

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy Father's Day! What better way to celebrate the gift fathers are then by being in church to strengthen our relationship with our heavenly Father. And that's just what we're going to do... get to know our Father better.

It's really amazing what you learn about someone when you can observe them in an extreme or stressful situation. Stretch a person's patience or endurance or abilities or will power or whatever... to the limit, and they show their true colors. And that's when you're relationship with another becomes especially clear. I bet we can all think of both positive and negative examples of what I'm talking about. Maybe you know someone who puts on a kind and helpful face most the time, but when the going gets tough they get nasty and selfish. And I bet you've seen the opposite... a person who's kind of gruff and stand-off-ish, but at the critical time, they show kindness and compassion you never knew they had in them.

This morning we have a great deal we can learn by observing the responses of two different parties in an extreme situation. The situation was the first sin committed by human beings. What we'll look at this morning is how Adam and Eve responded to the sin they committed, and we'll also look at how God responded to their first sin. In doing so, we will learn a great deal about what Adam and Eve were like and the way they thought. This will also help us learn a great deal about what we are like and how we think. In observing God's response, we see what God is really like and how he feels toward us. What we learn then is **GOD RESPONDS TO MAN'S WORST WITH HIS BEST.**

Now in order for us to properly observe the responses to this first sin, we first of all need to know the whole situation. So I'll back up a little bit and fill you in on what's just happened. As I do so, ask yourself how you might expect Adam and Eve to respond, and how you might expect God to respond.

God created Adam and Eve in his own image: that is, righteous and without sin. Then God gave them a command. They could eat whatever fruit they wanted, but he told them not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God didn't physically prevent them from eating. Instead, he gave them a choice. He gave them the opportunity to show their trust in Him by doing as he willed. They also had the option not to trust God by eating from the tree.

I think you know what happened. Satan appeared to Adam and Eve in the form of a serpent. He caused Eve to doubt God's word, questioning the command God had given them. He called God a liar, saying they wouldn't die if they ate of the tree, in fact they would gain wisdom. Eve was deceived by Satan, while Adam silently watched the whole event take place. Eve ate of the tree, and then gave some to Adam to eat. And there was the first sin. Now if you ask people what the first sin was, most will answer the sin was that Adam and Eve ate of this fruit. If only it were that simple! The sin in fact had much deeper roots. This was the first time man showed a lack of trust in God. Man doubted God's good intentions and love. As a result, man disobeyed God. They willingly, freely and knowledgeably rebelled against God and disobeyed his clear command.

That's the situation. Now how do you think Adam and Eve might respond to this situation in

which they find themselves? They've disobeyed the almighty God because they didn't trust him. Now what will they do? And how will God respond to their disobedience? How will he feel about their rebellion against him. Let's look at their responses and we'll learn a great deal about man and God.

Our text says,

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Apparently, Adam and Eve were accustomed to God showing himself in a physical form. They recognize the sound of him walking in the garden. It makes you wonder how many times previously Adam and Eve had enjoyed walks with the Almighty God in this perfect Garden. What a close relationship they must have had with God!

But we see from Adam and Eve's response to hearing God that this close relationship had abruptly ended. Rather than seeking fellowship with God as they previously had, sin elicited the opposite response. This time, when they hear God, they hide from him. How foolish they were to think they could hide from the almighty God who is present everywhere.

And why does Adam hide? He tells God that he was afraid because he was naked and so he hid. There's really quite a bit packed into this response than first meets the eye. First, Adam said he was afraid. And I guess that's a response we could expect. After all, he has rebelled against the all powerful God. That's a pretty good reason to be terrified. But he says he was afraid because he was naked. And what Adam told there was at best a half truth. Was he afraid? You bet he was! Was the primary reason because he was naked? Certainly not! He was afraid because he had disobeyed God. That disobedience made him feel guilty and ashamed to be in the presence of his holy God. The guilt and shame he felt made him aware of his nakedness for the first time. So in a round about sort of way, he was afraid because he was naked, but do you see how he conveniently skips over the part about why he is ashamed to be naked? Adam tells a half truth so he wouldn't have to confess his sin.

In examining their first response to their sin, we already see similarities with how we also respond when we've sinned. What do you do when you've willingly and knowledgeably sinned against God? And we've all done that, haven't we? We know something is wrong. We know it displeases God. But we do it anyway. Isn't your first inclination to try to forget about your sin and hide from God. Maybe you avoid going to church because you know you'll have to face God there. We don't want to have to face up to the wrong we've done. Like Adam, we are afraid of God. The thought of seeing God's reaction to our sin terrifies us. It's easier just to deny and ignore the sin then to deal with the sin and its consequences. And like Adam, we also aren't entirely honest with God as we make up half truths as to why we have these guilt feelings and we try to rationalize them away.

