### **5th Wednesday Morning Devotional on June 5, 2024**

**Passages To Contemplate: Genesis 3:1-15**

#### **1. The First Question God Asked Humanity**

God truly loves us and has an amazing plan for our lives. Everything we have, including our very life and the ability to worship Him, is by God's grace.

God cares deeply about us as we start a new year, a new month, or even each new day. He cares about what we do today, what clothes we wear, and the paths we choose while driving. He is interested in whether we drive fast or slow, follow the rules, or even the food choices we make.

When we follow God’s Word, it brings Him joy. But when we stray from His path, it grieves Him. God is particularly interested in our spiritual state—where we stand spiritually.

We can see this concern in the first question God asked humanity: "And the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?'" (Genesis 3:9).

Adam and Eve sinned by not following God's Word and succumbing to Satan’s temptation. When they fell, God came and asked them this profound question. It was a stern inquiry about their spiritual position when they had strayed from where they ought to be.

This question is directed not just at Adam but at all humanity, including us in the 21st century.

The essence of our lives revolves around our deep spiritual relationship with God. When God asked, “Where are you?” what was Adam’s response?

"He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'" (Genesis 3:10).

Adam, having sinned, felt fear and hid from God because his spiritual relationship with God had been broken. He strayed from his spiritual position. However, if we examine Adam's answer closely, he says, "I was afraid because I was naked."

But Adam was not afraid because he was naked. He had always been naked. What suddenly made him afraid? When humans sin, instead of acknowledging their wrongs, they often try to rationalize or find reasons elsewhere, showing a lack of understanding of the real issue.

Adam and Eve had always been naked, as God intended for man and woman to be one flesh without shame. But after sinning, their perspective changed: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." (Genesis 3:7).

It’s quite futile. How long would fig leaves last? They became aware of their nakedness only after eating the forbidden fruit. Before that, they didn’t see it as a problem, but sin changed everything.

There were no other people around to see their nakedness—only each other. Before sin, being naked in front of each other was not an issue. But sin caused shame, leading them to cover themselves. They began to hide from each other, something they never did before.

This change signifies a break in their perfect unity. God created humans in His image, reflecting the perfect community of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He said it was not good for a man to be alone, so He made a woman, completing the perfect community. Humans are complete when they are united in community.

Living as a perfect community, they had no shame and could be naked without concern. But sin shattered their relationship. Now, they were no longer one. The shame they felt was not because of their nakedness but because sin had entered and broken their relationship with God, making their relationship with each other shameful.

Adam's fear of God stemmed from his sense of guilt, shame, and the knowledge of having broken God’s command. This is why he was afraid after sinning.

When sin, we often don’t want to face God. We avoid prayer and the Word, just as strained human relationships make it hard to face each other.

In the church, if our faith falters, we may avoid the pastor and other believers. This avoidance indicates a problem in our relationship with God, signaled by our reluctance to attend worship and fellowship.

Fear and unease in our hearts are signs that we are not in the place where God wants us to be. When our spiritual state is off, our relationships with others also suffer. Jesus emphasized that loving God and loving our neighbors are the greatest commandments, and they are interconnected. When our relationship with God falters, our relationships with others do too.

Life is full of fears—family issues, illness, financial struggles, and relational problems. However, we must not lose sight of the core issue. Our fear doesn’t arise merely from facing difficulties; it stems from a lack of confidence in our relationship with God. We fear because we are unsure if God is with us and will protect us. This fear indicates that we have strayed from our rightful place with God, just as Adam and Eve did.

We must remember that the challenges we face as Christians often stem from our relationship with God. When we grow distant from Him, fear takes over. If you are feeling fearful, it may be a sign that your relationship with God needs attention. Doubts about His presence and love lead to fear. God challenges us in these times: "Are you where you should be spiritually? If not, return to Me quickly!"

#### **2. The Reason for God's Persistent Pursuit**

God constantly asks, "Where are you?" as He seeks us out. It might seem like He is pursuing us like a stalker, but this is actually His grace. God’s pursuit and His question, "Where are you?" are expressions of His grace. Without it, we would be abandoned, which is truly a terrifying thought.

Why does God keep asking about our spiritual whereabouts? It’s not to judge, curse, or condemn us but to help us. He wants to bring us back to the right place because He loves us and wants us to recognize our sin and find hope and strength to overcome it. When we hear His persistent call, it is a sign that He wants to heal us.

Let us listen to His call and return to our rightful place with Him, confident in His love and grace, knowing He seeks to restore us to a loving relationship with Him and others.

