

What's Wrong With The World?

"The Hiders & The Seeker"

Genesis 3:8-13

~ Delivered at Central Baptist Church on February 28, 2016

INTRODUCTION

- **(SHOW SLIDE)** Please open your Bibles to Genesis 3.
- It began when an ISIS recruiter on the Internet contacted a 15-year-old teen named Yursa. Yursa had a 17-year-old friend named Samya. The recruiter lured the two girls into flying to Turkey and then joining ISIS in Syria.
 - Samya hid her friendship with Yursa from her parents. She also hid her true travel plans. She lied and said she was going to check out a college in Turkey.
- The two girls are now feared to be among the 70 British women and girls who have travelled to join ISIS. Some of these women have joined the terror network's all-female religious police brigade. Others including two 16-year old twins from Manchester have married ISIS fighters.
 - Despite how Samya hid everything, lied, and rejected her family, her parents are on a desperate search to find her.
 - In an emotional plea her father spoke to his daughter through the media. He simply said, *"I want you back."*¹
- In this series we are asking the question, *"What's wrong with the world?"* We are, therefore, also asking, *"What's wrong with me? Why can't I seem to keep my temper under control? Why do I seem to have conflict in relationships? Why do I make a mess of my life?"*
 - We have seen that the Bible traces all that is wrong with us back to a critical event in Genesis 3. We have seen that human beings are God's children in the sense that he created us. But we have also seen that when the human race was young, a deceptive power lured us away from our true Father. This deceptive power promised that life would be better if we rejected God and followed our own rules. This promise turned out to be a terrible lie because, since this event occurred, our world and our lives have been messed up.
 - So the Bible says that the problem beneath all our problems is that we have rejected our Maker. The Bible calls this "sin."
- In the first few parts of the series we looked at what sin is. Since last week we are now looking at what sin does; how turning away from God affects us. Today we will see that sin makes us into hiders. We hide our guilt. We refuse to come out into the open and admit we are wrong. We hide by blaming everyone and everything else for what is wrong with us.
 - But we are also going to see that God, as our true Father, loves us too much to let us remain in hiding. We are by nature hiders but God is by nature a seeker. Despite our hiding, lies, and rejection of God, our Father

¹ <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/403840/Father-pleads-runaway-jihad-teen-daughter-come-home> (accessed March 4, 2015)

says, ***“I want you back.”*** Our loving Father seeks us in order that we might confess our disobedience and be restored to him.

- You see, if we keep hiding, justifying, and blaming, we will never find freedom. The first step toward freedom and joy is to humbly confess our disobedience to our Father who loves us.
- So let’s divide this morning’s message in half. In the first half we will talk about the people who hide. In the second half we will look at the God who seeks.
 - I am going to walk you through the passage twice, the first time looking at our hiding and the second time looking at God’s seeking.

THE PEOPLE WHO HIDE

- Let’s begin then with **(SHOW SLIDE 1)** the people who hide.
 - Here I want to show you that we all know there is something wrong with us but that we refuse to fully admit it. The proof of this is found in the fact that we hide. We hide from God, from ourselves, and from each other.
- We pick up the story after Adam and Eve have disobeyed God by eating from the forbidden tree. They immediately sense their guilt. We pick it up in verse 8.
 - Look at verse 8. **READ 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.*
- The term “walking” is used of God’s presence in the tabernacle or temple.² For instance, in Deuteronomy 23 God called the people to be holy because he “walked” in the midst of their camp. The garden then was a temple in the sense that God’s presence dwelled among his people.
 - Apparently it was common for God to walk with Adam and Eve. We can only assume that normally they would have rejoiced to hear God arriving like when my kids hear me arrive home. They yell, “Daddy!” They run to me and they tackle me in hugs and kisses.
- But this day is different. When Adam and Eve hear the key in the lock and the door open, they are filled with fear. They run and hide from their Father. If this were not so tragic it would be absolutely hilarious. Hide from God?
 - Hide from him of whom Proverbs 15:3 says, ***“The eyes of the LORD are in every place”***?
 - Hide from him of who says in Jeremiah 23:23-24, ***“Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.”*** Hide from God?
- Notice also that it says they hid among ***“the trees of the garden.”*** These are God’s trees and every one of them reminds Adam of his Maker. This is God’s garden and every step Eve takes reminds her that it is God’s soil she walks on. Hide from God among God’s trees in God’s garden?
 - Sin makes us irrational. It’s like when Jonah boarded a ship to run from God on the sea. He even tells the sailors that he worships, ***“YAHWEH, the God of heaven, who made the sea...”*** So God made the sea and you

² See Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14; II Sam 7:6-7.

are going to try to run away from God by sailing on his sea? Sin makes us irrational.

