

---

*God Always Wins Hide-and-Seek! (Genesis 3:8-15)*  
*12/6/2017 Sermon by Pastor Jason Liebenow*

---



Did you catch it! Our reading today records the very first game of hide-and-peek in history! Unfortunately, we're not talking about a pastime. We are talking about a game that sinners play with their God. It's a game that mankind has never stopped playing. It is a game that our sinful natures are so good at that we may not even be aware that we are playing it, but we all do. Thankfully, it is a game that God always wins. In our lesson today from Genesis 3, we will see this very first game of hide-and-peek in action and it will give us some incredible insights into how Satan tempts us to look at ourselves and our sin and how God frees us to see things in a whole new way.

We begin reading about Adam and Eve right after they have sinned against God. They know they have done wrong, and they know that they are in trouble. Right then, God shows up, at the one time in their lives when they absolutely do not want to see him. So they begin the game of hide-and-peek. As Adam and Eve react to their sin, we will see 3 rules for this kind of hide-and-peek. First, they implement rule number 1 of hide-and-peek with God: hide your sin. Adam and Eve hear God and they think, "If I can just avoid God knowing this, everything will be ok. If we just don't have to talk about it..." So Adam and Eve hide among the trees.

Our sinful natures know this rule very well. That is why we are so good at hiding our sins, why we ignore things that, deep down, we know are ruining our lives. You see this in addicts a lot. Sometimes, they don't even see that they have a problem. You see it in marriages that are falling apart. Each spouse can see what the other person is doing wrong, but they are completely blind to their own faults.

You've probably noticed it before in other people. They have some really obvious problems and sins, but they don't seem to even notice. If we are honest with ourselves though, we do it too; we all do. We ignore our sins and faults instead of dealing with them. This is the first rule of hide-and-peek with God. Our sinful natures try to tell us that if we can just ignore the problem or hide it, then it will go away. But it didn't work for Adam and Eve, and it doesn't work for us either.

So, when that doesn't work, Adam and Eve show us the second rule of hide-and-peek with God: cover your sins with good intentions. When Adam and Eve try to hide, God simply asks, "Where are you?" Adam knows that he can't hide from God, so he comes out, but he doesn't come completely out. He still doesn't confess his sin. Instead, he tries to hide his sin in a different way. Instead of admitting what he had done, instead of admitting his fault, Adam explains that he had a very good reason for hiding from God. He says, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid!" No, you see, Adam had a good and noble purpose for hiding! Who would want to stand before someone important completely naked, let alone stand before God naked! That would certainly be a shameful thing, so tastefully and respectfully, Adam hid his nakedness from his God, as he rightly should have.

This was Adam's reason that sounded good, but the real reason he was hiding was because

---

he had just sinned against an almighty and righteous God. But with this explanation, Adam could continue thinking that he was a good person.

Don't we do that too? Human beings have this uncanny ability to justify almost every action. Even when we go completely against God's word, we always have a very good reason for doing that, right? Many of those responsible for the holocaust likely believed their work would benefit humanity in the end. They hid their sin behind good intentions.

Or how about this: have you ever noticed how we judge ourselves by our intentions but we judge others by their actions? If I hurt someone else, I tend to say to myself, "I did a bad thing." If someone else hurts me, I tend to say to myself, "That person is a jerk." See what I mean? When I sin, it's so easy to justify it by thinking, "Well, that was just a fluke. I was stressed at the time. I didn't mean to do it! The action doesn't prove who I am!" But when someone else sins, we think, "They are a horrible person. Look what they did!"

If someone cuts me off in traffic, I can tell you exactly *who* that person is: a moron, a jerk, probably a couple other words come to mind. But if I do the exact same thing to someone else, well, I'm not a jerk, I just had a lot on my mind. I didn't see them. It's not my fault. We hide our sins, what we've actually done, behind good intentions, just like Adam.

Back in our lesson, when that didn't work for Adam and Eve, they pulled out hide-and-seek rule number 3: blame someone else. God saw right through Adam's intentions and asked Adam flat out: "Did you eat from the tree from which I told you not to?" But again, instead of coming out from his hiding place, Adam blames it on everyone but himself. Adam says, "The woman! She gave me some of the fruit and I ate it! I would never have eaten it if it were not for her!" Adam, who shortly before was in awe at the incredible gift that God had given to him in a wife, was now willing to throw her under the bus and destroy his relationship with her, if he can just keep feeling like he is a good person, that he was in the right. And Eve follows Adam's lead. She says, "The serpent deceived me and I ate! I couldn't have known any better!"

