

“Then Their Eyes Were Opened”
Genesis 3:1-21, selected verses
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We know this story so well, don't we?

We know how the serpent spoke to the woman, enticing her to eat of the forbidden fruit: the knowledge of good and evil.

We know how the woman saw how delightful the fruit appeared, and how desirable it would be to taste it.

We know how the woman reached for the fruit, and ate, and gave some to her husband, and he ate.

We know how their eyes were opened, and for the first time, they knew they were naked ... and in their nakedness, for the first time, they were ashamed.

We know how they point fingers at each other in blame ... even after eating the fruit, not really able to grasp the difference between good and evil.

Or maybe it was the case that they *did* know the difference between good and evil, and knowing, couldn't face the truth of their sin.

And maybe we've even notice that they never do apologize. They never do confess their sin. They never take responsibility.

And yet, God seeks them out, and finds them, in spite of their best efforts to hide themselves from God. Because, in the end, there is no hiding from God.

The Psalmist writes:

You have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up ...

You search out my path and my lying down,

And are acquainted with all my ways.

Where can I flee from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

No: there is no hiding from God. In our goodness, and in our sin, there is no hiding from God.

Jesus once said, God is like the shepherd who has 100 sheep, and one wanders away, and even though there are still 99 left, God will search the lost sheep through thick and thin, through night and day, until the lost lamb is recovered.

And God is like the parent who will comb heaven and earth to find the lost child, never giving up, never throwing in the towel, longing for the prodigal to come home.

In our heart of hearts, I hope we know that this story is not just about Adam and Eve, long ago and far away. I hope by now we know that this is the story of Everyman and Everywoman. I hope that we know that this story is about us. About our temptations. About our sin. About our reaching for something that does not belong to us. About our sense that somehow we're exempt from the rules, that somehow, we're special, we're entitled. About our inability to admit that we've failed God and each other and ourselves. About our flimsy self-protectiveness, our meager fig-leaves that we pretend will hide our shame, but only serve as testaments to our self-delusion.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night,'

Even the darkness is not dark to you;

The night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ...

So search me, O God, and know my heart;

Test me, and know my thoughts.

See if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

It is not as if there are no consequences for what Adam and Eve have done. There are always consequences, fall-out for the sins we commit, fall-out that impacts not only ourselves, but everyone around us too.

The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.'

To the woman, God said, 'I will greatly increase your pangs in childbirth; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'

To the man, God said, 'Because you have eaten of the tree I commanded you not to eat, cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'

There are always consequences, aren't there?

Yet this is not how it was supposed to be. It isn't how God created the world to be. God meant for man and woman to be equal. God intended for the earth to provide our sustenance. God planned for the ground to be a friend to us. God, who scooped up dust and dirt and formed it into humankind ... God, who blew his own breath, his own spirit, into us ... God, who birthed us into being in God's own sacred image ... pain and desire, inequity and blood, sweat and tears ... This is not what God intended at the start, when God spoke, and the world came to life, and it was very, very good.

And yet ... and yet, in spite of our foolishness and hubris ... in spite of our presumptuousness that the stop signs don't apply to us, the marriage vows don't apply to us, the alcohol limits don't apply to us, the fair wage rules don't apply to us, the command to love the neighbor, the immigrant, the Muslim, the liberal we despise, the conservative we disdain ... in spite of succumbing to our personal desires, the heck with anybody else ... in spite of succumbing to our personal desires, who cares whether we grieve the heart of God ... in spite of the pain and sorrow and disappointment and rage we have brought to the world ... in spite of all that, God does not give up on us. God, who made us, provides for us a way forward. It may not be perfect anymore. It may not be Eden anymore. It will not be innocent anymore. But God provides a way for us to live in this world we have damaged. God provides a way for us to continue to live.

And then God provides even more: God provides for us grace. For this is how the story *really* ends:

Then the Lord God provided garments of skins for the man and woman, and clothed them.

God covers our shame. God always covers our shame.

And more than that, God provides us a future, and a hope. God provides ... *grace*.

Bit by bit, in the stories of Scripture that follow, watch how it unfolds: how God keeps reaching out again and again and again to the beloved creation with love and life and grace. Watch how God keeps making all things new, in the covenant with Abraham and Sarah. Watch how God keeps seeking and finding the Israelites lost in slavery in Egypt, and in the wilderness. Watch how God keeps clothing the sinful kings and providing a way for the vulnerable people.

Until in the end, God provides more than we could ask or imagine: God provides his own Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the beloved creation ... to repair what we have broken ... to reach, with outstretched arms, to embrace us, to find us, to bring all the lost children home.

Once, in the Garden, Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized their nakedness. They recognized their shame.

But that's not the end of the story. Once, on the road to Emmaus, the risen Lord Jesus was walking with two disciples on the road. And they ate the bread he broke with them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized their Lord. At last, they recognized what God had been providing all along. They recognized God's grace ... God's creating, recreating, loving, amazing grace. Amen.