

*Genesis 3:1-20*

The first sin, original sin. Led pretty quickly to the second sin, didn't it, the sin of blaming someone else for what you did yourself, not taking responsibility for one's own actions.

But first there came the apple.

The first sin, original sin. Original sin has nothing to do with sexuality, and indeed has very little to do with disobedience, although that may be a part of it.

No, the original sin into which we are all born as human beings is the everlasting and ongoing temptation to try to live without God, to try to become our own God's, to try to pretend that we don't need God because we are in charge of our own lives.

And today even those of us who name ourselves Christians so often live our day to day lives as if there were no God. Functional atheism, it has been called. We get up, and have a shower, and go to work or school or a volunteer commitment, and we live our days as if there were no God, as if we were our own God.

We don't want to remember how utterly we depend upon our Creator God for every single breath we take, for every atom of oxygen our lungs take in. We don't want to admit, even to ourselves, how little control we have of our own lives, because to admit that is to admit weakness, and vulnerability.

And so we grab for whatever apple we can find, whatever we can swallow that will let us believe that we are in charge, that we don't need God. We try to convince ourselves, time and again, that we're doing just fine on our own.

And God sees this and weeps because if we would only let God be God, our lives would be so much easier. If we would only let God into our hearts; if only we would let God into our lives....

And as surely as God sought after Eve, as surely as God sought after Adam, God seeks for each one of us, and calls to us, and yes we may be naked, and yes we may be vulnerable, but God tries to tell us that that's OK, because we're with God, and we are safe with God.

But we continue to hide. And God continues to seek.

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*Isaiah 6:1-11*

How long, O God? How long? We want to invite you to come and be with us, we want you to come and give us peace and love and joy, but we are afraid.

We are afraid because we know that we are not worthy, that we are not good enough. With even the barest glimpse of your glory and majesty, with even the smallest sense of your holiness next to our worldliness and our petty concerns and our bickering and our wars and our prejudices and selfishness, with the vision of you we shrink away. How could we ever presume to approach you? We have covered our nakedness, you see, we have hidden our vulnerabilities under layers of indifference, and self-centeredness, and willful ignorance.

No, Lord, we don't want to hear your words, and we don't want to see your vision, we don't want to understand your call. Because if we truly heard, and we truly saw, and we truly understood, then we would see that we are still naked, we would have to become vulnerable. We might even have to change how we live our lives.

So we see your holiness and we are filled with awe and then we hide, again.

Yet you keep seeking us. You keep reaching out to us. How long, O Lord, how long?

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*Isaiah 40:1-11*

Cry out! Bring comfort to my people! Tell them that I do still love them, that I so desire to care for them as a shepherd cares for the tiniest lamb.

But these people don't deserve it, Lord. Look at them! They say one thing, and do another; claim to believe this way, but walk in the opposite direction. Why would you ever bother? They made their bed; let them lie in it. They made their own choices; let them live with the consequences.

Let them deal with the extreme weather they've caused by their own actions. Let them suffer famines in some places and obesity in others because of the way they've decided to share all you've given them. Let them experience the violence and hate that comes when some people decide that they are more equal than others.

No. Comfort, my people. I know that all of this, you have created out of fear. You do not want to be taken advantage of. You don't want to be the ones on the losing side. I understand that; I see the walls you have built to keep one another out; I see the twisted paths you have taken; I see the mountains you try to keep between me and you. I see what you are doing, that you keep hiding from me.

But I am coming to you anyway; I will always come to you, I will always seek you, because the word of God will stand forever.

Comfort, O comfort my people.

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*Micah 6:6-8*

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God.

No, that's too easy. And besides, doing all that might just make us open to being hurt. No, we need to do more than that to please God. We need to create books of rules to follow, so that we can all know when someone is living right and when someone's not living right. We need to create the proper ways to worship a God who is so holy and wonderful and mighty and magnificent. We need to make a great show of just how much we are giving to God, so that the world can see how wonderful our God is. We need to be able to look at one another and know who's doing it right and who's doing it wrong.

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God.

No, I've got an idea. Let's build God a building, a house of God we'll call it. We'll make sure everything in it is holy, because God is holy. And we'll make sure that nothing unclean from the outside world pollutes this holy house of God. We'll make sure it preserves all the traditions of our ancestors, because those traditions bring us comfort, at least for a while.

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God.

Wait, I've got it. We'll organize ourselves, so we can do more stuff. And we'll all keep real busy with meetings and committees and some of us get to be presidents and chairpeople, and some of us will even get to be reverends and bishops, and we can make sure that only the people who follow the rules and worship the correct way get to do those jobs, and that they concentrate on doing them within the holy building, because we wouldn't want any of that holiness to leak out into that dirty world out there.

Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God.

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*Luke 1:26-38*

Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word.

That's what made her different, isn't it. What made her the one.

She was willing to be naked before you, Lord. She was willing to be vulnerable, utterly open to you using her to do what you needed to do in this world.

You called to her, and maybe for the first time since Eden, one of your human creatures didn't hide. Others had served you, of course; others had opened a bit, had answered your call. But not like this. Not ever so completely open, so exposed.

Here, this woman-child sought only to understand, how can this be? There was still fear; how could there not be, for a creature to be thus confronted with the Creator? But

her love for you overcame the fear. Her willingness to be open to you made her the one. She stopped hiding, at least for a little bit.

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*John 1:1-14*

We just couldn't stop hiding. We kept putting on layers upon layers to hide our nakedness. We did not want to stand before you, knowing your glory and majesty would make us so insignificant, and that the depth of your love would overwhelm us. We decided to become our own gods, so that we wouldn't have to face you.

We refused to be vulnerable. So you became vulnerable.  
We refused to be naked. So you came, completely naked.  
We wanted to be in charge. So you came utterly dependent upon us.

Full of grace and truth, the light shining in the darkness that will never be overcome. The light that shines upon all of us and beckons us to come out of the darkness, to stop hiding, to come into the light.

The light still shines. The light still calls. The light still invites. All we need to do is respond, to call and invite the light into our lives once again.

Come, Lord Jesus, Come soon.