



Calling Out Your Name



A Sermon By
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Grace Episcopal Church
Silver Spring, Maryland

An audio version of this sermon is available at
<http://graceepiscopalchurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2nd-Pentecost.mp3>.

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Genesis 3:8-15

The Rev. Andrew W. Walter
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The 2nd Sunday after Pentecost
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But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
Acts 2:1

These days, it can be very tempting to dismiss the story of Adam and Eve. We read the first few chapters of Genesis through our 21st century eyes and tell ourselves that is not the way life unfolded. It is all simply a myth, written thousands of years ago by people who did not know any better.

But, when we do that, we miss the power of what was written, for the story of Adam and Eve may be the most authentically human story in the Bible, a vivid depiction of life, as it was and as it is, with all of its thoughts and feelings, relationships and complexities, perfectly portrayed as if the writers had peered inside our hearts and our homes.

As we pick up the story this morning, Adam and Eve have already eaten from the tree of knowledge, misusing the freedom which God had given them, to do something God told them not to do. Now, their eyes have been opened, and their innocence is gone. Feeling vulnerable and scared, ashamed of what they have done, they hide themselves from God, jumping behind the nearest tree and crouching low to the ground, hoping not to be seen.

How many of us have not done the same thing?

Like Adam and Eve, we all hide from God at times. It may be to conceal our own faults and failures, those moments when we fall short of being the kind of person we want to be and God wants us to be. We feel guilt and shame for not living the kind of life God hopes we will live and made us capable of living.

Or, it may be we are angry at God. Life has dealt us a harsh blow, a scary and daunting challenge which we were not expecting and are not sure we can conquer. In those circumstances, it is natural to look around for someone to blame, someone to point our finger at, and God makes a pretty easy target.

Or, it might be God is just not a top priority in our life. We are busy juggling many different commitments and have other things that are more important. At one point or another, you have probably found yourself saying:

I am too busy at work.

I have too much going on.

I was young and in college; and Sunday mornings come awfully early.

I remember one rainy, August Sunday, when our boys were much younger, we woke them up to go to church, and after the service, we greeted the Rector, a wonderfully generous man who our boys really admired. “Hi, boys,” he said, “How are you? I haven’t seen you in a while.”

“Oh, Mr. Elsberry,” one of the boys replied, “we thought church was closed in the summer.”

At the same time, we all have a deep yearning to know God, and understand God, and have a connection with God. We want to learn and grow in faith. We have questions and want answers. Look no further than all of the people that come to Grace Church for worship and to participate in our ministries. During the season of Lent, we offered a class on spiritual practices which make us more attentive to God’s presence in our lives and in the world around us, and forty people showed up Sunday after Sunday.

It is not just adults, either. People of all ages want to know the Lord. Two weeks ago, I was standing in the narthex, greeting people after worship, and as the line was dwindling down, one of our youngest parishioners came up to me. She already had a donut in her hand, which I thought she was going to share with me, but instead, she asked, “Do you talk to God?”

When I told her, “Yes, I talk to God,” she immediately followed up with, “And, does God talk back?” So, she and I spent the next 5 minutes or 10 minutes discussing how you talk to God and how you listen to God.

Henri Nouwen, one of the great guides of the 20th century, wrote:

For most of my life, I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried 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 during all this time that God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me. The question is not “How am I find to 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?”¹

God’s deepest desire is to have a relationship with us. God wants to know us and love us and have us know Him and love Him. It does not matter what we have done or left undone. It does not matter how well we try to hide. God is out there looking for us, and searching for us, longing to bring us home.

¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*

Jesus tells us God is the shepherd who leaves his ninety-nine sheep to go look for His one lost sheep. God is the woman who lights a lamp, sweeps out the house, and searches everywhere, high and low, for her lost coin until it is found. God is the father who sees His prodigal son a long way off and runs out to meet him, embracing him and pleading with him and begging him to come home.

This is the nature of God, and we see it from the beginning of the Bible, with the story of Adam and Eve. Even though Adam and Eve did the one thing God told them not to do and were doing their best to hide, God went walking through the Garden trying to find them, calling out their names: “Where are you?”

If you are not connecting with God the way you want, it is probably time to stop hiding behind the trees and let God find you, let God know you. God is looking for you, and He is calling out your name right now.

Amen.