

Adam + Eve - "Seeking from the Beginning"

The God Who Seeks

Genesis 3

01/07/2024

Introduction

Pastoral Intro:

- Christmas Offering Update - **\$12,207.85**
- 3 Years = God's grace + kindness
- Invitation to hop in with us
 - Connect cards

PRAY.

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us..."

This is how theologian AW Tozer begins his bestselling work *The Knowledge of the Holy* – What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

He goes on – **"For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous (prominent, important, pertinent) fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God."**

What you think about when you think about God, changes the trajectory of your soul and your life. Not just your "Christian" life, but every part of your existence.

This is true whether you think of God as...

- Holy, All-Powerful, Glorious
- Helper, friend, confidant
- Angry, Bothered, Impatient
- Or whether you don't think about God really at all

Your view of God shapes the trajectory of your soul and your life.

So let me turn Tozer's statement into a question for us as we begin this morning – **What comes into your mind when you think about God?**

What attributes, characteristics, or stories rise to the surface and how might that be affecting your soul, your body, your mind, your life?

Well it's our hope and prayer over the course of this series that one of the realities about God that might stick at the forefront of our minds is this – Our God is the God who seeks and who saves.

If you examine the Scriptures from front to back, one of the continual themes you will see is the desperate need of humanity to be pursued, chased, caught, welcomed – and the continual heart of God to do that pursuing.

Christianity – and I want this reality to root itself in our hearts these next 6 weeks – Christianity is not about us finding God, but rather about God finding us.

That is the central reality of our faith – not us seeking and finding our way to God, but rather God seeking and pursuing us. And so we prayerfully want to spend the first 6 weeks or so of 2024 highlighting this beautiful theme in the Scriptures – **The God Who Seeks.**

And to do so we want to look at various stories, some famous, some not so much, that show the *seeking heart of God for various people. People like...*

- The runaway and the hiding
- The sinner and the religious
- The downtrodden
- The lowly
- The outcast

Our God is a seeking God. He seeks you. He seeks me.

Today, **Genesis 3 – God seeks from the beginning.**

Background to Genesis 3

- **Genesis 1**
 - God creating the world – Sun, Moon, Stars, Land, Sea, Birds, Animals
 - Pinnacle of creation/chief creating act – 1:27 creates humanity, male and female, in the image of God
 - “Imago Dei” – You and I are different from the rest of creation. We are in the image of God. We are *like Him* in a way the rest of creation is not.
 - And with the Imago Dei comes inherent dignity, value, worth.
 - 1:31 – God declares it all “very good” - “Mehod tov”.
 - *Shalom* – everything is right. As it should be.
- **Genesis 2**
 - Retelling of the creation of Adam and Eve
 - God’s only “Do not” command for them – 2:17
 - ***Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil***
 - If you eat it, you will die. Death will enter into the world.

The Fall

It’s a great story so far! And then you get to Genesis 3. We’ll start in v1...

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?”

- Everything is right. Good. As it should be.
- And yet here comes the serpent – the satan, the deceiver, the enemy of God and His people. And notice – He comes not with a sickness and a flat tire – what does he come with...a deceptive idea. A deceptive question.
- Did God actually say...? He’s trying to get them to doubt and distrust the goodness of God. This is how the devil works.

You’re going to see this play out as the conversation continues, keep reading...

2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

- Technically this is adding to what God said...God never said “Neither shall you touch it.”
 - I don’t know if this is the beginning of resentment toward God – “He’s so unreasonable he won’t even let us touch it.” OR if she’s just ignorant.
 - Either way – distortion of God’s words is dangerous.

4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

- Same thing – deceptive questions pulling on doubt and distrust...
 - Can you really trust God?
 - Does He really have your best interests at heart?
 - Does He really love you?
 - Maybe He’s withholding from you. Maybe He’s keeping you back from what is actually best for you.

And it leads to v6...

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

- Eve is tempted by the pull of the fruit and all that it seems to offer – good for food/sustenance...delight...wisdom.
 - Look at all that it can offer – *and she chooses the created fruit over the creator God.*
 - Paul in Romans 1 says about this scene that Adam and Eve gave to one of God’s creations the glory that belongs to God. That is what **idolatry** is – it is elevating a created thing above the creator in our lives.
 - They were meant to find delight and joy and life in God, instead they look for it in the forbidden fruit.
- Adam, who is standing there passively, doing and saying nothing, eats it too.
 - Doesn’t correct Eve when she gets the command wrong...
 - Doesn’t step in and go “hey, maybe we shouldn’t listen to a talking snake...”

