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Being lost feels horrible.

Unfortunately I've got a few stories about being lost. One I remember was being a little kid and getting separated from my mom in a department store. I remember feeling like I would never be found and would spend the rest of my life without my mom. I cried, big tears crying.

Being lost feels horrible.

When I was in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade I traveled to New Mexico with my church youth group. We spent a week working at an Indian Reservation and had several great experiences planned for the trip home. So on the way back through Texas we stopped at Six Flags and enjoyed a day of fun.

Now we were told to always stay with our buddy; but when we were supposed to be back at the front gate to leave my buddy and I were lost. That's when he decided to go one way and I went the right way! I'm not sure to this day how late I was getting back to the front gate; but I can tell you that being lost feels horrible- and so does the consequences of leaving your buddy, getting lost and making everyone wait till you're found!

In January 2004 I was lost. I was in the car with Rita at 5:00am headed to Holy Spirit for my open heart surgery. We had spent the night at our friend's home to make the morning trip to the hospital easier.

But it wasn't so easy in the dark and soon we were lost! I was already scared because the doctor was going to rip my chest open and stop my heart and who knew if I'd survive. And now we were lost!

Being lost feels horrible.

But being found feels wonderful.

I held on to my mom's hand and never left her out of my sight. While I regretted the consequences for getting lost at Six Flags I was relieved that I was not going to be left behind in Texas. And on that dark day in 2004 I finally found a road that I recognized and arrived safely at the Holy Spirit Hospital right on time. (And I guess you know I survived the surgery!)

Being found feels wonderful!

[Congregation shares stories of being lost and found]

The Bible is full of lost and found stories. The most famous are found in Luke 15 where Jesus tells the parable of a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. In a sense the Bible is the story about how we get lost and God comes to find us.

But the lost and found story that we focus on this morning is the first story- the story of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:1-10

God's quest for Adam and Eve begins with a very simple question, "Where are you?"

Let's set the stage that leads God to ask the question.

In the beginning...God created, that's the first two chapters of Genesis. God created a perfect world in which humans were made to rule and reign with God. We were to have a relationship with God that was intimate.

But we come to Genesis 3 and we see that humanity gets lost. Our mistrust of God to be a loving partner with us in this creation led our first parents to choose their own right and wrong. And when they made the choice to rebel against God their story becomes our story- and we walk away from God getting lost in this world.

Now notice something about Adam and Eve before they get lost in Paradise: Genesis 2:25 tells us that they had no walls that separated them. "The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame."

Hear that last word? Shame. When sin entered the world, when we walked away from God; shame entered the world. Shame, is the sense that something is not right inside us.

In verse 7, we see what happens to people who live as fugitives from God: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

What is the first thing someone does when they realize they did something wrong? [We cover our face] We cover up, we hide, and we erect walls so that no one will notice.

Adam and Eve tried to cover up their shame at being naked- something they didn't seem to mind before-by sewing fig leaves together. Note that later when God finds them Adam does the other thing that we do when we are ashamed- he tried to blame and shame someone else, Eve!

John Powell, in his book, *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?*, writes about how we are afraid to tell people who we are because if they saw "the real me," it might not be good enough. We would be exposed as defective, broken, dirty, disgusting, or inadequate. So it's better and safer to put on fig leaves and hide.

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We all wear fig leaves... [not actual leaves but,]

Fig leaves are anything we use to hide behind to prove we're not defective, broken, or sinful. They come in different shapes and sizes, but they all have this one thing in common: they're a self-made, self-covering project to cover our shame and nakedness.

Now Adam and Eve are hiding because they are ashamed; and the shame makes them fear God as he approaches them in the Garden. But, the good news is that God was looking for them. And in the same way, when we walked away from God, God comes looking for us. And what does God say, "Where are you?"

As a parent do you ever remember looking around a room in your house and realizing that one of your kids is out of sight? Because you love your child; What's the first thing you say, "Where are you?" And usually we ask it with some hint that maybe they are into something they shouldn't be into.

Do you remember ever having done something wrong and hiding because you were ashamed? While you were hiding did you hear someone ask, "Where are you?" Because of our shame, we usually experience the question as a sign that trouble is coming.

But when God asks the question, it is coming from a heart of love- from a God who truly misses us and wants to be reunited with us, not separated from us.

In the Gospels, Jesus had an encounter with a man under the cover of darkness. That conversation with Nicodemus led to Jesus words of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus came into the world to find us. Jesus is God's "Where are you?" And look at what the next verse says in 3:17: 'For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.' Jesus didn't come to condemn, but to seek and find.

God already knew where Adam and Eve were? God merely asked the question to reveal his love and wake Adam and Eve from their shame.

But God did something else when he found Adam and Eve. And most of us never see it or comprehend it in verse 21: God made garments to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness.

Now what has to happen for a person to be clothed in animal skins? That's right, the animal has to die. And that is a foreshadowing of the sacrificial system that is a part of the Old Testament law where animals were sacrificed to atone for our sins.

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But it also tells us something about another sacrifice. And that is the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. By His death Jesus covers our shame and sinfulness and restores our relationship with God.

Have you every though God misses you? Did you ever think beyond the idea of being "in trouble" with God to realize the God of the universe notices your absence, your waywardness, your flight from him—and he wants you back?

That's exactly what the Bible teaches. The Bible is a story of the lost being found. And the Good News this morning is that God is seeking you.

Did you hear him, "Where are you?"