

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

**[Introduction]**

Listen, God is calling. Did you hear His call in the Old Testament reading? He is calling, “Where are you?” He is calling to you just like He called to Adam in the Garden of Eden. “Where are you?” His call causes us to reflect on where we are and what is happening in our lives.

Listen, again, as the story unfolds and see how God’s call of “where are you?” affects Adam and how God’s call affects us.

**[God Questions Adam]**

“But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you? (Ge 3:9). At God’s question, Adam looks around himself and realizes that he has tried to cover himself from God’s sight. He has tried to put a separation between himself and God.

You see, after Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit the first thing they did was to make loincloths of fig leaves for themselves. To separate themselves from each other’s eyes. To separate themselves from each other’s presence. They realized they were naked and immediately thought, “This can’t be right, we will have to fix this. Surely, God must have overlooked the creation of clothes when He created the heavens and the earth because it isn’t right that we are naked.”

Then as they heard “the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,” (Ge 3:8a) Adam and Eve realized that these loincloths of fig leaves weren’t proper formal attire for a visit by the Lord God of Creation. So, they “hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden” (Ge 3:8).

They separated themselves from God’s presence by putting a barrier of fig leaves and a barrier of trees between themselves and God.

Notice how they have yet to realize (or fear, for that matter) their sin of disobeying God’s command. God told Adam, “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Ge 2:17). However, they haven’t yet realized their sin, instead, they are simply ashamed at their nakedness before God.

It isn't until God starts to ask questions, that Adam begins to realize his sin. Starting with his question, "where are you?"

God's question causes Adam to repent.

God's question causes Adam to return to God.

God's question causes Adam to confess that he was afraid of the sound of God, that he was ashamed over his nakedness.

God's question causes Adam to confess that in his fear he fled from God.

### ***[God Questions Us]***

Listen, God is calling to **you** as well. He is calling, "Where are you?"... So with that, where are you in relation to God?

Could it be... that you are hiding from God? Are you ashamed by the nakedness of your sin and disobedience to God's laws?

We are poor miserable sinners. We suffer from the same delusion that Adam and Eve had at the fall. We suffer from the loss of the trust we had at the beginning of creation. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they put their trust in their will above their trust in God's will.

We suffer from the same delusion. How often have we decided that we know what is best for ourselves? How often have we acted like we know better than God? That God's law doesn't apply to us, because we are special, we can do whatever we want, regardless of what the Lord God of Creation wants.

Where are you in relation to God?... **You** have separated yourselves from God, except, instead of hiding from God behind a few fig leaves and a few trees, you have hidden behind your excuses, your accusations, and your human justifications. **You** have separated your very life, your very will, your very desires from God.

We have hidden ourselves from God and we have run from God, loving our sin more than God's presence. We stupidly imagine that **our** will, **our** standards, **our** choices are better than God's. We stupidly "imagine that our cure lies in flight from God" (LW Vol 1.174).

### ***[God Calls us to Repentance]***

Where are you? God's question calls us to repentance. God's call causes us to reflect on where we are in relationship to God. God's call convicts us. We now realize that we are separated from God, hiding from His presence. We have fled from the Lord God of Creation.

But... like a parent calling to a Child, “Where are you?” Our heavenly Father’s call causes us to turn around and look at Him.

In repentance, God calls us to return to His presence to be restored in our trust and relationship to Him.

In fact, God has called us to Him in Baptism.

Where are you? You are in the word and water of baptism. Although the physical water has long since dried up and finished its cleansing of your sins, the Word of God is still active and wet in your life. The Word of God still clings to you and cleanses you from your sins. You are still in the word and water of your baptism.

Where are you? You are in the place of God, where you have the Word of God and the promises of God, instilling faith and trust in you. You are in the promises of God. You are in His presence. You are living out your baptism in repentance and faith.

You are in no longer separated from God because of your sins. Instead, Jesus Christ, Himself, declared you righteous. Now God can approach you like he approached Adam and Eve in the Garden. Except you no longer need to run from God. Instead, you can dwell in the Kingdom of God here on earth.

### ***[God Gives us the Gospel]***

The Kingdom of God, where God daily declares his Gospel promises to you. Words of truth like the first promise of the Gospel (also known as the “protevangelium”) recorded for us here in Genesis 3:15 after God declares the serpent to be accursed. God says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Ge 3:15).

For Adam and Eve this Gospel message seemed very near, it offered hope in the guarantee of offspring, but more importantly, it offered the assurance of the Gospel victory over the serpent Satan.

For us this Gospel message is also very near, it has been accomplished by Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the Devil. The serpent may have bruised Christ’s metaphorical heel as Jesus in humiliation died on the cross, but Jesus bruised the serpents head as Jesus paid the price for our sins, as He descended to declare victory in hell and as He rose again from the dead to declare victory to us as well.

But like the two answers to God's question, "Where are you?" this Gospel message of the victory of God's Kingdom also has two answers, the answer for you now, and the answer that has not yet reached its final fulfillment.

When I first talked about, where you are, I said that you are in your sins and so, in this world, you still struggle with your sins. You still live a life a slavery to your own will and you still turn your back to God's will. But in the now and not yet, Kingdom of God you are both saint and sinner and so likewise, you are in the waters of baptism and dwell in the forgiveness given to you by Christ. The final fulfillment of the Kingdom of God is also not yet. It is awaiting Christ's second coming and his final blow to Satan, as Paul says in Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."

### [*Conclusion*]

Listen, God is calling, "Where are you?" We must listen and hear God's words. As God pronounced judgment on Adam and Eve, they had to hear the word of God and **believe** that there is something good in it, even if they can't see the final fulfillment of it. They couldn't rely on their own understanding, they could only rely on the word as it is spoken to them.

This is true for us as well. We also must trust and **believe**: the word, the promise, and the one who speaks it, namely, Jesus Christ himself.

God calls out to us, "Where are you?" His call causes us to reflect upon where we are in our sin. His call causes us to repent. Listen, God is calling, because His words direct us to His Gospel message. His call causes us to remember our baptism and directs us to repent and return to where He is.

Where are you? You are in the now and not yet, Kingdom of God. You are dwelling with Jesus in the Gospel. You are in the presence of God. Amen.

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"Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do His will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb 13:20-21)

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