7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 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 sin, they’ve rebelled against God’s command. And the text says “they realize they were naked.” This is the Bible’s language for shame.**
 - They feel exposed, vulnerable, all the feelings that come with shame. They know they are guilty. They know they have sinned. They know they have gone against God’s commands and will.
- **And so what do they do? What we all do when we feel shame – *They try to fix it themselves.***
 - We’ll cover up our nakedness with fig leaves!
 - Maybe if we can just sort of cover this up, pretend it didn’t happen.
 - One pastor says about this passage – “Fig leaves are the world’s 1st religion.”
 - What do I need to do to deal with and absolve my guilt and shame on my own?
 - I’ll just work hard to cover up my brokenness and insecurity, shame and guilt.
 - When that doesn’t seem to work, they go to option 2 – hiding.
 - Maybe if God can’t find us, we won’t be in trouble.

- Which has to be one of the dumbest scenes of the Bible. "He'll never find us in the trees! I know he spoke all this into existence with a word, but if we hide in the trees, he won't be able to see us. TO THE TREES!"
 - **Hide and seek with Harper**

The Story Could Have Ended

Now, just pause there for a moment.

Don't fill in the rest, let's just sit right here in the story for a minute, pausing at verse 8. Think about what has just taken place.

Adam and Eve have done the unspeakable – they willingly cut themselves off from their Creator.

- Instead of trusting the God...
 - Who formed them and breathed life into them.
 - Who has provided for them and cared for them.
 - Who has given them food, shelter, beauty, intimacy and relationship with Himself and one another.
 - Who has instructed them in the ways of flourishing...
 - What to do:
 - Have shared dominion/rule with Him over creation.
 - Fill the earth with offspring.
 - What not to do:
 - Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

Instead of entrusting themselves to Him...they doubt his goodness and push him away.

The consequences of this rebellion are devastating to say the least. It's what theologians call "The fall". Sin enters the world, and you see all the reverberating consequences spelled out in the rest of the chapter – shame, pain, confusion, relational conflict, futility, struggle, separation from God, and death.

If you read the rest of the chapter there are some very real and very painful consequences for their sin.

And here's what's important to understand – this could have easily been the end of the story. The Bible could end after Genesis 3. The story of humanity could have ended with Genesis 3.

Stories growing up. When I was in elementary school, I had a short stint where I really wanted to be an author – write novels. I used to carry around fiction books in my back pocket and smoke candy cigarettes, it was a whole vibe. So occasionally I would sit down and write stories. Or at least intros to stories.

It would be like 4-5 pages of all this character development and the beginning of world building. And I would start trying to develop this plot. But then eventually my hand would start cramping, I would get bored or tired...and so if you go back and read these stories now, I found a few of them the other day, when you get to page 4 or 5 what you find is the same sentence – "And then the world exploded and they all died."

That's how all my childhood "novels" ended. Sheer boredom, so it all ends in an instant, story over.

That could have been how this story went. It could have ended here – God was awesome, created this fantastic world. Adam and Eve, in his image – relationship and flourishing between God and humanity. Then they sinned. End of the story.

And God in his holiness would have been completely justified if it went that way.

God Seeks Out Adam and Eve

But it wasn't.

Look at v9...

9 But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

In what could be argued as the turning point of the whole Bible, *God comes looking for man.*

- What Adam and Eve expected was God the Destroyer.
- What they heard was the voice of God the Seeker.

"Adam...where are you?"

God comes looking for, pursuing, seeking his lost Son and Daughter.

God pursues, He loves. He disciplines yes, that is part of His love (Heb 12 – He disciplines those He loves as His children.) And yet He keeps drawing them back to Himself.

Proto-Evangelium

And in his pursuit, God will make Adam and Eve, and all of humanity to come, a promise.

Look at Genesis 3:15 (speaking to the serpent, the devil)...

15 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."

This is what theologians call the "proto-euganelion". The "First Gospel". The first promise about Christ.

God tells shame-ridden, hiding, trying to fix and cover themselves up, rebellious, sinful Adam and Eve – I'm going to make this right. Yes death will enter the world because of sin, but death will not be the end of the world.

Sin and death and the serpent will not win. One day, a child will be born – a far off distant offspring of Eve.

And the serpent will strike his heel...

- That offspring will face temptation, suffering, and betrayal.
- Though He will be sinless, He will die a sinner's death on the cross.
- It will be a strike, and it will seem like Satan has won, just like it seems Satan has won in Genesis 3.

But the story doesn't end in Genesis 3 and it doesn't end on the cross...

- Because the offspring of the woman will not stay in the grave. His heel will not be bruised forever.
- After 3 days, He will get up out of the grave – defeating sin. Defeating death.
- Fulfilling the promise of Genesis 3:15 – He will crush the head of the serpent.

Even in the rebellion of Adam and Eve. In the fall. Even in the entrance of sin and death into the world – God is a seeking God. He seeks Adam and Eve. And He promises, through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, that He will seek and save the world.

