

Sermon – 09/13/20

Text – Genesis 3:7

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Theme – “The Fall”

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Surely you remember how the story goes, after all it was the sermon theme just a week ago. God had made Adam and Eve. He had given them a perfect world in which to live. He had given them each other to love. He had put all the Earth and its creatures under their dominion, their lordship. They were to rule and tend and love Eden just as God ruled and tended and loved in heaven. And He gave them one simple command: do not eat of just that one tree – the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Just *one* tree out of all of them. Just *one* commandment to keep.

But it was too much. Satan slithered in and tempted them, and they fell. Eve took the forbidden fruit and ate; Adam listened to his wife (rather than to God). They sinned. Their eyes were opened to knowing good and evil – just as the devil had said. But the problem was, before they had known only good – but now, now, they saw and knew evil. Evil that THEY had committed. Evil that ruined all of creation. Evil that they could not fix. Evil that they could not hide.

So when God comes to visit His children (as was His custom, apparently), they run away. They cower in the bushes. They try to cover over their sin, their evil, by making themselves clothes of fig leaves. But it is useless. And they know it. When God calls to them,

they have no choice but to step forward (there is no hiding from God). Arrayed in their shabby, silly, ridiculous loincloths of fig leaves, they have to face God and His judgment.

Oh, they *try* to pass the blame – Adam to Eve, Eve to the serpent – but it is no use. God will have none of it. They are guilty, and they know it. First, God passes judgment on the serpent: he will crawl all his days on his belly, he will eat dust, he will be hated and loathed by mankind. But buried in this curse on the serpent is the promise, the hope, for Adam and Eve and all mankind: God promises that One will come who will crush the serpent's head. That is, there will be a Savior, a Redeemer, One who will destroy the serpent's power and give back what Adam has lost. But, God also says, this will come at a cost – a great cost – for the Serpent, Satan – will strike the Savior's heel. The Savior will taste the satanic poison: the devil will sink his fangs deep into the Savior, and He will suffer its pain for us. He will *die* so that we might live.

Then comes the curse upon Eve and Adam. Eve will have great pain in child-bearing. She will long to rule over her husband, but he will rule over her. And to Adam come the hard words that he will now only live by the sweat of his brow – that is, unlike before, now it will be arduous and difficult work to earn his daily bread; the very ground is cursed because of him; and he (along with all of his descendants) will die and return to the dust from which God had made him.

Those are hard and frightening words, indeed. But they have been made bearable by the first curse – that pronounced upon the devil – which also promised a Savior. Yes, life will be hard. It will be a challenge, a fight, a struggle. And we will die because we have all inherited Adam's sin. But there is hope in that Savior, who will crush Satan for us. (pause)

And it is then, after those curses and promises, that we hear something very important. We are told that God sacrifices innocent animals to make clothing to cover Adam and Eve – the

first blood shed, the first death in history, the first sacrifice for sin. A very old tradition says that the animals thus sacrificed were sheep. That certainly makes sense: sheep were the typical and usual sacrifices throughout the Old Testament; more than any other, they symbolize and point forward to Christ's sacrifice. These sheep in Eden, though innocent and spotless and pure, had to die to cover over the sin and shame and nakedness of man. Of course that brings our Lord to mind, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Especially when we remember that Adam and Eve had first tried to cover over their sin themselves. But that could only be done by God, not by sinful man. Try as hard as we might, there is just nothing we can do to make up for our sin. There is nothing we can do to cover up our guilt and shame. Go ahead: put on your best and finest; clothe yourself in your supposed goodness; robe yourself in your imagined works of righteousness – and then hear God's verdict (as given through Isaiah):

But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness deeds like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

It is an affront to God, an insult to Him, when we try to stand before Him on our own, when we (Adam-like) try to cover over our sins ourselves.

Yet how often do imitate Adam, and seek to do just that? For instance, we want to compare ourselves with other sinners, and think that we look pretty good. Or we trot out the list of things we have done for God: our service in the church; our offerings in the collection plate; our prayers, our worship, our praise. Or we minimize and change His Law and its requirements, lowering them to our level and then pretending that we *have* kept them.

