

## Where are You?

*God's Call to Adam*

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**Bible Text:** Genesis 3:9

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We have before us this evening the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the best known and longest running radio programs on BBC is called *Desert Island Discs*. It is a program in which a celebrity is asked to imagine that they have been marooned on a desert island and they are allowed to have with them eight pieces of music and one book. And the interest of the program is: What pieces of music and what book would they suggest?

I wonder if we were asked to choose one chapter from the Bible to take with us to a desert island, what chapter would we select? It would be an extremely difficult choice, wouldn't it?

Genesis three could be a creditable candidate. It is absolutely fundamental to the whole story of the Bible, to the purpose of God in this world and, in particular to describing our human condition. For here is a profound analysis of who and what we are as human beings. What we are now, what we once were and what, by God's grace, we may become. We are all here in this chapter.

And tonight we are going to seek to listen to a voice, the voice of God. Some of you may find that voice alarming. You should find it alarming. It will be searching. It will probe us and examine us and go deep. It is a haunting voice and I pray that it will be a haunting voice, like that melody that you cannot dismiss from your mind, like that picture, let's say, of a suffering child and months later it is still with you. Above all, it is a voice amazingly gentle and infinitely loving and kind. And the question it asks is recorded for us in Genesis chapter three verse nine.

“But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”<sup>1</sup>

That is our text this evening. “Where are you?”<sup>2</sup>

I want to look at it under three headings. First of all, to ask to whom does God call? Secondly, how does God’s call come? And, lastly and more fully, why does God call? Why does he ask this question of us?

First, then, to whom does God call, “Where are you?”<sup>3</sup>

And the Scripture tells us that he called to the man, the man, not a man, not just any man, the man, because there only was one man Adam, the father of our race, our representative, our head. And God in calling to Adam calls to all human beings. God called to this man. And that is profoundly significant because it tells us something of who we are. As human beings we are created with the capacity to relate to God, to communicate with God, to know God and hear God and respond to God and serve and worship and love and obey and trust God. And that, my friends, is the essence of what being human means. To be human is to be in relationship with God. That is our unique privilege and honor.

I was reading last week of one of the modern film stars, a woman who is leading a notoriously wicked and immoral life. And when she was asked about it—and I am giving you the cleaned up version—she said, “After all, we are just animals.”

Well, that is precisely what we are not. And I ask you, each one, if you realize this about yourself, that you were created to relate to God and that is part of your being and that is part of who you are and that of the essence of your humanity.

Take this book for example. I could use it for many purposes. I could use it as a coaster on which to place my coffee cup. I could use it as a paper weight on my desk to keep my papers from blowing about. I could use it as a sports implement to play ping pong. I could use it as a weapon to kill an annoying fly. I could use it for all of these things, but am I using it as a book?

Surely it is only when I open it and begin to read it that I am using it properly, that I am reaching its essence, what it is designed and meant to be.

Human beings can do many things. We do do many things. We eat and drink. We communicate. We move about. We reproduce. But at the very essence of our humanity is a relationship with God.

And, my friend, tonight if you do not know God, if you do not have that communication, that relationship with God, you are less than fully human. You are losing out on what

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

God has made you to be. You are less than he has designed you to be. You are living at a profoundly substandard level. The Bible describes you as dead. It is as serious as that.

God speaks to the human. But more than that he speaks to a human being who is running away from him, who is trying to hide from him. Here is the first touch of humor in the Bible.

“The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”<sup>4</sup>

Ridiculous.

I have two little granddaughters whom I passionately love. And we play hide and seek. And they have many good qualities, but they are not very good at hiding. And they will say, “Close your eyes, grandda and we will hide.” And one of them will stand behind a little sapling about three inches wide and her chubby little top will project from one side and her chubby little posterior will project from the other side. She is hiding. And the other one seems to think that if she can’t see me I can’t see her, so she closes her eyes.

And they say, “We are ready now, Grandda, we are hiding. You can’t see us.”

The truthful answer would be, “Oh, yes, I can.”

But I play along with them. It is charming.

