beautiful and astonishing, which we'll talk even more about in the weeks to come, is that God says, "You're right. Death is the punishment. And God the Son took the death." Therefore, when we look in the New Testament, after Jesus ascended up into Heaven, he sent the Spirit. And what happened? The Spirit descended in what form? Like flames of fire. It affects people's speech. And Paul, in talking with the Corinthians about tongues says this is a sign of judgment. But it's always judgment to point to mercy!

The question for you today is, **"Has grace taught your heart to fear, and has grace relieved your fears? Are you going to embrace your shame, fear and excuse-making or are you going to confess and find reconciliation with God?"** Are you going to point the fingers at others or are you going to say, "It's me." Adam and Eve were in a perfect environment with a perfect Father, and they still made excuses. But we have no excuses. They're just fig leaves. It's just hiding. Won't you turn to God who is holy, holy, holy, and is calling you to back to himself?

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 3:13.