The God Who Seeks

**This is the heart of our God. This is the story of our faith.
Christianity is one big cosmic story of our God seeking and saving.
Of His mercy for undeserving people.
He's been doing that since the beginning.**

Seeking and saving...

- True in Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve.
- True in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

True in your life and my life as well. **God is a seeking God.**

We are just like Adam and Eve.

- We listen to the lies and deception of the enemy that makes us doubt the goodness of God.
- We replace the Creator with His creation, seeking to satisfy our hearts with all these other idols that are not God.
- We rebel against God and His design of flourishing for our lives.

- We are riddled with shame and guilt.
 - French Philosopher and playwright Jean-Paul Sartre (atheist) – said inside every human heart, whether they believe God or not, is a voice that whispers “not acceptable.” “Condemned.”

- **We try to deal with our shame and guilt in the same ways as Adam and Eve...**
 - **Try to fix it ourselves.** One pastor says about this passage – “Fig leaves are the world’s 1st religion.”
 - We’ll just work hard to cover up our brokenness and insecurity, shame and guilt.
 - Is this not religion 101?
 - “I’ll make up for guilt by going through religious observances.”
 - “I’ll be good and go to church or synagogue or mosque and donate money.”
 - I’ll just do some good things to cover up for the bad things.
 - **We try to hide from God.**
 - We try to hide by *rationalizing* our sin. “But yeah, on the whole I’m a good person... compared to others.”
 - We try to hide by *ignoring* our sin. “Maybe if I just don’t think about it or confess it or acknowledge it.”

And yet still, in the mess and chaos of all of that – God seeks us. He pursues us. He sends His Son to die for us.

This has been his heart from the very beginning. This is our God. He is the God who seeks.

- We see that in Genesis 3.
- We see that in the cross of our Savior.
- We see that banner over our lives.

He is the God who seeks.

And not just salvifically one time to get you into His kingdom. He seeks us in His mercy again, and again, and again, and again.

Your story, and mine, has been, is, and will continue to be a story, not about us seeking God, but God continually and constantly pursuing and seeking us.

Concluding Question

So the question for us then is – Is that what comes into your mind when you think about God?

- Do you have an awareness of just how much He has and is seeking you?
- Do you sit in the wonder of his pursuing love?
- Do you meditate on the beauty and sacrifice of the cross, where God the Son descends into humanity at great cost and sacrifice to Himself?
- Do you marvel at how he sought you when you were a stranger, his enemy, rebellious, covered in sin and shame?
- Do you rejoice in his constant seeking of you even now when you go astray?

Is your life open to His seeking love?

That is, perhaps, the greatest challenge and greatest necessity of your life – ***To learn to be loved by God, and to love Him and others in return.***

Henri Nouwen is one of my 20th century writers. He passed away about 30 years ago now. For the first part of his life he rose the theological ranks – bestsellers, sought after speaking career, lots of fame and renown. But in his 50s he started getting worried about his popularity and prestige in this sort of theological world.

And so he sought during the last decade or so of his life to “shrink down his world to not lose his soul.”

He left his position as a tenured professor at Notre Dame, and spent the last decade or so of his life in a church serving in a church community for adults with disabilities just outside of Toronto, Canada.

And he wrote, just a few years before he passed away, a book entitled *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. And in it he writes this, one of my favorite Nouwen quotes of all time.

“For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life—pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures—and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself. I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was close to despair. Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not “How am I to find God?” but “How am I to let myself be found by him?” The question is not “How am I to know God?” but “How am I to let myself be known by God?” And, finally, the question is not “How am I to love God?” but “How am I to let myself be loved by God?” God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home.”

This is the seeking love of our God. Will you open yourself to it?

- Either for the first time. Putting your faith in Jesus. Trusting in Him for the forgiveness of sins and life forever with God.
- Or for the hundredth or thousandth time, once again seeing how God, from the beginning, has been seeking and saving the lost.

Practices

Over the course of this series, we're going to be exploring that seeking heart of God. And I pray the Holy Spirit works to help you see yourself in these stories, and to open up your heart to receive God's love for you.

But as we close I want to invite you into some practices that might help you along the way over the next few weeks, and really into the rest of this year and your life. Some simple invitations for you on a daily basis open yourself up to being loved by God in and through the work of Christ Jesus.

1. Remember the Gospel

Daily discipline of rehearsing the gospel to yourself. It can be a short prayer you write down on a notecard and stick in the front of your bible or you can make it into your iphone home screen.

A simple short prayer of reminder about the gospel – **God is good. I am not. And yet he loves me in Christ Jesus.**

2. Listening Prayer

Creating space at the start or end of each day. Just for a few minutes to sit in silence before the Lord and receive His love for you in Christ Jesus.

Pray.