

*In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

It's hard for me to hear this passage from Genesis without chuckling, because of a joke I like to tell about a pastor who decided to pay a visit on a new family in his church one day. He went over, and rang the bell, but no answer. There were cars in the driveway, so he knocked; still no answer. He went around back. No answer. Finally, he wrote "Revelation 3:20" on his calling card, stuck it in the door and left. Who here knows what Revelation 3:18 says? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me." So the following Sunday after church, one of the ushers came up to the pastor and handed him a card. "Pastor, this was in the offering plate, addressed to you." The pastor looked at it. It simply said, "Genesis 3:10" – which is what we heard today: "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

This passage is what theologians refer to as the story of "The Fall." The great disobedience; the great "no" to God's expansive "yes," the great "I wanna" in the face of God's abundant provision. We didn't hear the temptation part; we heard of the immediate aftermath. Which is fitting – the temptation part for most of us happens in the blink of an eye ;the consequences we live with over time – sometimes our whole lives. And the consequences in this story, this "myth that tells a truth" about humanity, are an immediate breaking down of relationships.

The relationship between God and his first human creatures is shown as being so intimate, God "walked with them in the cool of the day." But when God shows up for his evening stroll, his people are nowhere to be found. When he asks where they are, he gets answers that don't address his questions – here is the break in humanity's relationship with God. And when he asks more questions, one creature points the finger at another – here we see the break in humanity's relationship with one another. And finally, the animal gets blamed, and the consequence of his role as tempter is enmity between his descendants and that of the woman – and here is the break between humanity and the natural world, one that is deepened as the man and woman are expelled from the Garden and fitted with animal skins as clothing... so we have the first shedding of innocent blood to provide the covering.

All that from eating a piece of fruit, breaking a stupid rule, you say?  
 No, all that from turning away from the love, provision and authority of the Creator.  
 The consequence of sin is broken relationships –  
     with God, with each other, with creation and within ourselves.  
 Jesus came to heal that break, to make us whole again, to restore relationships,  
 To bind the power of the enemy of human nature so that wholeness can happen.

In today's gospel story – do we see restored relationship?  
 Looks like we see a family fight, being waged through clenched teeth in public.  
 Jesus' mother and brothers travel to see him, to talk to him about this spectacle  
     he's making of himself – and he refuses to see them.  
 And then he goes further – he asks the crowd gathered around him listening to  
     his teaching, "Who are my mother and my brothers? You are!"  
 He has not cut off his family – he has expanded it.

We are very family-focused in our culture. Not all cultures put such a premium  
     on blood relationship. Many place the focus on the community.  
 That is closer to what Jesus taught and lived –  
     he was creating a new community, marked by love and devotion to God,  
     love so close and care so mutual, it was like the bonds of family.  
 This is the family into which we are adopted in baptism.  
 Let's take a look at one such adoption:  
*Sermon drama: Welcome to Your New Family*

I'm going to say something really blunt here:  
 As long as our first priority is our blood family, we are not putting Jesus first.  
 When we don't put Jesus first, all his priorities slide down the list.  
 And when we do put Jesus first, love expands.  
     The movement of God is always growth.  
 We don't have to love our families less – we just start to love other people  
     as much or even more. We live in an expanded web of relationships  
     that encompasses our love for our families.

We don't know how Mary and Jesus' brothers felt that day,  
     returning home, not even having been granted an audience with him.  
 Were they bitter? Angry? Embarrassed?  
 What we do know is that by the end of the story, they had joined Jesus' new  
 family. They had become followers too, not only of their Y'shua, but of the Christ.

Jesus' reconstituting family continued all the way to the Cross,  
when he gave his mother into the care of his beloved disciple John –  
now as real a brother to him as those with whom he shared DNA.  
And at least one of his brothers, James, became the leader of the  
Jerusalem church, the *koinonia* fellowship of those who called Jesus Lord.

That's our family now. We get to call Jesus brother, too.  
We get to call each other sisters, mothers, fathers, nephews, cousins.  
We get to walk with each other, and with God, in the cool of the day  
and enjoy the deepest intimacy and support.  
AND we get to help this family expand, ever inviting those who are lost or lonely,  
frayed or afraid, into this fellowship of love.  
We are in the business of adoption, my friends –  
who would you like to call sister? Invite her.  
Welcome to your new family – you get to keep it growing.

Amen.

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**Genesis 3:8-15**

The man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate."

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." The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

**Mark 3:20-35**

The crowd came together again, so that Jesus and his disciples could not even eat.

When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons."

And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

"Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" – for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him,

"Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you."

And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."