But that is what Adam and Eve are trying to do. The Lord God almighty, the God who has created the universe, the heavens and the earth and they are trying to hide, to hide behind a few little bushes from the presence of the Lord God.

My dear friends, are you hiding like this from God? Are you hiding from God physically just like Adam and Eve? Is it your practice to stay away from places where you might expect to meet God? Is it infrequent for you to be in a place of worship? You don’t like to come because you could meet God there? You don’t want to meet God. Do you tend to avoid Christian people because you might meet God there? Is it a long time since you have opened your Bible because God is found in the Bible? You don’t want to meet him. Are you hiding from God? Are you concealing yourself? Are you planting little groves of trees and cowering down behind them?

Perhaps it is intellectual doubts and questions. Those are the trees you hide behind. I used to do that before I was a Christian. I would come up with intellectual difficulties, with what I thought were clever questions. And until I could get an answer to those questions, I didn’t need to face God. I didn’t deal with God.

And, of course, when somebody answered my question I would come up with another one.

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<sup>4</sup> Genesis 3:8.

Are you doing that, some of you young people? You think you are an intellectual. You have come up with questions that people have had for hundreds of years. They seem to you so profound and so unanswerable. But all you are doing is trying to hide from God. Are you giving yourself to possessions and pleasure, using them as a screen to insulate yourself from God? Are you refusing to think about God? Are you hiding from God in your career? Are you hiding from God in religion? That is a good hiding place. Lots of people hid from God in churches and in rituals. There are lots of places to hide.

You are just like one of my little granddaughters. You are saying in your heart tonight, "You can't see me, God."

God says, "Oh, yes. I can."

God calls to human beings. You are trying to hide from him.

Let's ask, secondly, how does God's call come? How does God's call come? God can call us through conscience, that inner voice within us which is in every human being on this earth, which alerts us to right and wrong, good and evil. And there is no one without that conscience.

Now we abuse conscience. We neglect our consciences and suppress them and drown them out and drug them and try not to listen to them. But conscience has a way still of speaking.

Are you uneasy at times? Are you restless? Do you have nagging feelings of guilt? Have you got nameless fears that rise up and terrify you? That is your conscience? Are you defensive and secretive about your inner life? That is your conscience speaking. Where are you? Where are you?

Is that not part of the mania for noise in our modern world? People cannot bear silence. They are afraid of silence because in the silence you might hear a voice, a voice of your conscience.

So I can go about with things clamped over my ears and noise and wherever I go, be it airport or restaurant or elevator there is noise, always noise so the conscience cannot speak.

Where are you?

God can speak to us through circumstances, tragedy, disappointment. God is speaking. He is saying, "Where are you?"

God can speak to us through suffering, through frustration. God can startle us and alarm us. God can shake the foundations of our lives. God can speak to us through Christians, through their faces, through their lives.

Is he speaking to some of you through a Christian father or mother? You know how they love you. You know how they are praying for you. You know that they love you better than anybody else on this earth. That is God speaking. When they speak to you about Christ, that is God speaking to you through them. When you see the peace in your parents' faces, you see their kindness to each other and the way they love each other and the way they love you and the happiness of your home and the security and the peacefulness of your home, that is God speaking to you.

God can speak to us through his creation, through beauty. C S Lewis throughout the years when he thought he was an Atheist was haunted by what he called joy, a sweet salve, poignant yearning for the ineffable, for the indescribable, for something that spoke to the deeps in his being. And he got little flashes of it here and there. He would read the Norse poems and joy would fill his mind for a few seconds. And it was only afterwards he realized it was God, God calling me to himself.

God has many voices. But here in our text we are told that the man that the Lord God called to the man and said to him...

In the Garden of Eden, God spoke to Adam and Eve in an audible voice as I do now to you. They were the only two human beings on earth. It would be appropriate, it was appropriate then for God to speak to them directly. A moment's reflection will convince you that that would not be an effective way for God to speak to human beings now. If God were to speak to each human being in an audible voice, can you imagine what this room would be like at this moment?

