

## Adam – the man who tried to hide from God. Bethesda Coffee Morning. 31 October 2007.

The set reading for this morning comes from the first book of the Bible ... **Gen. 2. 7; 2. 25; 3. 1a, 6b-9, 21.**

The title for this morning's talk is 'The man who tried to hide from God'.

And we begin by asking, why? Why did the man try to hide? And the Bible answers that question for us, for, from his hiding place among the trees, Adam confessed to God, 'I was afraid because I was naked'.

And yet, in many ways, that was an odd explanation. And not least because, as we read, Adam and Eve had been naked from the moment of their creation. The fact was, and Adam knew it, that what had changed was not that he had just become naked, but that his nakedness had just become a problem for him. And, what is more, Adam knew why he now felt different. For he and his wife had sinned. And it had been then that 'the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked', v. 7.

For, alas, before God ever entered the scene in Genesis 3, sin already had.

The truth was that Adam and Eve had eaten forbidden fruit – the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. On Saturday and Sunday I was in Appledore, Devon. And a young Chinese student there wanted to know why God created that Tree.

Well, when God made man, He didn't make a creature who would worship and serve Him mindlessly. Far from it! For God placed enormous value upon man's free and loving response of obedience and worship. So much so that, though, being God, He knew in advance of man's rebellion and sin – and the enormous cost to Himself and His Son, the Lord Jesus, of launching His great rescue mission, He still gave man the priceless gift of freedom – gave him a will capable of making its own choices. I remember our oldest grandson, Kieran, when about five, who, if told to do something he didn't want to, had the habit of copying his friend Nick, "I can't; I am a robot". And God could, of course, have created and programmed a creature which would always have said "No" to evil and "Yes" to good - to have done God's will – infallibly and at all times. But what pleasure would that have brought either to God or to His puppet? But if obedience is to be loving, willing and free there must be the possibility of *disobedience*. And so there needed to be, at the very least, some kind of probation – some examination, if you like – by which man's love and obedience could be tested. Hence this particular tree.

Enter the serpent, the devil! And the rest, as they say, is history. As you know, tonight is Halloween – in origin a pagan, Celtic festival – which many see as a time of innocent fun and amusement. That is as may be but the Bible teaches us that there *are* very *real* powers of darkness, and that, presiding over that vast kingdom, there is the great overlord of evil himself – namely, the devil.

Yes, Adam and Eve had sinned – and were already beginning to discover the horrendous price tag. And so Adam says, not 'I was ashamed – or embarrassed – because I was naked' but 'I was afraid' – the first mention of fear in the Bible.

For Adam knew God to be holy – Adam knew the penalty which God had pronounced on sin ... death – spiritual, physical and eternal – and Adam knew that God had not been joking! He therefore had every reason to fear and to do the best he could to hide.

I said that, in many ways, Adam's nakedness was an odd explanation for his fear – that Adam and Eve had been naked from the moment of their creation. But I had a second reason. For, in truth, Adam and Eve were *now* less naked than they had ever been. For the very first thing which they did after disobeying God was to sew broad fig-leaves into aprons – into tunics – for themselves to hide their shame – and, it could be said, I suppose, in so doing to have commenced the clothing industry!

But clearly man's attempt to cover himself by his own efforts failed to satisfy even *himself* – let alone God. For, in spite of his self-manufactured fig-leaf suit, Adam *still* spoke to God in terms of being 'naked'. Adam and Eve no doubt regarded the tunics they wore as adequate to cover themselves *from one another* – but when Adam heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden, all his fig leaves were as nothing.

And so the man tried to hide from God – among the very trees which God Himself had made! Which, of course, the man could not. Many centuries later, the Lord asked through the prophet Jeremiah, 'Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so that I shall not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?', Jer. 23. 24.

But, wonderfully, Adam's action led to the first game of hide *and seek*. For, though Adam was certainly not seeking God – far from it – God was seeking him! Last week, we thought of the Lord's word to Zacchaeus, 'the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost', Luke 19. 10. And here also, right back in Genesis 3, the Lord

came to do just that. Graham spoke to us last week about a man up a tree – because he wanted to see the Lord. Here we see a man behind a tree – because seeing the Lord was the very last thing he wanted!

And the wonderful sequence was that God Himself provided the man and the woman with a *proper* covering<sup>1</sup> – with tunics made, not of fig leaves, but of animal skins, Gen. 3. 20 – animal skins which necessitated, of course, death, blood and sacrifice. The slaughter of the sacrificial victims must have horrific to Adam and Eve. It was their first encounter with death. But there they learnt that, if a sinner is to be covered, a life has to be forfeit, a sacrifice has to be made, blood has to be shed.

And by all this, God was pointing on, of course, to our Lord Jesus. And, if the first question in the *Old* Testament was, as we read, 'Where are *you?*', Gen. 3. 9, the first question in the *New* Testament is that of the wise men from the east, 'Where is *He?*', Matt. 2. 2. And wise men still ask that question. And so I close by referring you, not to Zacchaeus, the man up a tree, or to Adam, the man behind a tree, but to Jesus, the man on a tree – of whom the apostle Peter wrote, 'who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree', 1 Pet. 2. 24 – on the cross, that is.

It is 490 years to the day since Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Church in Wittenburg, which, in one sense, triggered the Reformation. Thesis number 62 reads, 'The true treasure of the Church is the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God'. It was God's grace which Adam needed – and received. And, through the Lord Jesus, God graciously offers us today – not our own self-made tunics of churchgoing, charitable giving or whatever – which the Bible tells us are in God's sight 'as filthy rags', Isa. 64. 6 – but He graciously offers us 'the garments of salvation'.

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### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> 'A tunic (תּוּנֵיךְ), the basic outer garment worn next to the skin, was a long shirt reaching the knees or ankles. Whereas the human couple could only produce inadequate loincloths (3. 7), God provided them with a proper outfit', G. J. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, Word Biblical Commentary, on Gen. 3. 21.