SHOULD ADAM AND EVE HAVE HID FROM GOD?

- Now to really understand this we need to ask a question: Should Adam and Eve have felt afraid and hid from God? What do you think? Isn't the answer both yes and no?
 - In one sense we must say, ***“yes, it was right to feel fear and to hide from God.”*** If my kids blatantly disobeyed me and then said, ***“Relax dad, it's not a big deal”*** it would show there was something wrong. If a criminal says to a judge, ***“I know I stole a car but it's no big deal”*** it would show there was something wrong.
- When you grasp how holy God is and how much you have sinned, it is right to feel afraid and want to hide. Isaiah saw God's holiness and he cried out, ***“Woe to me!...I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips.”*** Peter saw Jesus' holiness and said, ***“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”***
 - When God came down on Mt. Sinai we read that the people heard the sound of God's voice.³ Their response was the same as Adam and Eve's. Exodus 20 says, ***“the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off and said to Moses, ‘You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.’”***
 - When you see your sin it is a right response to feel shame, to feel afraid, and to want to hide from God.
- But the answer must also be, “no.” For their hiding clearly shows that sin has made them forget how good and loving God is. They fear God will hurt them.
 - When they heard God they should have come before him and said, ***“We did something terrible. You have every right to judge us. We were wrong. But we know from all you have done for us that you are YAHWEH – the God who is with us and for us – that you are good and loving and so we cast ourselves on your mercy.”***
 - But they do not do this. When God asks Adam where he is, look at how Adam responds in verse 10. **READ 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.”***

EVERYONE'S FAULT BUT MINE

- So Adam and Eve rightly feel unworthy to come into God's presence. They rightly know they have disobeyed. But rather than confessing their sin we now see that they try to excuse it.
 - Making excuses is just another form of hiding.
- Look at verse 11-12. **READ 11-12 – *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.”***

³ Dt 5:25; 18:16; Ex 20:18-21.

- Adam shifts the focus to his wife. How ironic for only a short while earlier he broke out into poetry at how perfectly suited she was for him.
 - He also implies it is God’s fault. Notice he says, ***“The woman whom you gave to be with me.”*** In other words Adam is saying, ***“Its not my fault God. It’s the woman’s fault and if you had not given me such a terrible wife I would not be in this state.”*** What a coward.
- Adam’s response is so juvenile that God does not even respond to it. God turns to Eve. Look at verse 13.
 - **READ 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.”***
 - Eve is also a coward. She hides her guilt by shifting the blame.
- So you see the Bible shows us what we already know but cannot stand to admit, namely, that there is something deeply wrong with us. The fact that we are always hiding proves there is something wrong.
 - First, we hide from our own selves. None of us can give a truly honest appraisal of themselves. We can so easily see the faults of others but we can barely see our own. And even when we admit our faults we still believe there are good reasons to excuse our behaviour.
 - Second, we hide from other people. We present ourselves in a way that hides our faults. When we are wrong we make excuses. We cannot stand to admit we are wrong. When your spouse tries to show you that you are wrong, do you not immediately take up the role of defense attorney? No, I’m not at fault here. Even worse, do you not then take the role of prosecuting attorney as you attempt to show your spouse that it is actually him or her who is wrong and not you?
 - All of this is hiding because we cannot stand to admit and confess that we are wrong at our core.
 - And then finally we hide from God. We know deep down that we are not worthy to come into God’s presence and yet we try to hide this. We hide by downplaying our sin. Some people just deny sin altogether.
 - You know the truth about yourself, but to borrow a famous movie line, “you can’t handle the truth.” That is why we hide.
 - In summary, sin makes us into hidiers.

THE GOD WHO SEEKS

- Let’s turn now to the second half, **(SHOW SLIDE 3)** the God who seeks.
 - Now if Adam and Eve were right and God is a merciless judge then they had every reason to hide. But now I want to go over the passage again and show you how sin totally distorts our view of God.
 - For here we find a God who seeks out those disobey, not to harm us, but to heal us.
- This is so clear in our passage. Notice in verse 8 that it is God who goes searching for Adam and Eve, not Adam and Eve who go searching for God.

READ 8a - ***And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden.***

 - Notice in verse 9 it is God who calls out ***“where are you?”*** It is not Adam and Eve calling out, ***“God, where are you?”***

done?” On the road to Damascus Jesus came to Saul and said,
“Why are you persecuting me?”