So God has something far better, far more secure. He speaks to us through the Bible, through his Word, clear, solid, definite. We can read it again and again. We can check it. We can examine it. We can study it. We can say, "This is God's Word and this is what God means."

And this wonderful book is inspired in every syllable.

We live in an era of communication devices. Now, I had better not say too much about these or I will make a fool of myself by showing my own ignorance.

In a recent sermon I spoke about the gramophone. And my children brought me home and sat me down and they said, "Dad, let's take you from the gramophone to the modern world."

But communications devices of all kind, ipods and mp3s and all these sort of things, phone which do everything.

Here is the most astounding, astounding communication device that there ever has been or ever will be, a full, perfect, permanent, infallible, accessible communication from beyond this universe from the creator of the universe to every one of us. We should

marvel when we take this book in our hands. We should want to fall down to the ground and say, “Oh, God, thank you, thank you for your Word.”

And in this Word God questions us. It is an intensely personal communication and at every page we are called to reflect, to examine ourselves. Every page says to us, “Where are you? What sort of a person are you? Why are you living? Where is your life going? Why do you say the things you say? Why do you do the things you do? What about your soul? How is your soul? Do you know you have a soul? What state is your soul in? What about your sins? What about your relationship with God? What is going to happen to you after you die?”

Our age is an age when people are searching for self awareness. Books are published by the thousands. Gurus make millions. There are clinics and courses and all sorts of procedures for finding yourself and knowing yourself.

My dear friend, here is how you find yourself. Here is how you know yourself, to read the Bible thoughtfully and intelligently and prayerfully is one of the most searching, transforming experiences possible. And if you are not a Christian, I challenge you to take this book and read it. Read it. And as you read it, pray, “Oh God, show me myself and show me yourself.”

And God has promised that those who seek will find. God calls us through his Word. Hide wherever we like, God’s call reaches us. And God is calling you tonight. God is saying to you tonight, “Where are you? Where are you?” He is speaking through my voice. It is not me you are listening to. It is God. He is bringing this question to each and every one of you without exception. Where are you? Where are you? Where are you?

Paul says, “We are ambassadors for Christ. God making his appeal through us, God making his appeal through me. Where are you?”

And that brings us, thirdly, to the question: Why does God call? Why does God call, “Where are you?” Is God at a loss? Does God not know where they are? Is he asking because he needs to be told? Is he wandering around the Garden of Eden looking high and low and at last in desperation because he can’t find them he calls out, “Where are you?”

Well, of course not. You can tell that from Adam’s reply. Adam doesn’t say, “We are over here, Lord, in the middle of the trees.”

God knew exactly where they were. God knew where they were to be found and God knows where you are and he knows where you are now this evening. He knows everything about you and about me. There is nothing you can tell God about yourself that he doesn’t know already. He knows you far better than you know yourself. He knows every molecule of your being. He knows every fiber, every thought in your mind. His

knowledge of you is absolute and complete. He knows what you are going to say before you say it.

The psalmist says, “Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, oh Lord, you know it altogether.”<sup>5</sup>

God knows.

Why, then, does he ask? Well, he wasn’t asking Adam for his own sake. He was asking Adam for Adam’s sake. And he is asking us for our sake. And Adam understands that.

“And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’”<sup>6</sup>

What a significant answer.

“Where are you, Adam?”

And Adam says, “God, I am afraid of you. That is where I am. I am guilty. That is where I am. I am ashamed and embarrassed. That is where I am. I am hiding. That is where I am.”

Adam and Eve had disobeyed God. They had listened to the devil. They had eaten the forbidden fruit and at that moment their innocence was gone forever and they saw each other with new eyes and they were embarrassed and they were ashamed. And, far worse, they were separated from God. And the Lord wants them to realize this. That is why he is asking the question. He wants them to face up to what they had done, to admit what they have become. His call is designed to make them aware, to get them to verbalize, to make concrete their own sin and their own separation from him. He wants to hear them say it.

And that is exactly why he is calling to some of you tonight who are not Christians. Where are you? You are hiding. You are running away from God. Some of you need to say, as Adam said, “I am afraid.” Is that not the truth? You are afraid of God.

