

QUESTIONS GOD ASKS: "WHERE ARE YOU?"

READING: GENESIS 3 verses 1 - 13

INTRODUCTION

On Thursday evening last, some of the folks at Bethel were able to "zoom" in for a Bible Study together, something which I hope we can extend. Now that we have seen how it works and thanks to those who tried and tested it beforehand.

On Thursday we began a series based on a book I had, entitled "Questions God asks" written by Dale & Sandy Larsen. It is one of a series in the Life Builder Series. Our first was based on a passage from **Genesis 3 verses 1 – 13**, and particularly focussing on the question God asked in **verse 9 – "where are you?"**. This might invoke memories of days playing hide and seek, or indeed memories of those days when we were free to visit new places with friends and family and especially with adventurous children (or maybe adults) who would wander off to explore new areas and there would be sudden realisation that a separation had occurred and then began the calling out "where are you?" I have been both the wanderer and the worried parent. In this passage, God had not suddenly lost Adam and Eve. His omniscience (all knowing) and omnipresence (being everywhere) attributes had not failed him. God was not unaware of Adam and Eve's physical location. This question was enquiring much more.

In **Genesis 2** we read of how after completing His creation with the creation of the first human beings, he planted out the Garden of Eden, placing Adam there, with Adam tending and looking after it. In **verses 15-17**, we find God telling him that he could eat the fruit of any tree, except the two in the centre of the garden – the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Seeing Adam looking lonely, God created a mate for him – Eve. All is well, until in the opening verses of the chapter 3, we have the appearance of the crafty serpent who challenges and tempts Eve, instilling doubt and then the first sin of disobedience takes place. Eve then entices Adam and we read in verse 7 that "the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Then God made His daily appearance and on hearing His voice calling "where are you?", Adam and Eve hid.

God knew exactly where they were because when He called them He had the knowledge of exactly where they were and was there with them when He called them! He was not searching for Adam, He already knew where he was. God also knew what Adam had done and those same attributes that allowed God to know where Adam was also allowed Him to know the future result of Adam's actions, the cost of what they had done. God asks us the same question He asked Adam, "where are you?" He watches over us every moment of every day. He is interacting in our lives every moment of every day, knowing the choices we make, even before we make them. God knows the motivation of our choices, even if we try to deceive ourselves and knows the outcome of our choices. God also knows the future impact of our choices.

So God was not asking about the physical location of Adam and Eve, for He was there with them, and why they were there. God knows our physical position, because He is with us as He has promised. But God also knows our spiritual position and if we are living outside of His perfect will, then you can be certain that question "where are you?" will be asked.

Why did God ask the question if He already knew the answer. Well, God was stirring conviction in Adam's heart. Our reading says they were hidden, which, in reality, is impossible. The issue is not that they were hidden; the issue is that they were not where they were supposed to be! God was in the habit of fellowshiping with man. That's why we were created, to have fellowship with God. Where we are supposed to be is in a place of fellowship with Him. The fact that the Bible says God walked in the garden leads us to believe that God visited the garden in physical form. The reason

they were not where they were supposed to be is because they were not in the condition they were supposed to be in.

Sin affects our desire to fellowship with God. In **1 Samuel 15 verse 22**, we read of God speaking to King Saul through the prophet Samuel, **"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."** When I worked in the Welsh Office and decisions had to be made on some issues, I often heard the saying "it's better to seek forgiveness than ask for permission." Sometimes it was right, but sometimes, it was most definitely not. It is better to obey God in the beginning rather than asking His forgiveness later. It is better to be where God wants us to be now than to ask forgiveness for not being there later. Every time we shun an opportunity to fellowship with God we do the same thing Adam did; we turn from God; we disobey God; we rebel against God. At least Adam was sorry that he was not where he should have been. Today, sadly, many are not sorry we miss church, or Bible Study, or prayer meeting. Today most are not sorry we brush off times to fellowship with God and our inactivity and lack of regret speaks volumes about our spiritual condition. Adam was not where he was supposed to be because he was not in the condition he was supposed to be in!

We are not where we are supposed to be because we are not in the condition we are supposed to be in. We still try to run away from God, to hide from Him, by staying away from church (in those days when we were able to go); refusing to sit under the preaching of God's Word; never seeking God; never reading and studying the Bible and by never praying; ignoring God; neglecting God; denying there is such a thing as sin, guilt, or conscience. So, when the doors of the church are open - "Where are you?" When our Bibles sit closed on the table or gathering dust on the shelf - "Where are you?" When prayer meetings and Bible Study is sparsely attended - "Where are you?" Where you are and where you aren't says volumes about your spiritual condition. Before anyone takes offense, I am well aware that there are those who just can't be there physically - but as was said before - God knows our motivation. If we want to, but can't - God knows. If we can, but don't - believe me, God knows.

God expects to meet us where He is. This place in the garden was their regular meeting spot. God expected Adam and Eve to be at their place of meeting, and He expects us to be at our place of meeting. Where are you when God expects to meet you? For now, that could be at home, out for a walk, in the garden - wherever you know and experience God's presence.

The Bible tells us that there was a consequence to man's being where he should not have been and not being where he should have been - God evicted them from the garden. They lost tremendous blessing by being where they should not have been when they should have been where they were supposed to be. Genesis 3 verse 24 adds the severity of those consequences - "After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life" - they also lost tremendous opportunity for fellowship with God. In return: Adam had life and got death; Adam had pleasure and got pain; Adam had abundance and got toil; Adam had fellowship and got alienation; Adam had peace and got conflict.

In **Genesis chapter 3 verses 14 - 15**, we read of God's curse on the serpent (Satan) and forewarning of the defeat he will suffer at the hands of Jesus in His sacrificial death on the Cross where that relationship with God would be restored once again.

"Where are you?" Are you where God wants you to be - spiritually, and physically? Are you where God wants you to be when God wants you to be there? Are you doing what God wants you to be doing when you are where God wants you to be?

PSALM 86 verses 11 – 17

¹¹ Teach me your way, LORD, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.

¹² I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name for ever.

¹³ For great is your love towards me; you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.

¹⁴ Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God; ruthless people are trying to kill me – they have no regard for you.

¹⁵ But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

¹⁶ Turn to me and have mercy on me; show your strength on behalf of your servant; save me, because I serve you just as my mother did.

¹⁷ Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

GENESIS 3 verses 1 – 11

Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?''

² The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."''

⁴ 'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman. ⁵ 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

¹⁰ He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

¹¹ And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?'

¹² The man said, 'The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'

The woman said, 'The snake deceived me, and I ate.'

BLESSINGS

By Laura Story

We pray for blessings
We pray for peace
Comfort for family, protection while we sleep
We pray for healing, for prosperity
We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering
All the while, You hear each spoken need
Yet love is way too much to give us lesser things

'Cause what if your blessings come through raindrops
What if Your healing comes through tears
What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know
You're near
What if trials of this life are Your mercies in disguise

We pray for wisdom
Your voice to hear
We cry in anger when we cannot feel You near
We doubt your goodness, we doubt your love
As if every promise from Your Word is not enough
All the while, You hear each desperate plea
And long that we'd have faith to believe

When friends betray us
When darkness seems to win
We know that pain reminds this heart
That this is not our home

What if my greatest disappointments
Or the aching of this life
Is the revealing of a greater thirst this world can't satisfy
What if trials of this life
The rain, the storms, the hardest nights
Are your mercies in disguise