

Genesis 3:8-15. 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 that I commanded you not to eat from?" 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 serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

The Father Calls Out to His Children

1. To Reconcile
2. To Rescue
3. To Restore

The door opens. The keys jingle. The kids know that Dad is home and they run to the top of the steps. Sure enough, in walks dad. Arms are open ready for hugs, snuggles, and maybe some stories. The kids are excited to talk about the days' activities and want to know what the plans are for the evening. They talk, if time and weather allow, they go outside for some family time or they settle in and get ready for the family meal. They welcome time spent together.

The routine is familiar, regular, and welcome. Therefore, it is strange and revealing when the door opens and this time little feet scramble away. Dad walks into an oddly quiet and empty scene. It's immediately clear something is not right. Something has gone wrong. And so the father calls out to his children in an effort to get to the bottom of things.

The Father calls out. ***Where are you?*** In the perfect surroundings of Eden, God and man would have routinely enjoyed each other's company in a welcome and perfect way. But on this occasion, as the LORD God approached, something strange and revealing took place that was clearly out of place. Adam and Eve did not greet him with a warm and welcome hello. There wasn't a loving rush to come and engage with him and walk alongside their God and Father. Instead, there was a sullen scene, empty of their presence. They heard the sound of the One who holds the keys to the universe, and their

feet scampered in the opposite direction. Away from their father they fled, they hid. Something was not right. Something had gone wrong. And so the LORD God - the loving Father that Scripture reveals him to be - called out, ***“Where are you?”***

Consider how generous and gracious, patient and revealing those words are. He knows where they are. He knows what they have done. But his goal is not to shame or cancel, crush, or dispose of those that have so gravely disappointed him and despised his command, but he comes near and he calls out in order to reconcile, to rescue, to restore. His will is that the sin is dealt with the relationship that they had broken would be repaired, that they would be rescued from the guilt and punishment that their transgression deserved. And His ultimate will is for human beings to walk and talk with God in the tranquility of perfection that would be restored by his promise of a Savior. And so a holy God calls out to those who had become lost creatures guilty of rebellion against his commands. And he calls out with a question that was designed by loving Father in order to gather his children back into his presence. He calls out not to humiliate and discard, he calls out and his goal is to lead his beloved children to repentance. He comes near with a call that invites them to confess their sin and trust in his steadfast love. He calls out. ***“Where are you?”***

His call reveals his perfect love, and the answer God receives reveals the brokenness of mankind and how they have fallen so far from perfection. The guilt, the shame, that drips from these words is heartbreaking. ***“I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”*** The simple childlike joy and trust and love that they once shared with God had been so suddenly stripped away by the brunt force of their sin. Their transgression had ripped open their senses to shame and guilt, and now those who once walked side by side with God hid in fear. No longer bearing the image of God, they could no longer bear to be in his presence. Aware of their fall they hid in fear of God’s punishment and in the shame of what they did and what they had become.

And so the Father calls out again. His words continue to reveal a God of supreme patience and love. This time he indicates that things are not as they should be, he spells out their transgression, and in steadfast mercy and love gives Adam and Eve an opportunity to fess up for what they have done. ***“Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”*** A simple yes would suffice. But instead of one honest word of confession, they sputtered out many foolish words, including words of shame and blame. They blamed each other. They blamed the devil. They even blamed God. 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 serpent deceived me, and I ate.”***

Into this dreadful and desperate situation, God speaks words of rescue and mercy. In his love, he moves to bring about reconciliation by his own efforts as he promises a Savior. This promised one would be born for us, to fend off the vicious attacks of this evil foe and as the one who stands in our place, he would deal the devil a crushing blow. He

would do it on behalf of those who could not save themselves: Adam, Eve, and every single sinner. He points at the deceiver who had set the trap and God makes his unforgettable promise of salvation. ***And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*** In these words, God promises to destroy the devil's work. In these words, God promises to send a Savior for us to be our substitute and to suffer on our behalf so that we might be reconciled to God, rescued from punishment, and restored.