- God’s question works. Adam is drawn out. But surely now God will denounce him and condemn him: *“Adam, you ate the fruit. You disobeyed me!”* No, again, God asks some questions. Look at verse 11. **READ 11** – *He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”*
 - Once again, it is not that God did not know the answer. God does not just tell them what they did. Like a good counselor, God leads them to see for themselves what they have done – to admit with their own mouths what they did.
 - Remember sin makes us irrational. We cannot stand to admit we are wrong. So God is like a counselor leading an intervention with an alcoholic. It does not do much good to tell the alcoholic they are wrong. They must come to the point where they admit it themselves. This is why the very first step in AA is to admit you are wrong. Only then can you move to the second step, which is trusting in a power greater than yourself to restore your sanity.
- Like a good counselor God is trying to get them to say with their own mouths what they have done. Step by step God seeks to bring them to confession.
 - He even phrases his question in a way that Adam will be compelled to answer with truth. God does not say, *“Why did you eat?”* That is kind of hard to answer because it means explaining all the complex motivations of your heart. God simply says, *“Have you eaten?”* It is a straightforward question and it requires a straightforward answer. God is making it so easy for him to confess.
- Despite their excuses, blaming, and self-justification they do admit their disobedience. It is not until the end of their sentences but both of them admit, *“I ate.”*
 - At best, this is a half-hearted confession but it is a start. Recovery begins with confession even it is only half hearted.

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

- You see the story of history is not the story of humanity seeking God. It is the story of God seeking humanity.⁴
 - The supreme way we see this is when the Son of God himself left heaven to come to earth – when he took on human flesh and became the man named Jesus. Jesus said, *“The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.”*
 - In Luke 15 Jesus tells three parables of lostness to describe what God’s kingdom is like and they are all about God seeking the lost. In the first, God is like a Shepherd who seeks out the lost sheep. In the second God is like a woman who sweeps out her house to find one lost coin. In the third, God is like the Father who seeks his two lost sons.

⁴ This can be traced from God appearing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the books of Judges and Hosea.

- God is seeking you. He is calling your name. There is an old poem by Francis Thompson entitled *The Hound of Heaven*.
 - God, like a hound that never ceases its pursuit of the rabbit, chases after the fleeing sinner. Thompson writes, **(SHOW SLIDE 5)**
 - *I fled him, down the night and down the days;
I fled him, down the arches of the years;
I fled him down the labyrinthine ways.
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears*
 - But Thompson goes on to speak of the feet of God chasing after Him.
 - *Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet.*

A GOD WE CAN TRUST

- But again, what if the hound catches us? What then? Will he eat us? This is what keeps us from confession. Inside we want to avoid any discussion about sin. You want to hide from it. You want to minimize it and excuse it. But look at your life – it’s a mess.
 - The first step to recovery is to stop hiding and to confess your sin before God. This is very hard for us. The only way we can do it is when we come to see that God is for us and not against us.
 - You can know this because the cost of his search and rescue mission was his own death. Jesus wanted you back home so badly that he sacrificed himself for you. Do you not see then? You can trust this God. Oh yes, he is holy but he is also loving.
- In his children’s classic, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, C. S. Lewis weaves a fairy tale in which a lion named Aslan creates a world called Narnia. Some children from our world go to Narnia and are curious about who Aslan really is.
 - *“Is he a man?” asked Lucy. “Aslan a man!” Mr. Beaver said sternly. “Certainly not. I tell you he is King of the wood and son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Don’t you know who is the king of beasts? Aslan is a lion – the Lion, the great Lion.” “Ooh!” said Susan, “...Is he quite safe? I shall feel nervous about meeting a lion.” “That you will, dearie, and make no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver. “If there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.” “Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy. “Safe?” said Mr. Beaver. “Who said anything about safe? Course he isn’t safe. But he is good.”*
 - That is it my friends. God wants you to know healing. He wants to put things right in your life. But you have to stop hiding from him? Oh yes, he isn’t safe at all. But you can trust that he is good. Since he gave his Son, you can trust that he has your best interests in mind. So come out from behind the trees. Bow before your God. Confess your sins. Receive the healing he offers.

(SHOW SLIDE 6) *Father in heaven, today I want to stop running from you. I want to stop making excuses and confess that I have sinned against you. Because of what Jesus has done in giving his life for me on the cross, I ask that you forgive me and make me right with you. Amen.*