When we cover our sin and nakedness and shame ourselves, it is doomed to be a failure. We look as sorry as Adam and Eve must have looked in Eden, standing before God in those fig leaves. God demands perfection – and we have no such perfection of our own to

wear. Instead all we have is shabby, soiled, torn rags. But God sees through all that. He sees and knows our sin; we stand naked before Him.

However, just as He did in Eden, so He does for us: He provides the necessary clothing. He covers our sin. And He does so in the blood of the Lamb. For us, He was sacrificed. For us, He was slain. For us, He was killed. His blood washes away our sin. His perfect righteousness clothes and covers us. We wear Jesus just as Adam and Eve wore those skins. And in Him our shame is taken away. In Him our nakedness is covered. (pause)

You all know the phrase: “a wolf in sheep’s clothing”. Well, that is what we are. Because of Adam’s sin, we have all been gifted with that wolfish, sinful nature. Man is, by nature, a predator and killer. We take, we destroy, we scatter, we attack. And we cannot change that. But Jesus has come to atone for our sin. On the cross, He was sacrificed to pay for all sin – as St. Paul says, there Jesus actually *became* sin; there, in Christ, sin was forever dealt with and settled. His death conquered death. Christ has done exactly what God promised in Eden: He has crushed the satanic Serpent, even at the cost of His own life. He is the Lamb slain for our salvation.

And now we are covered with His pelt. With His skin. We are members of His body, and in Him we live. It is only this connection, this joining, this covering with Christ – given us at baptism – that can save us. If ever we cease to be covered by Him, then we are only naked and shameful. If the Lamb is not on us, we are only deadly wolves. It brings to mind Jesus’ parable of the king who invited everyone to attend the wedding banquet for his son. But in the banquet hall, the king finds one guest who is not clothed in the robes the king had provided – he thought his own were good enough. The king, enraged, has the guest thrown out. However, those who were arrayed in the regal clothes provided them were welcome, and enjoyed the king’s favor.

That is the very thing spoken of in the book of Revelation, in the vision of heaven given to St. John:

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Then one of the elders answered, saying to me: "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him: "Sir, you know." So he said to me: "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

You have been forgiven in Christ. His sacrifice on Calvary is sufficient - and more - for all your sins, all my sins, all the sins of all people. It is not just some animal that was offered up, it is not just some beast whose blood was shed, it was not just some dumb sheep who died in our place. No, it was God Himself! The Creator of all. The Ruler of all. The Lord of all. And yet He has put Himself on that altar of the cross to save us! He covers you from shame. He shields your nakedness. He is on you like your very skin.

That's how close He is to you. That's how much He loves you. That's how connected He is with you. St. Paul talks about how we are members of the body of Christ, and we are. We have been made one with Him in baptism. His Body and Blood - offered on the cross - become one with us as we eat and drink the Lord's Supper. What is ours (sin) He has made His own. And what is His (perfection, holiness, righteousness, heaven, eternal life) He has made ours. (pause)

We live in the same fallen and ruined world as did Adam after Eden. Death is all around us. Brokenness and pain. Shame and grief. Sin and Satan. But it is only temporary. The Serpent has been crushed, defeated, overcome. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin

of the world has triumphed: He died but He lives. And because He lives, so do we. Not just here and now, but forever. In the promised return of Eden. In the new and restored heaven and earth He will give us when He comes again.

Those animal pelts on the backs of Adam and Eve proved God's promise of a Savior. Every time they looked down and saw them, every time they cinched them up against the cold, every time they felt their protection against the harsh world, they knew God's love and presence. Well, you are covered in the eternal garments of the Lamb. His righteousness clothes you; that is why you are to daily remember your baptism. His Body and Blood are yours in the Supper, and unite us with Him - what a treasure and seal of God's gifts it is! In these things (and in His Word) you have been given the same comfort as Adam and Eve in those sheep skins. So, don't fear: Jesus has got you covered. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

OS – Offertory/Prayers  
FE – Nicene Creed