

*Foreshadows of the Cross*  
*Part 1 –To Be Known AND Loved*  
**Genesis 3:1-13,21-24**

Rev. Jeff Chapman ~ February 22, 2026 ~ Faith Presbyterian Church

✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘

<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

<sup>2</sup>The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; <sup>3</sup>but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’”

<sup>4</sup>But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; <sup>5</sup>for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

<sup>8</sup>They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup>He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

<sup>11</sup>He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

<sup>12</sup>The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.”

<sup>13</sup>Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.”

<sup>21</sup>And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them. <sup>22</sup>Then the Lord God said, “See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—<sup>23</sup>therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.  
(Genesis 3:1-13,21-24, NRSV)

✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘

When I was in Albania recently I had just finished three straight hours of teaching 50-60 students one morning, when on the way out of the classroom I glanced down to notice that my zipper was down. All morning long I'd been standing up front exposed and no one thought to grab me during one of the breaks and help me out. I've been double-checking now every time I get up to teach.

None of us likes to be exposed. Forget having your fly down, imagine if you had to stand up here this morning totally naked. Not a shred of clothing, nowhere to hide. Even worse, what if it was not just your body that was exposed, but your mind and your heart. What if everybody else here was able to clearly see every thought that crossed your mind, every motive and intention of your heart? That sort of radical vulnerability terrifies us. I mean, which would be worse, having your body fully exposed, or your soul fully exposed? As unpleasant as it would be for me and for everyone else, I'd much rather take my clothes off in front of you all than to allow you to have an all-access tour of my mind and heart. Thankfully, I'm not going to do either one here this morning.

I've told you before that one of my favorite verses in the entire Bible is the final verse of the creation account in Genesis 2. When creation is complete, everything in place as God intended, we read this culmination: “**And the man and his wife were both naked and were not**

**ashamed.**<sup>1</sup> Try and imagine if this was our reality. What would it be like to stand before God and others totally exposed, everybody able to see everything that was true about you, and yet feel no shame in that moment. And not because you were a shameless person, but because there was nothing in you that should cause shame. Everything about you was good and beautiful and holy. *Imagine what it would be like to be fully known and, at the very same time, fully loved.*<sup>2</sup>

This was the place we found ourselves at creation, the place God intended for us in life, to be fully known *and* fully loved. But as you well know, everything changed in the following verses. Really all that Adam and Eve were asked to do was to trust God. He had provided everything that they might ever need, most of all enduring fellowship with him. But they believed the wicked lie told to them, the lie that God was holding something back, that God could not be trusted after all. God told them the consequences of believing such a lie would be death, but they didn't choose to trust him. They chose instead to pursue control rather than to submit, to trust in their own knowledge rather than to trust that their Creator knew best. And as a result they got what they asked for. They came to know far more than they ever wanted to know. And suddenly there was nowhere to run.<sup>3</sup>

What does the Bible tell us was the immediate result of human sin? If you've been paying attention so far you might expect that it would be death. After all, the Lord plainly tells Adam early on that if he eats the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, **“for in that day that you eat it you shall die.”**<sup>4</sup> But that's not what happens first, or even what happens that day. Verse 7 tells us what happens first: **“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.”** Knowledge of good and evil comes first, meaning the tree was rightly named. And with such knowledge comes shame, and along with shame comes hiding, and eventually when they are found out, there comes blaming. They are ashamed in front of one another. They hide from God. And then they blame everybody else for the problem. And we have been doing likewise ever since.

If you are honest with yourself you will see that this is the story of your life. I know it is my story. We desperately want to be loved, both by others and by God. This is the way God made us. But our great fear

in life is that if people truly knew us, or even if God truly knew us, that we will not be loved. So we settle for being loved without being known. We do this physically, of course. How much time and money is spent in the vain pursuit of making our bodies appear to others as good as we can possibly make them appear?

