

The Message for June 10, 2012**Genesis 3:8-15*****Hiding From God*****The Rev. Dr. R. K. Miller**

Some hunters from Pennsylvania went to Colorado and hired an experienced hunting guide to lead them into the mountains for a hunting trip. They had been hiking through the woods for a couple of days when it became obvious that they were hopelessly lost. It wasn't long before the hunters became angry with their guide and one of them shouted at him:

“You told us you were the best guide in Colorado!”

“I am,” said the guide as he looked around. “But I think we're in Wyoming now.”

Ever been lost? It's not fun. It's frustrating. I don't like being lost. That's why I really appreciate our GPS. Type in a city, state, and address, and a little map comes on the screen showing your exact position on the globe and how to get to where you want to go.

GPS stands for “Global Positioning System.” We've named our GPS, Sophie. Sophie helps us avoid getting lost. She talks to us and we talk to her. She tells me where to go.... I mean she tells me where we are and how to get to where we want to go. Sophie is a big help unless we are on a road she doesn't know exists. And that happens some times.

One time we took a trip to Philly. I turned onto a brand new road that was just opened that week. Sophie showed us driving off the road. “Please make U-Turn.” She said. I kept going. Then she said, “Recalculating.” Then she just stopped talking to me. The map on the screen showed us driving through a field. After driving a couple miles down this new road we came to an intersection, Sophie said, “Recalculating.”

When traveling, we rely on our GPS, Sophie.

Today we are talking about “God's GPS.” When it comes to traveling through life we rely on God's GPS. It helps us know where we are and how to get to where we want to go.

The first time we see God's GPS is in Genesis 3 with the story of Adam and Eve. I heard this story summed up this way – “The problem wasn't the apple in the tree, it was the pair on the ground.” In other words God's creation is good – it's perfect – we humans have tarnished it. So we need to follow God's direction for life.

Yesterday Simon and I were in the Mustang getting ready to go. I had just cleaned it and there was a little piece of paper towel the size of a pencil tip on the gear shift. I picked it up and tossed it out the window there in our drive way. Simon said, “Dad, that's littering.” He was right. We tarnish God's good creation all the time and often without knowing it.

Listen now to part of Adam and Eve's story – (read Genesis 3:8-15)

God created a beautiful garden for Adam and Eve. God gave them everything they needed for life complete with limits. Life is lived within the boundaries that God has established.

God has set limits for healthy living. Like the curbs or the ditches on the side of the road. Travel in the right lane, stay on the road between the curbs or the ditches, and there is no problem. Disobey the rule of the road, disobey God's rules for life, and we will suffer the consequences every time.

That's why God said to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16) *“You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”* God has established the boundaries for life.

Crafty and wild, and made by God, one day the serpent engages Eve in a conversation, casting doubt on God's word. The serpent convinces her that God has unreasonably restricted them. God has denied them the great blessings of the fruit on that one tree in the center of the garden. I can hear the serpent hissing, “God really doesn't want what was best for you. If so, God wouldn't put any restrictions on your life... right?”

So Eve is eyeing up this forbidden fruit. She picks some (we are not told what kind of fruit it is.). She takes a bite of the forbidden fruit then gives some to Adam and he takes a bite. The text implies that Adam is standing right beside her when she picks the fruit and eats it. One bite, that's all it takes, and they suddenly realize something is wrong. Before this they were innocent and ignorant in a good way. Now they know. One bite of the forbidden fruit is all it takes. Now they become ashamed. Now they realize they have been exposed, naked.

This is the first time in the bible where humankind “takes” instead of receives. Prior to this, God had provided everything needed for life, and health, and happiness. The text tells us that from that moment on, “their eyes were opened.” For the first time, they stop trusting God to lead, to guide, and to provide. Now, with “their eyes opened,” they begin to move through life without God.

Adam and Eve have taken a wrong turn on the road of life. They are now lost and they know it. They remembered that God told them. “Oh yeah, we weren't supposed to do that.” They remembered after the fact. They remembered the word of God. They just didn't follow the word of God. They didn't follow God's GPS instructions for life.