In Genesis 3:21, we see that God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife Eve and clothed them. In the midst of their fear and trembling due to their sin, God came to them and opened a path to salvation. To make garments of skin, an animal had to be killed, its skin removed and used to cover them. This would have been the first time Adam and Eve witnessed the death of an animal, and it must have been a shocking experience.

During the Old Testament times, countless animals were sacrificed to atone for human sins. These sacrifices involved butchering the animal and the priest sprinkling its blood, creating a scene filled with the smell of blood. People witnessing this would realize the severity of sin, understanding that the innocent animal died because of their own sin. Through this act, God prefigured the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). At the appointed time, Jesus came to this earth and shed His blood on the cross at Calvary.

"The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 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.'" (Genesis 3:14-15)

**Verse 15 is particularly significant theologically and is often called the ‘the First Gospel’. It prophesied the coming of Jesus.**

God said, "He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Jesus, by dying on the cross and shedding His blood, defeated Satan and his power. By rising from the dead, He conquered death and brought salvation to us.

When Jesus breathed His last on the cross, the temple curtain was torn in two (Luke 23:45), signifying that the way to God had been opened for humanity. From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, God had prepared a way for our salvation out of His love.

God is love. He doesn't just have abundant love; He is love itself. He loves us immensely. In our faith life, love is everything. Without love, we are nothing. The certainty of God's love helps us overcome all trials and temptations.

When asked, "Do you believe in the Lord?" Many confidently say, "Yes!" But when asked, "Do you love the Lord?" fewer can confidently say, "I love the Lord." If we have the assurance of God's love, trials are no problem. Temptation can come to anyone, but we must constantly pray, as in the Lord's Prayer, to not be led into temptation and to be delivered from evil. We must cling to God.

How can we overcome trials, shame, and guilt? How can we escape eternal punishment? It’s not about receiving special powers or anything else, but by holding on to God's love.

Why does God persistently seek us and ask, "Where are you?" Because He loves us deeply. He loves us perfectly, with an incomparable love.

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

Jesus died for us while we were still sinners, not after we became righteous. Through His death, we can see the endless love of God, as expressed by the Apostle John:

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:8-10)

God sought Adam with this same love, calling out, "Where are you?" Not to rebuke or judge him, but out of love. God comes to us with the same love, asking, "Where are you?" meaning, "Where are you spiritually? Are you abiding in Me?"

No matter what temptations, difficulties, or fears come our way, it is ultimately God's love that prevails. When we hold onto God's love, we can overcome anything. The key to overcoming trials and temptations is the assurance of God's love. Without that assurance, we falter.

### **3. The Spiritual Place We Ought to Be: Close to God**

We must not avoid Jesus. If we realize our sin, we should immediately kneel at Jesus' feet, repent, and receive forgiveness, dedicating our lives to Him. If we avoid Jesus and keep wandering, God will continue to seek us, asking, "Where are you? Who are you? How are you living?"

**Where should we be? First, we should be in a place of spiritual fellowship with God. We should be in worship, hearing the Word, and praying. God created Eden and made Adam and Eve to have fellowship with them.**

If we live outside the places of worship, the Word, and prayer, God will continually call out, "Where are you?"

**Moreover, we should be in the place where we fulfill the mission God has given us. Our mission is to spread the gospel to all the world.**

We must remember that our lives are in God's hands. Until the day our lives end, we should live for God's joy. God called us to this earth, but no one knows when He will take us back. We came in a certain order, but there is no order in leaving.

**A Prayer To Start A New Day:**

Heavenly Father,

We come before You with grateful hearts, thanking You for Your endless love and the profound truth revealed through Your Word. As we have reflected on Your first question to humanity, “Where are you?” we are reminded of Your unwavering pursuit of us, not to judge or condemn, but to draw us back to You in love and grace.

Lord, as we begin this new day, help us to recognize where we stand spiritually. If we have strayed from Your path, guide us back to the place where we can walk closely with You. Fill us with the assurance of Your love, knowing that You are with us through every trial, temptation, and fear.

May we hold onto the promise of Your salvation through Jesus Christ, our Savior, who crushed the head of the serpent and brought us eternal life through His sacrifice. Let this truth empower us to live boldly for You, spreading Your gospel and love to those around us.

Lord, help us to remain in constant fellowship with You, abiding in Your Word, prayer, and worship. Strengthen our relationships with others, reflecting the perfect community You designed for us.

As we go forth today, let us be ever mindful of Your presence and guidance. Protect us, provide for us, and lead us in paths of righteousness. May Your Holy Spirit dwell within us, giving us the courage to overcome any obstacle and the peace that surpasses all understanding.

In Jesus’ name, we pray, Amen.