But our fig leaves take other forms. We cover ourselves with our achievements and success, in work, in school, in athletics, so that others will see these things and love us. Performative justice is a term we use today to talk about how people get involved in doing good things to help others in need, or make statements on social media promoting such efforts and causes, so that others will look at us and be left with the impression that we are people who really do care. In relationships we may come to believe that we are nobody until somebody really loves us. We work hard to present our kids and grandkids in the best light possible because our identity is so rooted in people thinking we are good parents and grandparents. Even much of religion has its roots here. We try to display outward religious devotion even when it doesn't match our inward devotion, because we are desperate to have others, or even God, think well of us. And even when our sin is exposed, we will try to cover it up by blaming others – our upbringing, our genetics, the way others have treated us. You see that right here in this story when Adam blames Eve and Eve blames the snake.

But in one form or another, it's all fig leaves positioned to cover up what we don't want others to see is really true about us. Can you admit that this is your story, and that your greatest fear is that one day you will be found out?

Remember Cinderella? With the help of her Fairy Godmother, her rags are turned into a beautiful gown, a pumpkin into a carriage, animals into the sorts of attendants you'd expect to see escorting a true princess. But it's all a sham, a covering that will be ripped off when the clock strikes midnight. And so when the clock begins to strike at the appointed hour, she flees the royal ball so that nobody will see her when the magic expires and the fig leaves are ripped off. She wants to be loved, but she believes she cannot be known and loved at the same time.

The clock strikes midnight for Adam and Eve when they hear the Lord walking through the garden. Immediately they run and hide from the Lord. Imagine that, believing that you can actually hide from God!

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 2:25. This and all biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

<sup>2</sup> I'm indebted to Tim Keller for this way of putting it. "Nakedness and the Holiness of God," *Gospel in Life*, March 21, 1993. Listen online at <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/nakedness-the-holiness-of-god/>

<sup>3</sup> I'm indebted here to Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation Commentary: Genesis* (John Knox Press, 1982), 49.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 2:17

They at least understand that while the fig leaves may work with one another, they are not going to work with God. And so when God calls to Adam, he answers the Lord, **“I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”** His speech betrays him immediately “I was afraid...I was naked...I hid.” It’s all about “I.” The focus has turned from the Lord to a total preoccupation with self.

What’s interesting is that Adam tells God that he is afraid because he is naked. But he’s always been naked. Right? He was naked earlier, when he was standing before God unashamed! So what’s changed? What’s changed is that there is now shame in his nakedness. What Adam sees in himself is intolerable. And when God asks Adam who told him he was naked, the question implies that beforehand Adam wasn’t even aware of his nakedness. It makes me think of that famous C.S. Lewis quote: “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.” When we are in right relationship with God, our focus is not on ourselves, but on him and others. But when that relationship is broken, our focus turns inward. Or maybe it’s the other way around, that our focus turns inward and then the relationship is broken. Either way, can you imagine what it would be like to be fully exposed before God and others and have no awareness that you are fully exposed? I’m afraid that possibility was lost to us.

Consequences are coming. God means what he says. He told Adam clearly that if he chose life on his terms rather than trusting God’s terms, that death would be the result. In verse 14–19 those coming consequences are spelled out in detail. The natural world will be cursed and turned against itself and humanity. Bearing children, the primary task given to these two, will become a severely painful experience. Men, originally meant to partner alongside women, will now seek to dominate their partners. Work, which God intended to be fruitful and joyful, will turn to drudgery. And in the end, bodies made from dust will die and return to dust.

But notice something crucial. Before any of these consequences come to pass, and before Adam and Eve are kicked out of paradise, God does something first. Realizing that their fig leaves are insufficient to cover their shame, God provides them with a more sufficient covering. Yes, he will send them away from his presence, but he will not send them out naked and totally vulnerable. This is grace *before* judgment which,

with God, is always the order. In the next chapter Cain is given a mark of protection before he is sent out to wander the earth after he kills his brother, Abel.<sup>5</sup> Before God brings the flood in Noah’s day, he announces the covenant he will make with Noah after it’s all over.<sup>6</sup> We’ve been reading through Isaiah as a church, the story of how God brings judgment on Israel for their stubborn rebellion. But even from the first chapters of the prophesy, as God is detailing the coming judgment, he is regularly reminding them that when it is all said and done he will bring restoration. Judgment may come, but grace always comes first.<sup>7</sup>

So how does this grace play out? Well, when God finds them hiding in their shame he doesn’t tell them to go and do a better job of covering themselves up. He knows that the fig leaves are the best that they can do, even though they never do the job. He also knows, by the way, that all the ways you and I try to cover ourselves up are equally inadequate. So God does for them, and for us, what only God can do. Only God can cover our shame.

