

In the book of proverbs, we read, **“The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion”** (Proverbs 28:1). We can sin and sin and sin. We can keep on doing things that we know are wrong, and we can try to numb our consciences. However, just as the law of gravity cannot be cheated, so too God’s moral law cannot be sidestepped.

The wicked flee when no one pursues. The book of Leviticus speaks of the punishments for God’s people disobeying His law. We read, **“The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues.”** And so it is that we see 1. (oops!) The guilty flee at the rustling of a leaf (Lev. 26:36).

Genesis 3:8—**“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.”** Adam and Eve did what they knew they were not supposed to do. God gave them one rule. One rule! Do not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

It’s like the fire alarm at school. There’s plenty of things you *can* do at school yet pulling the fire alarm isn’t one of them. I can say that in my 20 years of education, pulling the fire alarm was never a big temptation.

You think it would have been easier for Adam and Eve not to eat from the forbidden tree, but that was not the case. They disobeyed God’s command, and now they are hiding. Hiding at the rustling of a leaf as the Lord walked in the garden in the cool of the day.

The Lord made mankind so that we could be in fellowship with one another. He made us so that we could enjoy His presence and enjoy the gifts that He gives us. When we read that Adam and Eve hid from the Lord, this is unnatural. Hiding is not what God intended for us.

Yet for us, perhaps this scenario is all too familiar. It might be easy to blame Adam and Eve for their first transgression. “How could you do such a dumb thing!” But we eat the forbidden fruit every day. We sin and transgress God’s law every day.

The difference is that unlike pulling the fire alarm, the bells and sirens don’t go off immediately. We live in a world of fleeing and hiding, and it’s all we have ever known. Just a little white lie. Just a Facebook message to that old flame from high school to see how she’s been doing. Just a few dollars, who could notice? When we sin, we sin on the down low.

What about when we’re caught? Adam and Eve also give us the template for how sinful humanity responds. **“But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I**

**commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” 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.””** 2. (ugh!) The guilty blame others.

In this text we see the world’s first match of the blame game. God’s moral laws are like the laws of gravity. You can escape them as much as you can escape the law of gravity. Even in space, the law of gravity is still there, still tugging at even the most remote flying objects. We see this as asteroids, space debris, and rocket parts re-enter Earth’s atmosphere.

Guilt has to be dealt with, and usually it plays itself out in the passing of the buck, or the blame game. Adam blames God for giving him Eve, his wife who caused him to fall into sin. Eve then blames the deception of the serpent. Neither one takes responsibility for their actions.

Some things never change. The guilty continue to blame others. It’s always somebody else’s fault. How often when we’re confronted with a sin or wrongdoing, do we jump to blaming others or point out where others have done wrong?

Now to be fair, there are scenarios where there are things that are not our fault. Victims of abuse and harassment are not to blame for those horrible things having happened to them, but even in that case, you see the reality of guilt, and the damage that guilt can do. Oftentimes abusers and harassers will shift their guilt onto the abused and the harassed, and that internalized guilt will add further damage to those who have already been sinned against.

This guilt for sin ricochets around until it finds a target. We know how deadly it is, so we don’t want to be the target. Conversely, perhaps we have been the target of so much blame and guilt for things that we haven’t done that this guilty feeling weighs us down and stops us in our tracks.

**“But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?””** 3. (aha!) The Lord seeks out the guilty. Even though for Adam and Eve, sin made it so that the voice of the Lord calling out to them was bad news, the fact that the Lord sought them out is good news. The Lord seeks out the guilty, and He seeks you out. **EVEN IN THE GARDEN, THE LORD CAME TO SEEK AND SAVE THE GUILTY.**

In the Gospels there’s a story of a tax collector named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus climbs up into a tree to see Jesus passing by. Jesus seeks Zacchaeus out and asks to go to his house. Some people grumbled saying that Jesus was going to be the guest of a man who was a sinner, yet Zacchaeus joyfully receives Jesus and promises to pay back what he owes to those from whom he stole. **“And Jesus said to [Zacchaeus], “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.””**

4. (whee!) The Lord seeks the guilty to confess. God could have said something else to Adam and Eve. He could have said, “Eve, I was watching from around the corner, I saw you eat that fruit!” He could have said, “Adam, what were you doing the whole time, you were supposed to crush Satan instead of letting him talk to your wife!” He does none of those things. Instead, he asks, “Where are you?”

He wanted to give them a chance to say, “I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy ... to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.”

Because God has a solution for guilt. The Lord has a solution for us hiding. He offers us forgiveness. **“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** God seeks us out, so that we may confess our sins to Him and receive forgiveness.

Even today, God has sought you to be here. You have alongside each and every one of us confessed, that you are indeed a poor miserable sinner. And you have received forgiveness from the pastor as though from Christ Himself. God has welcomed you out of hiding into His marvelous light.

Even in the Garden of Eden, God had a plan to save His people. God said to the Serpent, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”** 5. (yeah!) The Lord seeks the guilty to save them.

This passage, Genesis 3:15, is known as the first gospel. It is the first ray of hope that shines in a dark place. It promises that God Himself would become Immanuel, God with us, to be born of a woman’s offspring to save us. Once again, God would seek us in our hiding. He came in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus sought you out, and He came to save you. This salvation happened when He died for your sins on the cross. All your blame was heaped upon His bloodied and stricken back. All your guilt was accounted to Him. He has borne your sins and your sorrows, and He hung them there on the tree. Not the Tree of the Forbidden Fruit, but the Tree of the Cross. No more blame game. No more passing the buck. Jesus has become that scapegoat for you. Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Behold the woman’s offspring who crushed the serpent Satan’s head.

On the third day He burst from the tomb. In another garden, it is mankind seeking out Jesus. Mary, Jesus’ disciple, looks for Jesus and cannot find His body. It is Mary calling out to Jesus, “Where are you?” And Jesus appears to her. In the

resurrection, the Garden of Eden is restored. Fellowship with God and mankind is repaired. No more hiding.

Today is a communion Sunday. In communion we commune not only with each other as fellow Christians, but we commune with God Himself. For those who are in agreement with what we believe, teach, and confess. For those who believe that Jesus is truly present in the meal. For those who believe they are guilty sinners in need of a savior to forgive them and seek them, come to the table and receive that forgiveness. Come out of hiding and lay all your burdens on Jesus. Amen.