

When God gave Adam and Eve the gift of free will, he gave them the capacity to be moral, that is, to choose to do what is right. But they chose evil. To choose evil is to abuse freedom. And like children who have done wrong, they tried to hide rather than face the consequences.. But God came looking for them and called out to Adam, “Where are you ?”

But there seems to be a problem here. If God knows all things, why did he have to ask Adam “Where are you ?” Are we to conclude that God didn’t know where Adam was ? Oh, God knew all right. It was Adam who didn’t know. In asking the question God does not expect to learn something God doesn’t know. What God wants is to produce an effect on the person which can only be produced by just such a question.

The question “Where are you?” is a profoundly disturbing question. And it is a question which is addressed not just to Adam but to every person.. In every era, God calls to every person, and says “Where are you..... In your relationship to me, to others, and to yourself ?”

Adam hid to avoid rendering an account, and to escape responsibility for what he had done.. We hide for the same reason, when we find ourselves in Adam’s situation. When we do wrong, we become afraid, and try to hide the consequences. In trying to hide from God (which is impossible) we are hiding from ourselves, we are running from ourselves.

But there is something that seeks us out. We hear the voice of God in our heart asking, “Where are you?” God is not indifferent. God pursues us when we would rather not deal with God. God does so, not to punish us but to get us to face up to what we have done. God loves us enough to forgive our sins, but God wants us to take responsibility for them and to try to atone for them. Confrontation is a sign of love.

Adam and Eve trembled on hearing the voice of God. They were ashamed of what they had done, and ashamed of themselves. Everyone’s heart (like that of Adam) trembles on hearing the question “Where are you ?” That question is

not meant as a threat but as a help. It is the voice of someone who cares about us.

Adam and Eve felt guilty. Today guilt has become a dirty word. But guilt can be constructive. It is the sign of a healthy conscience. If people do wrong they *ought* to feel guilty. It is a sign of being truly human. Only a psychopath feels no guilt but only a scary moral numbness. We don't consider such a person "normal" or fully human.

Just as pain is a warning that all is not right with us physically, so guilt is a sign that all is not well morally. In some people the throbbing pain of guilt calls them to change, to seek the truth, to repair past faults and to ask forgiveness – and all of this is positive. However, taken too far, guilt can become a spiritual sickness. Here we are talking about someone who is "guilt ridden" or crippled by guilt. It has been said that the purpose of guilt is to make us feel bad for the right reasons so that we can feel good for the right reasons

When Adam and Eve sinned there were consequences. Before they sinned they enjoyed a delightful familiarity with God. They are portrayed as walking with God in the cool of the evening. What a wonderful metaphor of intimacy! After the fall they are afraid of God and try to hide from God. And there is a breakdown between themselves: Adam betrays Eve. Where once unity and harmony existed, now there is division, fuelled by mistrust, mutual recrimination, and fear. It wasn't God who brought this punishment on them. They brought it on themselves. We are not punished so much for our sins as **by** our sins.

The sad scene ends with a promise of salvation. God takes pity on Adam and Eve and promises to send them a saviour. The Gospel shows the promise fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus overthrows evil and establishes the kingdom of God. For those who believe in him and do God's will, a new kinship is formed and a new intimacy with God becomes possible. As a result of what Jesus did, we are not just God's creatures, but members of God's family. And a new bond is formed between us. And all the old divisions are overcome.