There is a stunning passage in the book of Ezekiel where God makes this abundantly clear. In the text God tells us that we are like a little newborn baby girl who has been abandoned and thrown out into a field naked and still kicking in her own blood. The text is stark: **“On the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths. No eye pitied you to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you, but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.”**<sup>8</sup>

Writer Tim Keller points us to an ancient letter archeologists have recovered which was written by a Roman businessman living around the time of Christ. The man was out on business in Alexandria and he was riding home to his pregnant wife. It’s a spine-chilling letter. In it he says he hopes the pregnancy is going well. But since he knows the child will likely be born before he gets home, he reminds his wife that if the baby is a girl, she is to throw it out. This was very typical all across the ancient world until Christianity humanized civilization, and is tragically still typical in parts of our world today.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, nobody in those days would have been surprised to hear that such a thing could happen, and

<sup>5</sup> “Then the Lord said to him, ‘Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.’ And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him.” – Genesis 4:15

<sup>6</sup> “But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.” – Genesis 6:18

<sup>7</sup> I’m indebted here to Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 207.

<sup>8</sup> Ezekiel 16:4–5

<sup>9</sup> Keller, “Nakedness and the Holiness of God.”

that even God would do such a thing to us when our true selves were uncovered. But that is not the response of God. Instead, the Lord describes passing by this abandoned child and this is his response, **“I spread the edge of my cloak over you and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you...and you became mine.”**<sup>10</sup> Go read the rest of the passage today. It’s one of the most stunningly beautiful passages in all of scripture.

I don’t know about you, but I’m so tired of trying to cover up what I know is inside so that others, even God, might possibly love me because nobody really knows me. I’m so tired, because no matter what fig leaves I use they never seem to be enough. I always live in fear that I will be exposed. But what if there is no need to fear? What if there was a love so unshakable that it was not altered when the truth was exposed. We’re told that perfect love casts out fear.<sup>11</sup> What if such perfect love exists?

Pay close attention. In verse 21 we read, **“And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife and clothed them.”** There is a truth in scripture we need to understand. It’s best articulated in Hebrews 9:22, which reads, **“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”** Remember that because of their sin, humanity has been cut off from God and the life of God. That’s symbolized here by a flaming sword that flashes back and forth to guard the way back into paradise. What does a sword do? It sheds blood. This is not complicated. The way back to a restored relationship with God is through the sword. Only death can undo the damage which has been done. Blood must be shed. God made that clear from the beginning.

It’s critical to notice that God doesn’t tell Adam and Eve to go kill an animal, skin it, and cover themselves. He doesn’t even ask their permission before he does it. He just goes and does it for them. We don’t know what kind of animal this was, only that some innocent creature had its blood shed so that shameful humans could have their shame covered up. This must have shocked Adam and Eve. Again, they likely would have expected to die once they were exposed. That is what God said would happen. What they could not have expected was that though death would come, it would not be their own. And as they watched this animal being killed, we can imagine two thoughts went through their heads. One, the horror of seeing a living

thing die. Two, the wonder that it was the animal, and not them, whose blood was shed.<sup>12</sup>

This was, by the way, only the first of countless animals whose blood would be shed to cover human shame and sin. When Israel is established, the tabernacle, and then later the temple, became places where countless animals were sacrificed to atone for sin. For again, there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood. So when you sinned, better an innocent lamb or goat go under the knife than the guilty person who committed the sin. The problem, of course, was that these coverings, much like the fig leaves, were woefully insufficient. Like the fig leaves, they may cover up the sin so that shame can be postponed, but beneath the covering the shame remains. Later on in book of Hebrews we are told that, **“[Such sacrifices] can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach...For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”**<sup>13</sup>

What we have here in this first shedding of blood, along with every animal sacrificed thereafter in the Old Testament, is therefore only a shadow of a much more real and sufficient sacrifice to come, a sacrifice which would not only cover our sin and shame, but heal it at its roots. For in the fullness of time, as had been planned all along, the Lord looked down at the world full of people forever trying in vain to cover themselves in fig leaves of every variety, hiding their shameful nakedness from him and one another, and without asking for our permission, he came himself into that place of shameful nakedness. Though sinless himself, on the cross the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was stripped naked and took on our shame. Motivated by a love for us we can never understand, much less explain, Christ submitted himself to the sword that guarded the way back to paradise, his blood shed so that our sin might not just be covered but cleansed, his nakedness exposed in shame so that we might one day stand again naked and unashamed.