Strange enough they just kept going and made the situation worse. They tried to hide their nakedness with fig leaves! They try to hide from God. They try to hide the fact that they messed up.

Their behavior is a little like the driver who is lost. But instead of turning around and going the right way, he just speeds up. He's lost but at least he's making good time.

Adam and Eve try to hide the fact that they're lost. They try to hide the fact that they took a wrong turn. They tried to hide the fact that they messed up. When God shows up for "happy hour" as God did every day, Adam and Eve aren't there to meet God at the usual place and time. So God calls, "Adam, where are you?"

Now wait a minute! Doesn't God know where Adam is? Yes – God knows everything. God is all knowing. So why does God ask that question? Because Adam needed to know his location in relationship with God. This is God's GPS in action.

Now Adam has a bigger problem. He's sinned and he knows it and he knows God knows it. He knows he deserves to die. So he hides. Who wouldn't? He tries to cover up his shame and his nakedness with fig leaves. He seems to think that if he avoids God everything will be okay. Avoid the problem – hide from it – cover it up – or blame somebody else and the problem is taken care of.

Do you ever feel that way? When you have a problem, when you mess up, do you just assume it will take care of itself and in time just go away? Avoid it, hide from it, cover it up or blame somebody else? We call that – denial. Denial begins right after we've made a mistake. We try to hide it, if that doesn't work we try to cover it up, and if that doesn't work we look for someone to blame. And we make the problem worse.

God gave Adam a chance to come clean to confess. God even gives him the benefit of the doubt. God asked, "Who told you that you were naked?" Instead of confessing Adam blames Eve, "This woman..." Adam then blames God, "That you gave me..." Eve blames the serpent, "The serpent tricked me..." And the serpent just smiles and says, "Gotcha!"

God immediately recalculates. Otherwise God would have killed them right there on the spot. They deserved to die for what they had done. It's a good thing God did recalculate or we wouldn't be here. The world would be people less. If it wasn't for God's recalculating of grace and mercy and forgiveness and love, that would have been the end of humanity.

Death in the bible is separation. When someone dies we are separated from them. The ultimate death is separation from God. That's exactly what happens here. Adam and Eve are now separated from God.

Our human relationship with God was forever changed because of Adam and Eve. But God did some recalculating. Jesus comes along and begins to restore that broken relationship. We call Jesus the new Adam. Jesus continues the restoration process between us and God. Some day Jesus will come again to completely restore our relationship with God. Heaven is the new Garden of Eden and we get a taste of heaven every time we experience God's grace and mercy and forgiveness. Until that day when

the garden is restored, we travel through life learning from our mistakes and seeking the life God continues to offer us.

We can learn at least four things from Adam and Eve's story:

1. There is a universal truth, we will be tempted to eat forbidden fruit – don't!
Forbidden fruit is a desire for something we know we shouldn't have. It will not go well for us if we do. We will suffer the consequences. I Googled the words, "forbidden fruit" and got 6.4 million hits. There is a lot of forbidden fruit out there.
2. When (not if but when) we do eat of that forbidden fruit, we need to realize that we made a mistake and admit it, receive God's forgiveness, and learn from it. We will be tempted to go into hiding, or cover it up, or blame others – don't! It will not go well for us if do. We will suffer the consequences.
3. God desires to spend time with us everyday guiding us with God's GPS, the bible. God does not desire death for us but life God does not desire separation from us but to live with us forever starting in this world and into the next.
4. There is no need for us to hide from God. It won't do us any good. We will be tempted to hide from God – don't! God knows exactly where we are 24/7. So consider living life like this.

A father was walking through the woods with his young son and wanting the boy to start thinking about finding his way out of the woods if he were lost, the father paused and asked: "Do you know where we are?"

The boy looked up, and with a sweet smile replied, "No, I don't."

They went a little farther and the father trying to look puzzled asked, "Do you know how far we have come?"

"No," the boy replied happily.

A little later, the father asked his son again, "Don't you think we're lost?"
The boy grinned and said, "I can't be lost, I'm with you."

We are never lost when we are with God. Amen