

Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 5)

HIDING AND SEEKING

Genesis 3:8-15

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Analysis by Bruce K Modahl

8They 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. 9But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" 10He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." 11He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." 13Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." 14The 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.*

*15I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will strike your head,*

and you will strike his heel."

DIAGNOSIS: A Ruined Love Affair

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Hiding and Passing the Blame*

Having disobeyed God our original ancestors hid from God. I no longer remember the source but I remember one commentator noting that we have been hiding ever since. We hide our missiles in silos and guns under the pillows. Spouses hide things from one another. Children hide escapades from parents. Parents hide from children. We hide because we fear the shame of being found out. But hiding from God? Good luck with that.

When discovered they did what by now comes naturally to us. They passed the blame. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. In the background of the blame game is an accusing finger pointed at God. After all God created the woman who gave Adam the fruit to eat. And it was God who created the serpent who tempted the woman. It is all God's fault.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *A Failure of Trust*

God sought friendship with the woman and man he created. Even after they disobeyed God, God sought to walk with them in the garden that was God's gift to them. God did no less than invite them into the divine life of the Trinity, the life lived between the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit. Yet the man and the woman did not trust God. They did not trust God's love for them. If they had they would have been able to admit their sin and face whatever punishment they must face, confident that God's love for them would not be withdrawn. A lack of trust breaks the love affair.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Enmity*

We must read a bit further in chapter three to learn the full consequences of mistrusting God. However, a hint of those consequences is present in the text before us. God curses the serpent and puts enmity between the serpent and Eve and their offspring. We have two problems: the curse of the sin that binds us so we cannot free ourselves, and the enmity that sin places between God and us. With that our lives and world lie in ruins.

PROGNOSIS: Love in the Ruins*

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *God Seeks Us in the Ruins*

While our text provides hints of the consequences of not trusting God, the text also hints at the solution only God can provide. God told the serpent that Eve's offspring "will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." The proper preface for Passion/Palm Sunday takes us to this text. The presiding minister sings of Christ our Lord, "who on the tree of the cross gave salvation to all, that, where death began, there life might be restored, and that he, who by a tree once overcame, might by a tree be overcome." God in Christ comes as one of us—seeking us among the ruins of our lives, the world, the grave, and even hell.

Hippolytus proclaims of Jesus in his Eucharistic prayer, "He stretched out his hands in suffering in order to free from suffering those who trust you. It is he who, handed over to a death he freely accepted, in order to destroy death, to break the bonds of the evil one, to crush hell underfoot, to give light to the righteous, to establish his covenant, and to show forth the resurrection, taking bread and giving thanks to you said: Take and eat; this is my body, broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This is my blood

poured out for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Trusting the Seeker*

In the game of Hide and Seek being found by the seeker is not the worst outcome. A worse outcome is being forgotten by the seeker. The worst outcome would be for the seeker intentionally to leave us in the dark closet we chose as our hiding place. Jesus does not do this. He loves us so much he seeks us out to trade our sin for the blessings of his righteousness and new life. We trust Jesus enough to stand naked and vulnerable before him. We can accept whatever punishment is meted out for our sins because we know his love is certain.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Coming out of Hiding*

We come out of hiding every time we confess our sins. We do so when the community gathers for worship. We acknowledge we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We acknowledge we are vulnerable to God’s wrath. We admit we depend on God’s mercy revealed to us in Jesus.

It is easy, however, to continue hiding among those with whom we gather for worship. So it is that God calls us to put our ritual confession into action by entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). This is not easy work. It is much easier to tell everyone else how a particular person has wronged us. We make ourselves vulnerable when we seek out the brother or sister and tell them how we think they have wronged us. We risk their anger or finger pointing. Worse, we risk being told how we have wronged them. However, the outcome more often than not is a resolution of misunderstanding and a reconciliation with a sister or brother in Christ.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells us, “Let your light so

shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” The pastor spoke those words to us when we were baptized. We may have been too young to remember. It is the job of parents and sponsors to tell us and explain to us the meaning of those words. We make ourselves and our faith visible with our good works. We engage in good works, not to hear people applaud and praise us, but so that people will give glory to our Father in heaven.

**Love in the Ruins* is a book by Walker Percy. I recommend it and everything else he wrote.