

The Heart of God

What happens next? For me it is one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible.

“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. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:8,9).

Of course, it is sad that Adam and Eve hid themselves from God. This evidence of the brokenness of their relationship is tragic both within the context of this passage and within all of eternity.

There are other elements that are worthy of noticing. First, is that they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day. It is wonderful to learn that even before Jesus came into this world born as a baby human being, God came to Adam and Eve in a form that they could relate to and walked with them in the garden.

It has been my pleasure to meet with leaders of global organizations, leaders in governments and leaders of nations, church leaders and business leaders. None of these events, however, come close to the exhilaration of the intimate times spent in prayer conversing with God. These two types of experiences aren't even in the same realm of reasonable comparison.

So, the idea of walking with God is absolutely exciting to me. Think of how personal and intimate this image is; walking along enjoying the evening together, talking about anything we want: simply enjoying one another. It's beyond amazing!

God loves us enough that He wants to simply walk with us. This is an amazing statement that drives home the true nature of the heart of God; He loves us, He loves us, and yes, He even loves me.

It is the true desire of the heart of God to give us His very best, and His best is Himself. There is nothing better than God, nothing more fulfilling, nothing more satisfying, nothing that makes us more complete than for God to give Himself to us.

This is not the first time that God has come to walk with Eve and Adam in the garden. It is something that happened every day. God had talked to Adam and Eve right after creating them as we've seen in Genesis 1:28-30 “And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply,...’.

In Genesis chapter two we see God bringing every beast of the field and every bird of the sky to Adam so he could name them. A part of the “Good” about creation is that God is in continual interaction with that which He has created.

Walking in the garden together with God must have been a very special time indeed. Not because they were separate from Him the rest of the time, but because in the evening God manifested Himself to them in a special manner; He walked with them.

The significance of those walks speaks volumes about the loss of their relationship with God, the impact of Death, and the power of Sin that drove Adam and Eve to hide themselves from God in the trees. Sin always works to separate us from God at every level of our existence.

Think of how terrible it is for separation from God to be the norm within all of creation, instead of an intimate and all fulfilling relationship with God. That is exactly what the power of Sin has done, and is doing still.

This is so much the case for us that we have to discover the fact we are separated from God because it “feels” normal for us to be apart from God. It is that separation, the power of Sin that drives all of us away from God. It is easier for us to hide within the forest of our activities than acknowledge His Love for us.

Here, Adam and Eve are more comfortable going into hiding than to see, and be seen by God. Their over-compelling sense of separation caused them to deny the fact that it’s impossible to hide from God. Into the trees they slipped hoping that God would pass them by. What a tragedy of eternal proportions!

Now take note of what God does and says in verse nine, “Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” Here is another telling point that gives us a dramatic window into the heart of God.

On the surface this may seem a ridiculous question for God to ask. After all God is omniscient; all knowing, and as I stated earlier omniscience is not limited by time. So there is no question that God knew exactly where Adam and Eve were, and why. God is not just “showing up” and trying to catch up on what has happened today while He was away dealing with something like angelic issues.

It is also interesting to consider what God could have done. He could have decided that He was not going to walk in the garden that evening. Adam and Eve had just messed up His entire perfect creation so why not let them stew in their guilt and shame a while. If they thought that they could get along without Him then let them try for a while and see what happens. They made their bed, let them sleep in it a few weeks before He returns.

He could have walked in the garden and said nothing, deciding that He would walk by them and if they didn’t say anything to Him then He would just keep on walking. If they don’t have the gumption to own up to their mistake then they don’t deserve His company.

We can see how a list of possibilities might go on for several iterations of “attitude”. The very same kinds of attitude that most people have had toward others with a sense of self-righteous indignation about some wrong done to them by others.

It is also worth emphasizing again that Adam and Eve just wrecked all of creation. Every bit of it. So, what God does here is relevant for each one of us as we consider our own wayward actions. With such a great and shocking sinful act what is it that God does to Adam and Eve?

God comes walking in the Garden of Eden like always. Then He calls out to them, "Where are you?" This is astonishing to me.

As my mind and heart have pondered this act of God it becomes more and more amazing to me. If this remains my focus of thought too long tears start to well-up in my eyes. God's words are so overwhelmingly filled with Love: "Where are you?"

God doesn't say, "why are you hiding from me?", or "what have you done?", or anything else that points to their horrendous act of disobedience. No, He asks the one question that represents an outstretched hand, from a loving heart.

Yes, God knows that Adam and Eve needed Him to provide them with the opportunity to respond to His compassion. Just like He knows that we need to be drawn out of our sins and into His love.

It is so wonderful that God comes to us! No matter what we do, He comes to us and seeks to draw us out of Death and into His Life. This is something that God does throughout the scriptures, coming to people in the past, present, and even in the future as it is declared in Revelations.

It is a great truth about God that we can count on. Just as this is an amazing demonstration of the Grace that God, so it also demonstrates Who He is: Love.

Love does not define God. God defines Love. It is only through God that true Love exists, and these three words, "Where are you?" fully demonstrate Who God is: Love.

It is also important that Adam and Eve responded to God. There is merit in the idea that the more we refuse God's loving invitation the easier it is to never say, "Yes", to Him. The statistics tell us that the older people get the greater the chance is that they will never say "yes" to God's outstretched hand.

One of the blessings in my life occurred during a special church service it was my privilege to lead in a small rural town many years ago. The blessing came when an eighty-two-year-old man accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior on Sunday morning. The last service of the week.

One year later upon returning to that church as a guest speaker for another week of meetings it was necessary to go to the hospital to visit the now eighty-three year old man. Unfortunately, cancer had been discovered during that year and he was not doing well.

While standing at his bedside, as we talked he looked me in the eyes, blinked with a few tears running down his cheeks, and said, "Why, why did I wait so long?" "What?" was my question. He replied, "Why, why did I wait so long to say yes? I could have been enjoying a relationship with God all of these years. Why did I wait so long?" My response was the obvious; the great thing was that he said "Yes" and eternal Life with God was now his forever.

The odds were enormously against him ever making the decision to accept Christ at that age. For any person to receive Jesus-Life is a miracle, but he was unique so far as the odds were concerned.

The point is that we can easily wait too long. I thank God for each person who does not make that eternal mistake and instead responds to God's call positively.

Perhaps God is calling us right now. My prayer is that we will say "Yes" to Him.