



October 16, 2011
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Zombie: Dying to Be Found

Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-10

Your Session is excited and unified in our conviction that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will be a great home for Chapel Hill. The clincher in that decision was our recent visit to the brand new Presbytery of the Pacific. It was a wonderful, Christ-centered, prayerful, joy-filled experience for all of us. But Friday night I had a sick feeling inside. I realized our flight wasn't returning until Saturday evening and if there was any hiccup with the flight, there would be no one to preach on Sunday morning.

So I shot Ellis White a text saying, "I need you to be on deck for me in case our flight is delayed." He quickly said Yes but, a while later I got another text from him: "I've been thinking and praying about this; I don't think I'm the guy to do this. Sorry to let you down." I texted back, "You ARE the guy; there is no other guy. Just pray that we have no flight delays." That was Friday. Then Saturday evening, just before we boarded, I sent the following text: "Flight delayed. Possible cancellation." I just let that stew for a few minutes. Then I sent another text: "Just kidding. We're going out on time. No worries." A minute later Ellis replied; "Good news. Prov. 26: 18-19." I looked it up:

"Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is a man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I was only joking!"

I like a man who knows God's Word and how to use it effectively! But this morning we come to a place in our story where someone knows God's Word...and twists it for evil purposes. With eternal, devastating consequences. (READ 15-16)

God lovingly creates man out of the dirt and breathes his Spirit into him. Then he creates a gorgeous garden with beautiful trees and luscious fruit. He commands the man to eat and enjoy everything. But there is one "No"...one limitation. The man is not to eat of the tree in the middle of garden. But that's it. Otherwise, enjoy!

What happens next? Well, for the first time, God declares that something is NOT good in the garden. What? "It is not good that man should be alone." So God creates a woman and presents her to Adam and when he sees her he says, "Wow. Where have you been all my life?" Not exactly the Hebrew translation but exactly the sentiment! And then, with God's blessing, they hop in the sack to enjoy one of

God's greatest ideas of all: Marital sex! It may be stated a little more delicately than that...but that's what it means when it says they became "one flesh....the man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Everything is perfect! A beautiful garden, beautiful wife, a completely transparent relationship. Nothing to hide; nothing to be embarrassed about.

What could possibly go wrong? Let's read the rest of the text. (Read Gen 3: 1-10)

These are ten PACKED verses! First, we meet the Tempter. He is called the serpent but we don't know who he is. In fact, it isn't until the very last book of the bible that the identity of the serpent, who appears in the very FIRST book of the Bible, is revealed. Revelation 12:9:

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

So...the Devil...the Tempter...slithers onto the stage to begin his work of leading the whole world astray. And he begins with one couple. One woman. Now, HOW does the Tempter lead astray? What does he attack? The Word of God. The whole story is an attack on the Word of God. In three waves. First assault-He questions the Word of God. Verse 1: "He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

What would have been the simplest, truest answer to that sneaky question? "No!" Did God say that Eve could not eat from any tree in the garden? NO! It's almost the reverse of what God said. What was God's first word to Adam? Yes! "Here is this garden that I have created for you. Every beautiful tree, every luscious fruit...it is ALL yours. I command you...eat. Enjoy!" God's first word was "Yes," not "No."

But isn't it just like the Tempter to plant a question in her heart? To make her wonder if her generous God is in fact a stingy, joy-killing tightwad? "God doesn't want you to enjoy life. He wants to limit life; to restrict life." The Tempter's first assault was QUESTIONING the Word of God.

Now Eve could have put an end to it if she'd answered truthfully, "No, you slimy jerk! As a matter of fact, God told me that I could eat anything. There is only one restriction. And because I have seen how good the rest of God's gifts are to me, I will trust that his restriction is good for me, too. Now...get thee behind me, Satan!" That would have worked. Instead, Eve answers with her OWN assault on God's Word.

"The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" Wait a second...what's wrong with that? God never said, "You must not touch it." As a matter of fact, Adam was told to tend the garden. Presumably, that meant caring for this tree, too. But the

Serpent's evil questioning of God led to Eve's own assault: Adding to the Word of God.

Now comes the third: "'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" The third assault is Changing the Word of God. God said, "On the day that you eat of it, you will die." The Tempter says, "You most certainly will not die." Only one of those statements can be true. The Tempter calls God a liar.

This story speaks right to this moment in our church's life. The challenge we face as a congregation is that voices in our denomination have taken up this assault on God's Word. "Did God REALLY say this about how we ought to live our lives? About how we should behave morally? I know...you may THINK that's what God's word says...but it doesn't say that. Not really. In fact, it means the exact opposite of what it seems to say." The reason Chapel Hill elders have voted unanimously to be dismissed from this denomination is that we no longer have confidence that when God's Word speaks clearly about sexuality or about the person and work of Jesus or the need for salvation that only he can provide, or about anything else that might be at odds with our culture...we no longer have confidence that our denomination will bow in submission before that Word. And we cannot stay in a place where God's Word is questioned and added to and changed...and ignored.