Now, of course, that is the last thing you want to communicate to your friends and family.

I remember when I was 18 or 19 years of age. I called myself an Atheist. I was Mr. Cool, Mr. Sophisticated. I laughed at these things. I shrugged my shoulder. Oh, God. And inside I was just a little frightened boy.

And your parents see that, you know? You are not fooling anybody but yourself. You are afraid of God. You are afraid of God coming into your life, what he might want, what he might ask of you. You are afraid of losing what you think is control.

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 139:4.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 3:10.

Face up to it. You are not tough. You are not cool. You are not really sophisticated. You are not even that intelligent. You are afraid. Tell him. Don't kid yourself.

"I am just afraid of you."

Perhaps you feel naked, ashamed of yourself. That is the truth, ashamed, as we all are, ashamed of your sins, ashamed of your thoughts, ashamed of your uncleanness, ashamed of your hypocrisy and your weakness and your lack of love and your inner emptiness. You are ashamed and you are aware that you have broken God's law and that you have been ungrateful to him and that you have refused to love him and trust him. That is where you are, isn't it? Isn't that where you are? You are not ready to face God. You are not ready to die. You are not ready to meet God and answer him for who you are and what you have done. Where are you? Where are you?

Young people, boys and girls, where are you? If you are not trusting God where are you?

It is not easy to answer this question from God.

How humiliating, how humiliating for Adam. You see, shortly before they had fallen for the con trick of the devil.

"In the day that you eat thereof, you will be like God. Listen to me," he said, "You will be so glorious. You will be so wise. You will be so powerful. You will have it all."

And they believed him.

God says, "Where are you?"

Hiding, naked, ashamed, frightened, cowering like animals. It is not so great, is it? It is not so great.

You have turned your back on God. You have chosen sin. Where are you? What is your life like? Is your life so wonderful? Are you so happy? Are you so fulfilled you have so much peace?

If truth be told it is pretty grimy and shabby, second rate and pathetic. Where are you?

When you put aside all the bluff and the bluster and go home and look in your mirror, who are you, where are you? Not much.

And, of course, the temptation is to put our hands over our ears and to run deeper into the trees and try not to think about it. But one day you will have to answer that question.

We are told in the Word that each of us will give account of himself to God. And now is



the best time to face up to that question because of what God is about to say and do. And here is why his question suddenly becomes so wonderful.

You see, he is not calling Adam just to rebuke him, to extort a confession from him, to punish him. He does speak sternly to this guilty couple. Their sin will bring struggle and pain and suffering and death into their lives and God makes that plain.

But the main reason why he comes into the garden, the main reason why he seeks these runaways, the main reason why he asks them the question is to speak to them incredibly kind, thrilling words of love and hope. They are hiding from him, but he is seeking them and he is seeking them in love and in mercy and he is seeking you in love and mercy tonight. He tells them, remember, about the Savior who is going to come, who is going to destroy the devil and all his works, the offspring of the woman who will bruise the head of the serpent.

The Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothed them. Innocent lives were given up that their shame and their sin might be covered. And God covered them. And they were expelled from the garden and they were going to die and they would return to dust. But beyond death a hope was given of a future new life, a life everlasting. The tree of life was guarded, but it was not taken away.

He drove out the man into the east of Eden. He placed cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. And the word could also be translated to keep, to keep the way to the tree of life. The way is guarded. But the way is still there. The tree is still there. We are going to meet it again at the end of the Bible. It wasn't removed. And in God's own time that cherubim would step aside and the way to the tree of life would be open again.

And Adam and Eve went out of Eden, but as they looked back, as Milton says, they could see the tree of life and it is there. And some day by God's grace we will at of its fruit.

God, in other words, calls to these men and to this man and woman so that he may find them and forgive them and save them and restore them. And they are restored. They are restored.

We find in the next chapter Eve is trusting in the Messiah. Verse four and five. She is wrong about the identity, but the hope is profoundly right.

“We have got a man from the Lord, Cain.”

