



*They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” 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 from 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 from 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 tricked me, and I ate.” The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will*

The human creature is truly a strange animal. Rational and utterly disconnected from reason at the same time. We are earthly creatures biologically driven and spiritual ones soaring to heaven.

Ernest Becker in his Pulitzer winning book, *the Denial of Death* explained:

*Man is literally split in two: he has an awareness of his own splendid uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty, and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in order to blindly and dumbly rot and disappear forever.*

Despite Becker’s dim thoughts of our final end his view of our split nature hits the nail on the head. If we look at the actions of Adam and Eve, they are bizarre. After they eat the forbidden fruit, they hide-from God and they cover themselves in shame. But God is

the one being we know we cannot hide from. More than Superman God can see right through those fig leaves.

Whatever your view on the factual nature of this encounter it clearly rings true. We spend a tremendous amount of psychological energy hiding our true nature from others, from God but in end, we are only hiding from ourselves; keeping the truth of ourselves from ourselves.

We believe God is all knowing; God is all good which means we need to be an open book to God in order to receive all the benefits of God’s guidance, and yet cannot help but hide...

Yet God does not force divine omniscience on us. After they hide God asks, “Where are you?” God knows this question on the surface makes no sense. At first, we might be tempted to think this is mere poetic license but instead I think it discloses something fundamental about God.

God chooses not to know in order to let us be free.

When my son Matthew was in high school they deployed a new app, which gave the parents God-like knowledge of the child's homework, grades, attendance, behavior, and more.

I loved it. The first few weeks of the rollout every evening Matt and I would go through the long list of assignments that had not been turned in and I would pressure him to begin studying for that test coming up.

Matt hated it! The mere notion of omniscient parents is horrifying to children. Not surprisingly, it resulted in a few heated discussions. In the end, we agreed that as long as he kept his grades up I would not use the App! So his success or failure depended upon him not me.

God restrains knowledge in order for us to be truly free.

This restraint enables us to be autonomous beings for God chooses to at least let Adam and Eve think they are hidden; God chooses to let them respond to questions for which the answer is already known.

God chooses to be less than the full divine self so that we might realize the fullness of ourselves -- true moral agents who grow and mature into beings of love and purpose.

Immanuel Kant in his theological framework asserts that humans should never be treated as an end in themselves, but agents of self-determination intrinsically endowed with dignity and worth.

This intrinsic worth and dignity of every person is so critical to God's plan that God is willing to let a fantastic mess unfold as a result of not exercising full omniscient control. The truly shocking item in this story is the vast power God leaves with us faulty humans; the frightening freedom; literally to have doomsday devices.

When we treat people as anything less, we rob them of their humanity and erode their spirit. Thus, over 100 years later we are still dealing with the effects of slavery and more. One African American pastor described it as PTSD. His great grandmother was enslaved. When he put it that way, it seemed so terribly recent.

The industrialization of the modern world, which offers many benefits, has also led to the explosion of mental illness, physical illness and ultimately despair.

God's punishments seem harsh - toil in working the land. But this is how the world works. When we are not fully ourselves, when we hide from our true selves, life becomes toil. A viral video that came out last week shows and expletive-laden rant from a package deliveryman. It has garnered mountains of sympathy, for one can

immediately tell that his soul, his brain, his spirit is broken from his toil. And when our soul is broken it manifests in all types of horrible behavior.

Thus the great divide in our time racism, classism, every 'ism', is in one form or another a replication of this innate fear; of hiding from self and others and most of all God; which results in silly behavior like fig leaves because you don't want God to see you ?!

The path away from despair and away from brokenness and becoming a better person is to discover your path to wholeness and authenticity. One of your members put it this way, "I asked myself what did I truly enjoy in life, and that is what I set out to do."

For God and Henry David Thoreau that meant walking!

In 1862, *The Atlantic* published an article by Thoreau entitled, *Walking*. Listen to this excerpt:

*I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks—who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering, which word is beautifully derived "from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretense of going a la SainteTerre," to the*

*Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, "There goes Sainte-Terrer," a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander...Every walk is a sort of crusade.*

I love this notion that one can be a genius at walking. A person who can saunter about being fully present to the moment and their surroundings. Not making lists for tomorrow, not bringing the worries of today, but being utterly and fully in the moment. For me a walk is a purge of sorts. Each step cleanses my brain of one of the soul toxins that have crept in.

In order to be human, perhaps more than most Thoreau needed an exceptional amount of walking. He wrote:

*I think that I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least—and it is commonly more than that—sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements.*

I suspect Thoreau found himself there to hear the Sounds of God.

As today's text tells us, Thoreau was not alone in his sauntering. The sound of God walking was echoing through the garden.

God walks. Perhaps not literally, but yet there is something colossal in this verse. Like God resting at the end of creation, God walks, not just at any time of the day. But as we are told during the “Cool of the evening breeze.” The fact the text chooses to mention this makes it critical.

Last week I was walking in my version of Eden with some of your fellow church members, and it was sacred. For the connection to them and to nature was a singular event. And what made it extra special was the breeze that brushed upon us the entire time. The breeze is sacred refreshment so glorious that even God wants a taste.

The time of the evening breeze is not clock time but Kairos time. It is not counted by minutes and hours but by moments and movements. The moment of iridescent glory of a blooming flower, the movement of a stream carrying minerals and water to bring new life to far off places.

The Sound of God walking, where in your life do you hear it? What more beautiful noise could there be than the sound of God nearby.

That is why Thoreau walked. In nature, he hears the Sound of God.

But God has made us unique and your quest is to listen for that sound and chase it down. It is like the pearl of great price of which Jesus spoke, and when the man found it; he sold all he had to obtain it.

If we keep hiding from our true selves like Adam and Eve our lives will fill up with more toil and we just might find ourselves screaming at no one in agony over that one last package that needs to be delivered.

I am not a doctor, but today I am giving you a sacred prescription. Listen for the Sound of God and follow it, find the cool breeze and bask in it. After all this time, you need it. Amen.