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Zombie: Dying to Be Loved Genesis 3: 6-13

I heard recently about a pastor who was calling on the house of one of his parishioners. When he came to the door he was sure he heard movement inside but, despite his loud knocking, no one came to greet him. Finally, he pulled out a business card and wrote on the back, "Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock"... and left it at the door. Two days later he got a note from the woman of that house that said, "Genesis 3:10: "I heard you and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

Last week we studied the first time those words were spoken. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and death immediately entered creation just as God had promised. First, their relationship with their creator began to die. They hid from God, if you can imagine! But there's still more death to go around: (Read)

Alienation from God is only the first sign of death that appeared in the garden after they ate the forbidden fruit. Listen to v. 7: Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Another relationship is dying here: the relationship with ourselves. Listen to Adam's response when God comes looking for him. [Adam] answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

What is the word that is repeated? "I!" Four times, the personal pronoun. "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." Part of the fallout of sin is self-absorption. We become more and more aware... more and more focused on ourselves. And here's the really pathetic part; we don't like what we find!

Think back. God created Adam with a tenderness that no other creature received. Formed him out of dust; breathed his Spirit into him. And God showed the same care in creating Eve. Here is something that our culture, especially the earth-first, animal-rights folks, can never accept: human beings are the zenith of God's creation. He created them last. He created them uniquely. He created them in his own image; he didn't do **that** with any other part of creation. He animated them with his own Spirit. He didn't do that with the rhinos or the chimps. Read this story and pretty quickly you realize that God created the whole of the universe as a

stage upon which to place his most prized and precious creation—humanity. You don't read **that** perspective in our newspapers!

God created humanity to live in loving, transparent relationship with Him. We are the only creatures intended for this two-way relationship with God. We are created with a longing to know God and be known by Him... with a longing to hear from God and to talk to Him. He created us with a God-ward focus. Our "eyes" were created to look to God.

We raised German Shepherds when I was a kid. One of the reasons that dogs are man's best friend—and cats' are not—is their eyes. Dog's eyes are always on you! Looking for approval, looking to be noticed, looking to please... always looking. Cats' eyes say it all. "I don't have the time of day for you, you stupid human being. If you want to stroke me and cater to me, fine. You should, of course. But if you expect a longing look of adoration, good luck with that."

God made us with dog eyes...created to focus on our Master. But what is the **first** thing that changed after they ate the fruit? Verse 7: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened..." Was that good? Nope. What do they suddenly see? Themselves. And what do they notice? Their nakedness. And what is their response? Shame! They were embarrassed. They didn't like what they saw. They were uncomfortable. Before they ate the fruit, they were "naked and unashamed." Now they are destructively self-aware... and ashamed of what they see.

Zombies hide from God. Zombies also live in shame. But wait a second. Shouldn't they have been ashamed? They disobeyed God. When we sin...when we disobey God, there is an appropriate feeling within us. What? Guilt! When you sense guilt about something you have done, it is God nudging you to make it right; to get it cleaned up. In John 16, Jesus tells his disciples why he is sending the Holy Spirit: "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin..." Guilt is God's gift to help us know when we are living self-destructively. It is like a spiritual pain reflex. If I pick up a hot pan, pain tells me to drop it because it is hurting me. If I experience guilt, the Holy Spirit is telling me to drop that behavior because it is hurting me.

But it wasn't guilt that Adam and Eve experienced. It was shame. What is the difference? Guilt is the appropriate emotion over the bad thing that we do. Shame is the inappropriate emotion over the bad thing we think we are. And you can always tell the difference between guilt and shame by one thing: the direction we run! Guilt causes us to run toward God; to ask Jesus to forgive us; to make things right again. Shame causes us to run **away** from God; to hide; to become focused on our own failure and self-loathing. Jesus never taught about shame; he often taught about guilt.

Should Adam and Eve have felt guilty about eating the fruit? Yes! But was hiding their only option? No! What else could they have done? How about this: The

minute they heard God walking in the garden, they could have come running to him. Crying out to him! “Lord, we blew it! We were tempted and we were weak and we ate and we are **so** sorry. Please, forgive us!” But shame drove them into hiding. Shame brought internal brokenness. All Adam could think about was himself. “I heard, I was afraid, I was naked, I hid!” It is the cry of the shame-centered person who hates himself. Who disagrees with God’s opinion that he is precious and beloved.

What is the object of their self-shame? Their nakedness. God created them beautiful. But now they find their appearance shameful. And they cover themselves.

I think this is one of the saddest remnants of the fall in the Garden. Disgust and self-loathing with the bodies God gave us. It is true for all humans, but it is women—especially young women—who battle with the lie of the Enemy who says, “You look shameful! You ought to cover yourself! You ought to change the way you look!” The lie of the Cosmo cover perpetuates this horrible sense of self-disgust. You do realize, right....that no woman looks like those magazine covers? They are computer creations. They are photo-shop lies. Here, watch this. [Dove video]

Another video in the same campaign ends by saying, “Talk to your daughter before the beauty industry does.” One of the Devil’s most destructive lies is that you are ugly. Or not pretty enough. All of you—but especially you young women—need to hear this. God created you. He created you beautiful... in his image! The way you are. The sooner you believe God and disbelieve the Devil’s shame-producing lies, the sooner you will take your eyes off of yourself and put them back on your life-giving Master!

Shame has the devastating effect of damaging our relationship with ourselves. But the shame-stain seeps out beyond ourselves. Jesus told his disciples, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” When shame stains healthy self-love and turns it into self-absorption or self-loathing, it makes it impossible for us to genuinely love others. And what is the first relationship that sin tries to kill? Marriage—the central relationship of human society—the institution that is under attack in our culture as never before and even in our own denomination!