Now he wasn't a messiah. He was a murderer, but she believed in the Messiah who would come.

My friends, listen. Please listen. Listen to God calling you this evening.

Where are you?

Where are you?

Don't try to hide. Don't run away. He is calling to you kindly, graciously, lovingly. He wants you to face up to your sin. He wants you to acknowledge it.

“God, I have disobeyed you. I have sinned against you. I am frightened and I am ashamed and I am guilty and I am sorry.”

He wants you to admit that you are a guilty, frightened sinner who has been running away.

And then, as he did with Adam and Eve, he is pointing you to his Son. The Lord Jesus, he is the offspring of the woman, the one who had no human father, for God was his Father. And it is the Lord Jesus who bruised the head of the serpent on the cross even as he did so was damaged and hurt himself. And God is calling you to trust this Christ, to look to this Son, to tell him where you are and ask him to save you from who you are and where you are.

He says, “Whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

And then God will clothe you, not with skins of animals, but with the wool of the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, the perfect, divine righteousness, the very righteousness of God himself will clothe you. And God will show you the tree of life. And no longer is it guarded by angels with a flashing sword. The way is wide open and the Savior is waiting with outstretched arms. That is why God is calling you this evening. Where are you? Where are you?

Where were you when you came in? Where are you now? Are you coming to Jesus? Or are you still staying away? Are you trusting in Christ? That is the place.

My dear friends, God is going to ask that question again. And at the end of the world at the day of judgment he is going to call to you and to me and he is going to say, “Where are you?” And you will have to appear and stand before him. And if you haven't trusted in Jesus as your Savior he will say to you, “Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire.”<sup>7</sup>

And it may be that throughout all the ages of eternity that awful question will echo and echo in your mind and heart. Where are you? Where are you?

I am in hell. I am in hell. And to all eternity that answer can never be changed. You will be in Christ or you will be in hell.

Where are you now?

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 25:41.

And, friends, this word, because the gospel is for Christians as well and especially, this word comes to all of us this evening reminding us of our true location. Your heavenly Father comes to you this evening. He puts his hand on your shoulder and he says, “Son, my daughter, where are you?”

And you say, “Lord, I am heavy hearted. I am discouraged. I have been badly let down. I am lonely. I am frustrated. I am hurting. I am angry. I am confused. I am worried. I am stressed. I am uncertain and depressed.”

Tell him, just tell him.

Where are you?

Here is where.

And our Father says, “I know it. I know it.” He doesn’t dismiss that. He listens. He listens. And then he says, “I am going to ask you again. Where are you?”

And you think. You say, “Where am I? I am in Christ. I am in Christ. That is where I am.”

For we who are Christians get lost, too, don’t we? We forget. We wander and we need to be reminded where we are.

But oh thank God in spite of everything you can say tonight, “Father, I am in Christ.”

And it is our prayer that all of you can say that. Will you come to the Savior? This is Paul’s life ambition, that I may gain Christ and be found in him. And if we are in him that is a blessing without limit and we are secure forever. Amen.

I am going to lead us briefly in prayer and after that we shall sing together in praise to God. Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, Thank you for coming to seek us, for the Good Shepherd come to seek and to save that which is lost right into the stony places, the hard desolate places. He lays us on his shoulders rejoicing. Oh Lord Christ, come among us this evening we pray, you Good Shepherd of the sheep and find, we pray, some of the lambs who have gone astray. Oh Lord, save them we pray. Place your hand upon them now and may they hear your gentle, penetrating, searching voice. Where are you? May they cry to you even now in need and be found by you? And, Father, when we lose ourselves, bring us back to yourself that we may be secure in our Shepherd’s arms. We pray for his sake and glory. Amen.*

Hymn number 34. Hymn number 34. We shall sing these five verses noting particularly the prayer in the last verse.

Search me oh God, my heart discern.  
Try me my inmost thoughts to learn.  
And lead me if in sin I stray.  
To choose the everlasting way.

We shall stand to sing praise to God.

[singing]

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with Christ's people now and forevermore. Amen.