How does God feel about Adam's response to his sin? For that matter, how does God respond when we hide from him and ignore our sin? God's response is actually quite amazing. In fact, it's just the opposite of what you might expect. When Adam and Eve sinned, they couldn't come to God. They were too ashamed. A less patient God would have wiped them out and started over. But God in his love went to Adam and Eve. Knowing they couldn't approach him, God is the one initiated contact. He's the one that took steps to reconcile the hostility that had developed between him and man.

So God approaches Adam and Eve, and he gently questions them. He first of all simply

asks, "Where are you?" Now, obviously God wasn't asking this because Adam and Eve were excellent at playing hide and seek. He knew exactly where they were. God asks this question to try to prompt Adam and Eve to willingly admit and confess their sin. Parents sometimes do that, don't they? A parent might ask a child with his hand in the cookie jar, "What are you doing?" The child knows the parent can see what he's doing, and so instead answers with an excuse. "Well, I was hungry and so I wanted a cookie." That's what happened with God's question. He asked, "Where are you?" and Adam answers with an excuse as to why he was hiding. *"I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."* God didn't want to hear a poor excuse, he wanted the truth -- a full confession.

Because of his love, God wasn't content with Adam's lame excuse. When he didn't get the confession he desired, God asks two more questions, this time being much more blunt. "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

What does God get for an answer this time? *"The woman you put here with me -- she gave me some fruit, and I ate it."* Adam passes the buck. He blames someone else. First he blames Eve. He blames his perfect companion God himself provided him. And what's incredible is, Adam even blames God. He says, "Hey, it's not my fault that I sinned. It's the woman's fault. What's more, you're the one that put this woman here with me!" Then God listens to Eve who says, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Again, when you look at Adam and Eve's response to sin, you must be struck by how similarly we react. We also try to pass the blame if at all possible. If you have brothers or sisters, or more than 2 children, you know that this is the case. I still remember that the first words that came out of my mouth when I got in trouble for fighting with my sister were, "She started it!" The most natural thing in the world for us to do is to try to make ourselves look better by passing the blame onto someone else.

Now, again, let's look at God's response. A less patient and loving God would have called it quits, wiped them out and started over. Here he makes every attempt to bring out a confession, but they stubbornly refuse. So what does God do? He responds with grace! God turns to the serpent (Satan) and pronounces a curse on him. The snake must crawl on its belly in the dust. Now obviously it was Satan who used this serpent for his evil actions. But this punishment was to be a reminder for man of God's intolerance of sin.

Then a completely unexpected response to man's sin. Adam and Eve were given a choice, and they determined their course of action -- disobedience. God also had a choice as to how he would deal with man. His choice? GRACE. Here we have recorded for us the first of many examples of God's grace -- his undeserved love for sinners. We might expect God to curse Adam and Eve along with Satan, but instead we see his grace. Addressing Satan, he gives this first gospel promise, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

This passage may be a little confusing for you, so let's break it down and hear exactly what God is saying. He says, "I will put enmity" (enmity is hostility) between you (Satan) and the woman. Between your offspring and hers. Now obviously Satan wasn't going to have children. So who are the devil's offspring? I Jn 3:8 says, "He who does what is sinful is of the devil." So those who continue in rebellion against God willfully and intentionally sinning against him are children of the devil. The offspring of Eve then, refers to those who put their trust in God, turning from their life of rebellion against God. So God says he will establish hostility between these two groups. Adam and Eve had made themselves friends with Satan and enemies with

God. God in his love promises he will restore things to the way they were. There will be hostility between believers and unbelievers, and believers will enjoy once again fellowship with God.

God goes on to make a promise about a particular offspring of the woman. "He will crush you head, and you will strike his heel." Here you have the first and most basic promise of a Savior. God says that this champion and substitute will deal a death blow to Satan, crushing his head, and totally defeating him. Satan will strike the heel of this champion and cause him to suffer, but he certainly won't win the victory. That is exactly what happened when Jesus came. He was the offspring of a woman. Carrying the sins of the world, suffered intensely and died. Satan probably thought he had won the victory at that point. But Jesus rose again. In doing so declaring his victory over Satan, proving the debt of sin had been paid for in full. Jesus Christ the seed of the woman which God promised right after the fall defeated Satan and conquered sin and death.

On this Father's Day, remembering your heavenly Father and how he responds to our sin. We still fall into sin as we are tempted by Satan. And we also feel shame, hide from God because we fear him. We try to pass the blame and tell half truths to cover up. But God in his incredible love and mercy reaches out to us. He offers us the same promise of a Savior that he gave Adam and Eve. He tells us that his Son came into this world and has won the victory for us through his suffering and death. God has forgiven our sins for Jesus' sake! It's hard to believe, but it's true: God responds to man's worst with his best! Thanks be to God, he has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!