Restoration is necessary. Because of Adam's sin every man, woman, and child has lost something that only God can restore. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, in holiness, and purity, and harmony with each other and with their maker. That image of God has been lost and it shows. It shows up in our strained human relationships and our relationship with God. Instead of eagerly welcoming his presence, we find ourselves backtracking and even fleeing from him, we hide from him in shame, we push him away, trying in vain to keep him far enough away that he cannot see what it is that we have done. That relationship is by nature strained, it is more than broken, as we are dead in our sin, yet still active in rebellion. We are deserving of being cast away into hell, scrapped and forgotten, but in his goodness, God promises to send a Savior to mend that otherwise incurable wound. And God remembers his promises, so the God-man Jesus comes to reconcile us to God, and to restore us. And that restoration includes an Adam and Eve like desire to be in the presence of God – even if that means in our fallen state that we confess our sins as we approach him. Through his love and his promises and his gracious call, God instills in us a desire to come before Sunday after Sunday and we lay our sins before him. We do not run away and stay away, we do not hide in shame, and push him away, but instead by his gift of faith, we draw near for in Christ's love we are restored. For in Christ, we know and believe in our Father's love. In Christ, we know his promise to forgive us through the work of our Promised Savior. We know that the hero came as one of us and he was the better Adam, and he has rescued us and reconciled us to God by his perfect life and his self-sacrificing ways and this good news restores us. So with that image of God being restored through faith in Christ, let us no longer flee from God or resist his presence. But basking in the peace that Jesus gives as our stand-in and substitute and risen and victorious Savior, now let us come before our Lord with thanksgiving. Let us enter his courts with praise. With reverent humility, we confess our transgressions – for those sins that would have forever separated us from God have been removed, wiped out, and paid for by our hero our rescuer.

You are forgiven and blessed by God through our Savior. He restores to us that desire to be in God's presence. As restored children of God, we welcome the opportunity to hear his Word. And as we spend time with our Father, we are also being restored into his image so that we begin to reflect the same gracious way that God deals with sinners. We are restored to deal with those who sin against us, as we forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. We aren't out to humiliate, to crush, cancel, and discard, but as a reflection of God's loving approach, we are careful to admonish and rebuke when necessary - as we lead brothers and sisters in the faith, friends, and children, to God's Word and the

repentance that comes through faith. We aim to gently lead to confession and proclaim forgiveness knowing of God's promise in Christ. We do this in how we parent, how we deal with our fellow brothers and sisters in the faith, and those who have sinned against us. The Savior comes to forgive sins. He comes to rescue us from punishment and despair. And his goal is to bring us all to *be with* our God forever in the perfection of paradise restored.

May the Lord restore to us the joy of salvation that we may stand in awe of the opportunity to walk and talk with God in worship and bible study and prayer. Dear brothers and sisters of Jesus, revere our Father's Holy Word and then consider its great and glorious promise. Consider the glorious reality of being able to stand before your Heavenly Father, your Savior, and Sanctifier, with no more sin to confess. Instead in the bliss of paradise restored you will approach him as pure and holy forever. What a blessing that will be, and God gives you that promise to bless your lives with hope, with joy, with grace.

Consider the grace of our God that he would do this for sinners who broke his perfection and break his perfect commands. O the undeserved love of a Father. Come and welcome his call. Rejoice in his presence. Be eager to walk with God through life. Go and live as his children. After all, isn't this why he made us? Isn't this why he has reclaimed us and called us to be his own?

Remember that remarkable scene in the garden of Eden as well as that telling scene in our Gospel lesson for today (Mark 3:33-35) as Jesus, the promised Son of God, addressed the crowds that were pressing in against him. Lean in and listen as Jesus asks that thought provoking question, *"Who are my mother and my brothers?"* And then hear his gracious voice as he looks around those are seated and listening to his Word and says, *"Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother!"*

Dear friends, hear God's gracious call. You who have rescued and reconciled by Christ our Promised Savior be daily restored by his mercy and grace and live as children of God. Rejoice in the presence of God your Father, welcome him with open arms, gladly spend time in his Word and in the hearing of his voice, and throughout your whole life rejoice in his presence. And let us live as those who were raised on his love. Thankful for his forgiveness and patience and even his loving rebuke, let us go out not to cancel or crush, humiliate or discard, but let us forgive as the Lord has forgiven us. Carry that lasting memory of your God with you and live in the light of his love and his promise. Thanks be to God through our Lord, our one and only Savior, Jesus Christ, who came to do just as promised: to reconcile, to rescue, to restore! Amen.