Look at what happens next. "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." Please note...the forbidden fruit was beautiful and desirable. Just like the rest of the trees in the garden. And Eve was created...in her sinless state...with a desire for that which was forbidden. It makes sense when you think about it. The whole of the creation account turns on the idea that we are created with the ability to make moral decisions. We have choice. Part of God's purpose in creation was that He would have a loving relationship with us. Creating us with free will was the only way that our love for God could be meaningful. If we have no choice but to obey God, no choice but to follow God...then we really have no free will. And that means that we are robots. Who cares about a robot that says, "I love you"? The reason Cyndi's "Yes" to my marriage proposal meant something is that she could have said "No." In fact, the first time, she DID say "No."

On the difficult issue of sexuality, one of the arguments put forth is, "I was created this way. God made me this way. Therefore, you must embrace and endorse my lifestyle." But this story says, clearly, that the woman was created with the desire for something that was not good for her. That was, in fact, forbidden to her. The answer was not for her to say, "Well...God gave me these appetites, therefore I am going to indulge them." The answer would have been to say, "God made me with these appetites, but he told me to master them in obedience to Him. So, I will not let my passions overrule me. With God's help and grace, I will live enthusiastically

into his YES. And by God's grace I will master the passions that tempt me into NO."

Something else worth noticing. Where was Adam in all of this? Verse 6 says that he was right there "with her." God placed Adam in charge of the garden. God told him what to do so that they could experience the fullness of life. And yet, when the Tempter slithers up to Eve, what does Adam do? He goes passive. (Remote control joke) He shrinks into the corner. He could have ordered the Serpent to leave. He could have stepped in front of Eve to protect her. He could have chopped his head off with a hoe. Instead, he went passive. He allowed his wife to be assaulted. And he threw away paradise.

There are men in this sanctuary who have not yet embraced their God-given role of spiritual leadership and protection of their family. They have gone passive; stepping back from any spiritual responsibility whatsoever. And until the men step up to their share of spiritual leadership, our marriages, our families, our churches and our communities will never be safe!

What happens next? "The eyes of both were opened and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." A little while ago they were naked and unashamed. Now, Shame enters the Garden. And now comes the saddest moment in the story. "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. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Every day when it was cool in that tropical paradise, God took a walk with his friends. Can you imagine? Jesus used to hang out with his disciples in a Garden called Gethsemane. It was one of their favorite places. But here at the beginning of humanity, we also discover God hanging out with his friends in a garden. It was the high point of every day. But not today. See, the Devil was wrong. The moment they ate the Forbidden Fruit, death came. The death of innocence. The death of openness. And most sadly, here, the death of their relationship with God. They heard God...and instead of running to Him as they did eagerly every other day...they did what? They hid!

How did that work for them? How do you hide from the all-knowing God? Ostriches do it this way. (Pic) Kids do it this way. (Pic of kid with eyes closed) or this way. (I pull blanket over me.) What tree was big enough for them to hide behind from God? And now come these heartbreaking words: Adam, "Where are you!" The plaintive cry of a loving God to the child that is trying to hide from Him.

Adam replied, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." I was vulnerable. I was guilty. I was ashamed. And so, I did the only thing that made sense to me. I ran from you, my life-giving God. I hid from you."

Our sermon series is called Zombie because every human being suffers the fate of our first parents. In our natural state, WE are the living dead. We have all inherited the "sin defect." Every one of us has turned away from God. We have listened to the Tempter twist God's promises. We have believed the lie that says, "Because I long for something that must mean it is good and I should have it." We have believed the Devil when he tells us, "You can be your own god. You can call your own shots." And then...reality hits us: it's all a lie! God is still God. He will always be God and we cannot take his job. And our decision to believe the Liar and follow our passions instead of believing our God and mastering them only leads to a Zombie life of humiliation, guilt, shame and hiding.

How many here have played Hide and Seek? What is the second worst outcome in Hide and Seek? Being found! You choose a lousy hiding place stinks get found quickly and lose the game. But you know what the worst outcome in Hide and Seek is? NOT being found! Isn't that right? One youth night, I played with a group of kids in the church in Bakersfield. I hid so well, no one found me. Finally, after sitting in that corner for a LONG time...I got up and went looking for the people who never found me.

Little kids actually WANT to be found. That's why, when they are hiding from Daddy, they will giggle and stick their head out. Just enough to be seen. And Daddy pretends he can't see. And the game gets sillier and sillier. Little kids long to be found by their daddy. Big kids long to be found by their Daddy, too! We try to hide. We hide in destructive, non-marital sexual relationships. We hide in a fog of booze and drugs. We hide behind a massive pile of credit card debt. We hide behind careerism. We hide behind a façade of "happy family" when, in fact, our marriage is miserable and our kids don't like us. We hide behind lies and pretense and preoccupation and material consumption.

But our longing...the longing of every human heart...is that our Daddy would come looking for us. And would find us. And would wrap his arms around us and say, "I forgive you. I love you. It will be okay." That's exactly what God did in Jesus. When Jesus came to earth, God was saying, "Where are you!"

How are you hiding from God this morning? How's that working for you? Wouldn't you like to take a walk with your savior in the cool of the day? He calls out to you, "Mark... Cyndi... Tony...Shelly...Amy... Kyle...Stephanie...Where are you!" Your answer? "Here I am! Here I am! Please, Daddy...come find me. I want to go home."

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. God said "no" to one thing in the Garden. Why? How does our ability to choose badly reinforce the reality of God's love for us?
 2. How do the serpent's questions challenge God's word to Eve? How do those same questions continue to be a challenge to us?
In what way are you hiding from God?