

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
Rev. Mark Lampley
July 19, 2020

“Eden: He Said, She Said, Jesus Said”
Genesis 3:9-13

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*We hear you earnestly and tenderly calling, calling us, as sinners,
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Where can you be called to action?

Prayer:

Lord, part of us says, “We can’t take it anymore!”

but, all of you says, “I took it on forevermore!”

*We hear you earnestly and tenderly calling, calling us, as sinners,
to come home.*

Thank you, Lord God, that while we were lost, you found us!

*Keep us ever by your side! **Amen.***

(Disclaimer: This text was written to be verbally delivered.)

Sequoyah Hills Presbyterian Church
Knoxville, Tennessee
Rev. Mark Lampley
July 19, 2020

“Eden: He Said, She Said, Jesus Said”
Genesis 3:9-13

We are in the middle of a sermon series on Genesis, the 1st of 66 books. It’s a story about the beginnings of our struggles; the ones we have in following God and getting along with each other, as well as the one God has in dealing with us rogue humans. Spoiler alert, God’s grace prevails over our shortcomings! Grace provides a path, where the road seems unclear and impossible.

Genesis chapter 3, verses 1-7 are about the Fall- into temptation, verses 8 and beyond are the Fallout- where we have to deal with our own agendas.

Next Sunday, Rachel will expand on the consequences of our selfish sin which started with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This week is more playful in tone. Almost childlike with games: a game of hide-and-seek, blame game, and one more I’ll tell you about later. Let’s listen in to the story from Gen. 3:9-13!

My son, Luke, and I have bonded over many things, one of which is 70s, 80s, and 90s rock music. So, it comes as no surprise that I mention a big success song from Billy Joel. In his number 1 hit, “We Didn’t Start the Fire,” he refers to the “fire” as basically the past events that Billy Joel feels 'his generation' is not responsible for. He blames others. The “list song’s” lyrics include brief, rapid-fire allusions to more than 100 headline events between 1949, the year of Joel's birth, and 1989, when the song was released. (I’m waiting for a song of 100 challenging events that could be written about the last 4 months during these uncertain times. No need for accumulating 40 years.) To Billy Joel’s credit, the chorus says, “We didn’t start the fire. No, we didn’t light it. But we tried to fight it.” And elsewhere he says, “*I can’t take it anymore!*”

Maybe WE feel like we can’t take it anymore! Schedules of all kinds constantly changing, kids and parents re-adjusting to teaching timetables and formats, graduates still feeling weary and disappointed because of cancelations, racism still tearing away at our bonds, and financially frustrated business owners and institutions all under their breath... “*I can’t take it anymore!*”

We often want to blame others for the frustrations. Our fingers point to any number of people, counsels, boards and on up the chain. These days we hear blaming going on just about everywhere we look. Some people blame the police; the police blame underfunding. Some politicians blame the other party of politicians. Local authorities say it’s the fault of regional authorities.

You get the picture. Blame, some legitimate, is documented in old narratives through Scriptures and in current narratives like yesterday's news.

It would be expected for God to look at foolish humanity and be exasperated. To say, "*I can't take it anymore!*" Fortunately, this is not the case. According to Genesis 3, we chose our own path, instead of God's. Whether we resist the thought that we are guilty or justify it away, the truth is we are disobedient.

Adam and Eve instigated this long ago and felt naked. Ashamed. As Pastor Jay preached last week, though, their guilt and rebellion plants seeds for God's good. In the Garden of Eden, with the best known 'he said/ she said' blame game, we see their twisted logic. When Adam blamed her, note how he describes their relationship, i.e. the woman YOU [God] gave me. She's the problem. I can hear Adam's tone, *well, YOU gave her to me...wasn't my idea to extract the rib and make her*. Then, Eve similarly blames another. She deflecting says, *wasn't my idea to eat of the fruit. I've been innocently deceived by a wily serpent that YOU [God] put in the garden*. If this were a Shakespearian play, they would say in unison, "*DON'T BLAME ME!*"

I've blamed others before. I've not always taken responsibility for my actions. Sadly, I sometimes prefer to point fingers, so I'm no different from Adam or Eve blaming another. When I think about being this way, to be transparent especially before God, I also feel naked, even though clothed. No place to run. No place to hide. When Karen plops down raw cookie dough balls on the cooking sheet, I confess 10 out 10 times I sneak one, or two, OKAY five! Then, I quickly run off to another room. [Doesn't everyone?]