Some years ago I learned of a practice which I have tried to adopt in my own life. It’s a practice of prayer. It’s simple and difficult all at once. It goes like this. You rip off the fig leaves. You look honestly at yourself and you see the truth about all the ways you have failed to trust God and love as he made you to love. You face your sin without turning away. This is not easy. We certainly don’t want others to see our souls exposed, but it’s also difficult even for us to take an extended look in the mirror. But then as we do, instead of

<sup>10</sup> Ezekiel 16:8

<sup>11</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:18

<sup>12</sup> I’m indebted here to James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis*, Volume 1 (Baker Books, 1982), 238.

<sup>13</sup> Hebrews 10:1,4

allowing this exposure to lead us once again hide in that dead-end place of shame, we simply hold our exposed lives up to God and we let the Lord love us in the midst of our sin. This is also not easy. But if we can do it, and keep doing it, we may begin to experience something beyond our shame.

Don't you see that because of what Christ has done, there is now a way back to the place that you might have imagined you could never go again? The sacrifice of the Son of God has accomplished what no other covering could ever accomplish. Paul puts it far better than I could: **"For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."**<sup>14</sup> As we trust Christ and believe what he has done for us, we can stand naked before God and stand there without shame. For when the Lord now looks at us he does not see our sin, but instead sees in us the very righteousness of Christ. He was stripped naked so that we might be clothed. That means that now we can be known *and* loved again. There is nothing God does not see in you, and yet he loves you still. The person who comes to know this is the person who comes to know true freedom.

Genesis 2:25 remains one of my favorite verses in the Bible, even though it all unravels in the next verse. Because I believe that the whole rest of the Bible, in fact the entire redemptive work of God in this world ever since, has been dedicated to getting us back to that place where we will once again stand one day fully exposed, before God and even before one another, and stand there naked and unashamed.

In a few moments we are going to sing one of the most beloved hymns of the church, *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*. I hope you will linger on the last verse. It is a beautiful declaration of this truth, this truth that in Christ, our Solid Rock, we are not only loved, but we are known *and* loved.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound  
Oh, may I then in Him be found  
Dressed in His righteousness alone  
Faultless to stand before the throne*

Naked and unashamed before the throne. All praise, all glory, all honor to Christ alone who makes this possible. Amen.

✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘ ✘

### The Next Step *A resource for Life Groups and/or personal application*

1. Read Genesis 3:1-13,21-24 again. What do you notice here? What stands out to you?
2. When we are told in Genesis 2:25 that Adam and Eve were completely naked and completely without shame, what are we being told? What does this mean?
3. After they eat the fruit, Adam and Eve cover themselves up. Then when God comes near they hide. What are they trying to cover up? Why are they hiding?
4. God warns that if they eat the fruit they will die (see Genesis 2:17). They eat the fruit and yet they don't die. What's going on here?
5. When do you feel most 'naked' before God? How does this help you understand Adam and Eve's reaction here?
6. Fig leaves can be seen as a symbol here of things we use to try to cover up ourselves so that others do not see in us what we don't want them to see in us. What sort of fig leaves have you used in your life?
7. Paul says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 that in Christ we have become "the righteousness of God." Do you believe that when God looks at you today he sees in you righteousness? If not, what does he see?
8. How do we see Christ in this story from Genesis 3? How does this point us to Jesus and what he has done for us? What is your response?

#### Table to Table: Something for kids and adults to consider together.



*Read Genesis 3 together as a family. Talk about what it was that made Adam and Eve hide. Talk about how God responded to them after they ate the fruit. What does this teach us about God?*

<sup>14</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21