

What is This You Have Done?

Texts: II Corinthians 4:13-5:1, Genesis 3:8-15

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The late President Calvin Coolidge returned home from attending church one Sunday afternoon. His wife had been unable to attend, but she was interested in what the minister spoke on in the service. Coolidge responded, “Sin.” She pressed him for a few words of explanation. And being a man of few words with his wife, he responded, “Well, I think he was against it” (From Charles R. Swindoll, ed. The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998. p. 522).

I think that it is pretty safe to say that we are all against sin. That we long for and hope that we can be so faithful to God that we have some success in the avoiding sin and overcoming temptation department. This morning, we are going to talk some truth about sin. It is probably safe to say that none of us likes to talk about sin – or think about sin – our sin. Our reactions to our sin can be varied. Thinking and reflecting about our sin can make us ashamed. We are ashamed about our behavior – that we are not strong enough to resist. And what will others think of us if they knew our sins? Still others may have some indifference about our sin. What is the big deal? Does not Romans 3, verse 23 say, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” If everyone does it, then it is what it is. I am no worse than anyone else. So I am not going to worry about my sin.

Sin is a big deal. It is a turning away from God, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sustainer. Our sin not only hurts us, but also hurts others. It is a disobedience to God – not being faithful to Him and His best for our lives. Sin is a part of the life of each one of us. Just as it has been since the time of our Scripture lesson for this morning from the third chapter of Genesis. That is where we find ourselves today.

“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 in the garden... Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’” God knows immediately from His interaction with Adam that something is awry. When God asks Adam where he is, Adam replies, “I heard you, but I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” How did Adam know he was naked? When did he start to feel this new emotion of fear? God knows what has happened.

Adam and Eve have done what God has told them not to do. They have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They have committed what we call original sin. They disobeyed God, and they are feeling all of the things associated with sin – guilt, fear, vulnerability. Their consciences are telling them what they have done is wrong. And God asks each of them a question. To Adam, it is “Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” And to Eve, it is simply, “What is this you have done?”

From what they have done to how they respond, the change comes quickly. Both Adam and Eve find someone to blame for the indiscretion – for the sin. Adam blames Eve – “The women you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” But it was her. And Eve blames the serpent, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” It was not Adam’s fault. It was not Eve’s fault. It was someone else. It was something else.

How much do we respond like Adam and Eve to our sin? We become more aware of our vulnerability before God and others when we sin. We sense that we are laid bare before God in the midst of our sin, and we want to run for cover. Sometimes we, like Adam and Eve, blame someone or something else. “The devil made me do it” becomes our canned response. Do you

see yourself in the persons of Adam and Eve and their response to their unfaithfulness before God?

Why could Adam and Eve not resist the temptation? What was so enticing about the serpent's message? What were they not satisfied with that prompted them to look elsewhere – to defy a direct command from God? What about us? Why can we not resist the temptation to be disobedient to our God? What are we not satisfied with in our lives that we must look elsewhere – namely our sin?

Regardless of the answers to those questions, there are consequences for all involved in this original sin in Genesis – the serpent, Adam and Eve. “What is this you have done?” – God's initial question to Eve now becomes, “Because you have done this,” and God lists what they can each expect in life as a result of their disobedience. No one is spared. No one gets off the hook. And today, we are still feeling the effects from original sin. Adam and Eve's actions have had everlasting ripples to our time today. We continue to disobey God. We continue to look for our fulfillment elsewhere than from God. We continue to brush God aside when something more enticing comes along.

It could seem so hopeless if we just left the Scripture there – or did not read it in light of God sending His Son, Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve – and we – need to be accountable to God for our unfaithfulness and sin. But – and this is a big BUT – we have the grace made possible to us through Jesus Christ. All seemed lost at that moment in the garden. However God has revealed that He is a merciful and forgiving God.

In our opening Psalm this morning – Psalm 130 – we see the mercy of our God. “Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord. Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is

forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.” If God kept a record of our sins, we would be sunk. However, the Lord is a forgiving God. Therefore, we can put our hope in Him. Despite our sin. Despite our disobedience. Despite those times when we go our own way. As we experience the mercy and forgiveness of our God for our sins, we realize more fully that grace that is reaching more and more people that we read about in our first Scripture reading, from II Corinthians 4.

Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have a lifeline. We have a way out. All is not lost because of sin – original sin, our sin – individually and corporately as the Body of Christ, and the sin of the world. Each of us has to make account to God of our sin, confess, and be assured of our forgiveness. Because of our sin, there are consequences that we must endure and face. Some of these consequences can be painful, but at the end of it all, we find a merciful God who loves us and who wants to welcome us back with open arms.

Friends, as we consider our sin, let us seriously and intentionally attend to it. Let us strive to be more faithful to God. Let us accept the consequences of our actions and live in the grace of the One who bore these sins on the cross for us – Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory – let us pray...

Merciful and forgiving God, we come before You this morning aware of our sin. We thank You that You forgive our sin, even and especially when we fall over and over again. We thank You for the grace that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Help us, we pray, to take our sin seriously and try to live faithful lives for You. Meet us in our needs, we pray in Christ’s name, Amen.