Galatians 6:7 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will they also reap." [If I don't watch out, I'm going to "reap" around the waist!] **Blame** explicitly jumps out at us as a major theme in this text. But, I'm curious. I wonder, what's the motivation for blame? God starts here, answering our questions with a question.

God to Adam, "Where are you?" It is not from a place of unawareness or ignorance. God doesn't need to install GPS trackers on us. This hide-and-seek is more than physically searching; it's deeper- involving matters of the heart. God is asking for an accounting. God compels his creation to respond. The Lord God lovingly says, *where have you found yourself, my beloved child?* It's like, a grandparent examining a mud-pie-covered child on the doorstep inquiring, *what have you gotten into?*

God approaches sinful man and woman. He reaches out to us first. God doesn't wait for us to confess. God doesn't keep walking past in the gardens we play in. Instead, God COMES, when we have disobeyed or messed up. God counters their uncomfortableness, nakedness and shame with a calm and peace

that's filled with hope. The verb in the original language is so rich! God calls out, invites, summons, beckons, HUDDLE! (Y'all remember football?)

The loving character of God shines through entering our disorder, starting a conversation, and rectifying the problem we couldn't handle. In the Jewish songbook we call Psalm 139, it testifies, "You search me and know me, O Lord." When we become aware of God's presence, often times we are afraid. The word used here is the same as awe, the same that motivates Moses to take his sandals off when God calls him.

We surely feel this unease around God, at times. The old hymn says, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love." When we feel guilty, we have a bad conscience and attempt to evade God or another person. We feel ashamed- first of our uncooperative actions, then of our vulnerable nakedness. It's like coping with this COVID- we fear unsafe exposure; we distance ourselves further and further away from God and neighbor. This is why we need unconditional love and why we need to embrace the knowledge we are, in fact, okay, even when we royally screw up.

Because of humanity's failure to obey in the beginning, we poisoned our world, making it a place without hope and brining on death. Then Grace asks each of us the same question. He asked the first person: "Where are you?" If honest, our answer is that we are in a bad way- lost, hopeless, and stumbling in the dark

BUT God sent his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to solve the problem of sin and death with His death and resurrection. He paid for every person's sin with His obedience and sacrifice. One's trust in Him is how we enter into LIFE, eternal life, beginning here and now; so, we can keep trying to fight the fire, to let the Spirit comfort us when disappointed, to be made one in love.

Since God did all this **great work**, how are WE to respond to this brokenness reversal? To responsibly deal with this solution to our vertical relationship with our Creator and our horizontal relationship with others? The answer is with a game, a game of show and tell.

Show God your thanks! Be grateful for the person we call the second Adam, the Redeemer. Be glad God plants seeds of grace with a simple, loving question. Teach others He atones us after polluting the Garden. Tell them that He restores Eden!

In the 66th book of the Bible, in the last chapter, it says, with Him, there is "no more night, no more pain." He is the **Gate** who says, "If anyone enters by Me, they will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture!" He is the **Resurrection**, who says, "Those who believe in Me, though they may die, yet shall they live!" He is the true **Vine** in the Garden, who says, "If you remain in

Me, I will remain in you and you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing!”

Friends, God is calling...

Where are you?

Where are you- in your relationship today with our Creator?

Where are you- ashamed and needing forgiveness?

Where are you- hiding from God?

Where can you be called to action?

Prayer:

Lord, part of us says, “We can’t take it anymore!”

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