But Adam and Eve do not stop there, Adam says it outright and Eve more subtly, but in their blame we also hear who else is to blame for all this: God. Adam says, "God if you had not put this woman here in the first place..." Eve says, "I was deceived by one of the creatures you made God..." They say, "My sin is not my fault!" They pass the responsibility for their own actions to someone else, anyone else, even God! They are willing to destroy their relationships with each other and with their own God, again, if they can only continue believing themselves to be good people.

Sound familiar? How often do our thoughts dwell on what everyone else is doing wrong? How often do we justify our sins with, "Well, if you knew the kind of people *I* have to deal with on a regular basis"? How often do we pass the responsibility instead of acknowledging and accepting our sin? How often do we hide ourselves instead of coming out into the open?

---

But throughout this whole account, God doesn't miss a thing. God can see Adam and Eve's sin clearly the whole time. And God can see our sin clearly at all times. God is not fooled by our hiding and God doesn't mess around with these things. God knows that our eternal futures are at stake here. And so, though our sinful natures make us want to hide, God seeks us out, finds us, and ends our stupid game.

When Adam and Eve try to hide from God, he isn't fooled, and amazing as it is, he doesn't condemn them either. Instead, God turns to the serpent, in whom Satan was working to tempt mankind, and he curses the serpent. Then God condemns the serpent and gives us the very first promise of the gospel.

God says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." You see, when Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin, they started seeing Satan as their friend and God as their enemy, but in these words God tells us that he is going to redraw that battle line so that Adam and Eve would again be on his side and against Satan.

God says, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers." It's the same with us. Our sinful natures want to view God as an enemy, from whom we need to hide ourselves. Our sinful natures think that Satan is our friend and if we can just hide our sin, hide how bad we are, then maybe God won't know, maybe we won't get in trouble, maybe we won't have to deal with it. But God promised that he was going to redraw that battle line. He was going to show us that he is our friend, that we do not have to hide from him.

And God showed us the extent of his love when he fulfilled this promise. God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel." God promised that a battle would happen. That an offspring of the woman would fight Satan, and, though Satan would strike that offspring's heel, that offspring would crush Satan's head, leaving him dead, powerless, and defeated.

Brothers and sisters, that battle happened. God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to share our humanity, to be one of us, to be *the* offspring of the woman. On Calvary, as our Savior's body hung on that cross, that was the moment when God brought us to his side again. That was the time when God made us his friends and the devil's enemies. Because as Jesus hung on that cross, he felt the devil strike his heel. Jesus suffered, not only the pain of one of the world's cruelest and most torturous ways to die, Jesus also suffered hell, the punishment that our sins deserved. On that cross, in our Savior's body, our sins were completely paid for. No matter how great a sin we have committed, no matter how many times we have committed that sin, all of our sins were paid for in full by the blood of Jesus.

In that moment, Jesus crushed Satan's head. Satan no longer has any power over us. Satan doesn't want us to know that, doesn't want us to believe it. He still tries to tempt us, "No, don't confess your sins to God! Keep hiding them! Your intentions were so good! It wasn't your fault! If God knows, you'll be in trouble!"

---

But God's word tells us the truth. There is no use in hiding our sins, because God already knows them all. Jesus already paid the full price for all those sins. We will face no punishment from our God when we confess our sins to him because he has already punished those sins in Jesus. He has fully forgiven us. In fact, our God encourages us to confess our sins to him, to admit what we have done, to agree that our past sins no longer have any place in our lives. And God promises us that the blood of Jesus, his Son, washes all those sins away.

Satan can babble on and tempt away as he might, but the truth is, God is our friend. There is no point in hiding our sins from him because he knows them all and he has paid for them all.

Our sinful nature tries to make us think that we can be good people. It makes us hide our sins from God and from ourselves. But God shows us that being good is not a matter of good intentions or blaming others. Good is done when we come into the light. When we step into the light of God's law and see just how wretchedly sinful we are.

Then, God makes us righteous, makes us good people, not by the sin-filled lives we live, but by the perfect life Jesus lived. As Christians, we no longer have to hide. Instead, we learn to live honest lives, admitting our faults and wrongs. We learn to live humble lives, recognizing that our justifications for our actions and our blame of others are sinful. We learn to live lives of repentance, matching our actions not up to our good intentions but matching them up to God's law and turning away from the sins we have done. This life that we now have in Christ is a life that we do not have to hide. This is a life that we do not have to ignore or be ashamed of.

Only our God offers us this freedom: to openly admit who we have been and to happily embrace who we now are in Christ. And this is why we live differently from the rest of the world. Because we can admit our sins, while the rest of the world still tries to hide them. We can embrace the new way of life that our God shows us, the life of love for God and for each other! This is why we do live together here as a family in Christ, why we love each other, why we forgive each other. We have a new life, one that we do not have to hide from our God, all because our God sought us, found us, and gave us the reason to never hide again. Amen.