Adam and Eve first were ashamed of themselves...and then they became ashamed of each other. They covered up so that they couldn’t see each other anymore. Now **that is** a shame! When God presented Eve to Adam, they were “naked and unashamed!” They delighted in complete openness with each other. Sexual, yes, that was God’s great idea for marriage, but in every other way, too—spiritual openness; emotional openness. But when shame comes into a relationship, trust, transparency, innocent delight... all of them run and hide.

This is why it is so hard rebuilding marriages after an affair. It is why divorce is so toxic. It is why premarital sex, especially among teens, is so destructive, often

leading to eating disorders, depression and suicide. Because when we become that exposed—and someone violates that trust and brings shame into the relationship—it is an almost unbearable sense of vulnerability.

Shame is an awful zombie consequence that we find in this story. But there is another. Did you see it? Blame! Adam's **first** instinct was to become preoccupied with himself; to turn inward in a destructive way. His **next** instinct was to deflect the shame through blame. God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Who does Adam blame? His wife! He throws her under the bus! It was her fault. She was tempted. **She** ate the fruit. Of course this conveniently ignores a big problem here: Adam's wimpiness. Adam was right there. He had the responsibility to save his wife from that assault. But he pulled back. He let the Serpent attack her and did nothing. Adam did what the majority of men do today in their marriages—he went spiritually passive—when what was required was courageous, sacrificial spiritual leadership. As I said last week, one of the most toxic sins that Adam has passed on to us men is the sin of passivity. And it is so sad, because we were called and created for leadership.

But Adam wimps out, and then he blames his wife. No different from what happens in lots of bars after work where guys take turns complaining about their nagging, hard-to-please wives. Men, if you **ever** speak to another person about your wife in any way that doesn't build her up and honor her, you are becoming just like Adam. Bite your tongue! If you want a wife that treats you honorably, start by honoring her in every word you speak about her!

But the blame game isn't done yet, is it? Who's next in the blame game? God! "The woman **you** put here with me..." "It's actually **your** fault, God. Things were going along just fine until **you** decided to stick me with this woman." Wow. What a distortion of reality. Remember? Adam was lonely and God saw that it was not good. He gave him this greatest of all gifts, the gift of loving, intimate, transparent relationship in marriage. But now, God is the bad guy. It's God's fault.

But the blame virus is contagious. V. 13: Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Now it's Eve's turn. "It was the serpent... the serpent that **you** created, God. The serpent deceived me. It's his fault that I disobeyed you!" Everybody is pointing at someone else. Adam points to Eve and to God. Eve points to the serpent. No one has the courage to point to the person that really deserved pointing to. Who? [Point to self.]

Zombies cannot take responsibility for their actions. Zombies are always victims. Zombies are always looking for someone to blame... someone to sue... someone to deflect attention and responsibility away from themselves and elsewhere. Shame kills relationships... so does blame.

So what is the prescription for blame? Courageous responsibility. The willingness to stand up and say, "I did it! It was my fault! All of the blame rests on me!" Husbands and wives...you will never get back to the intimate relationship that God intends for you to have if this is the only hand motion you can come up with. (Finger pointing) Of course there is blame to share. Of course she did something or he did something to hurt you. But if you dare to have the courage to say, "I will focus on myself; I will take responsibility for what I have done, I will point to me..." you might be amazed at how your marriage could be transformed. Own up to your own sin and fault. Model for your spouse how they might do the same. Anyhow, it's worth a try, isn't it? Because I guarantee it, the Blame Game never works.

But this also works with our broken relationship with God! What is called for is a good dose of Psalm 51. David wrote this after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then conspired to have her husband, Uriah, murdered. Awful! But his response is different than Adam's. Listen:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me...Restore to me the joy of your salvation...

Zombies are dying to be loved by God, by themselves and by others. The way into real love and real life is to reverse the Shame/Blame cycle. Just like David did. First, you reject shame. That feeling that causes you to hate yourself and to hide from God and others... that is shame. It is of the devil. Recognize it for what it is. Do spiritual warfare. Talk back to the devil. Tell him that you are a beloved creation of God; that you are precious to God; that God loves you so much he sent his Son to die for you; that you will choose to believe God's opinion of you, not the Devil's. Plead the protection of Jesus over your emotions and your spirit.

And second, take responsibility for your actions. Admit your guilt before God. Don't blame your parents, don't blame your boss, don't blame your boyfriend, don't blame your background. Declare to God, "I know my transgressions..." Beg his forgiveness, thank him for sending Jesus to do what you cannot do—pay the price of your sin and deliver you from guilt and shame. Paul told Timothy, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners!" Jesus told his disciples, "I came to seek and to save the lost!"

The shame/blame cycle can be broken. Stop living like a zombie and discover the joy of living life loved.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **READ** the passage out loud.
- **REFLECT & APPLY INDIVIDUALLY:** Each person take 5-7 minutes to circle words or phrases that jumped out at them; jot down your reflections; check the notes in your Study Bible for insight or help. Grapple with what the Spirit is saying to you, your group, the church—write down some applications.
- **REFLECT & APPLY TOGETHER:** Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.
- **PRAY TOGETHER:** Tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for, and lay one concern before the Lord.
- **DIG DEEPER**
 1. What were the two responses of Adam and Eve when they were caught in their sin?
 2. What is the difference between guilt and shame?
 3. What one thing have you been blaming on others for which you need to finally take some responsibility?