

Intro.: When I was a boy I learned about hiding. Being an active and curious child I broke most of the house rules, along with many of the things in the house. Many days ended with my mother warning me, “Wait until your father gets home!” Rarely was my dad in good spirits when he walked in the door, and being met with a litany of what this Tasmanian Devil had done did not help. Many evenings I would hear his car pulling into the drive and I would run away. I would hear his voice and know that the time of reckoning had come; that the wrath of my father was upon me, and so I would hide in fear.

This is the same kind of reaction that the world’s first sinners had when they heard the sound of the Lord in the garden of Eden.

I. Adam And Eve Run From The Sound Of The Lord.

A. While originally they loved to hear the sound of the Lord in the garden, because it was a beautiful reminder that He was with them. On the day they ate of the forbidden fruit all of that changed. That day, when they heard God taking his daily walk in the cool of the day, they ran away from Him. Their relationship with Him had changed drastically. They no longer trusted Him, or accepted that He loved them, so they tried to hide in the bushes. They were created to reflect God’s image, but now, in their attempts to become “like God,” they had set themselves up as His enemies. They were turned inward on themselves, self-oriented, self-aware, and self-centered. In their guilt and shame they realized their nakedness - the shame that came from the exposure of their very souls and what they had done. And they tried to cover their nakedness with clothes of their own making.

B. As children many of us used to love to hear the voice of the Lord and found comfort in knowing that He was always with us. We wanted to come to worship to greet the pastor who loved us. We were eager to go to Sunday School to hear our teacher tell us about Jesus and His love. But for some of us that changed as we became more aware of our sin and nakedness before God. In our shame and the uncomfortable feelings we have in God’s holy presence we may even try to run away from the sound of His voice. We imagine that if we just avoid worship and God’s word – if we just put him out of our heart and mind as we go about living our daily lives - then we can flee His presence and our day of reckoning.

Like Adam and Eve, we try to hide from the Lord in the bushes of this world. We hide behind our fig leaves and fine clothes. We hide behind our work and play. We hide behind so many things because we don’t want to be naked before God. We cover up our unbelief with the good things we do. We cover up our sin by telling ourselves its not so bad, and everyone else is doing it. This is the curse of the fall: We run and hide from the sound of the Lord in the garden, because we hear him and we are afraid because we are naked and ashamed before Him. But just as He sought out our first parents, covered their nakedness with a sacrifice, and restored them with a promise, so it is for us.

Transition: At the center of the new relationship that God established with Adam and Eve, and through them with all of us, was the wonderful promise of a Savior who would be born of the woman to crush the head of Satan. Scripture clearly shows us that this Savior was Jesus Christ, true God begotten of the Father from eternity and true Man born of the Virgin Mary. By His death and resurrection He crushed Satan’s head. The result is that we can have an entirely different response to the sound of the Lord. This is the response we see in our Gospel, when...

II. Mary Runs Toward The Sound Of The Lord.

A. Our Gospel begins on the first day of the week in the garden of Jesus’ tomb. She and the other women had been separated from their Lord for three days, and had gone to the tomb in hopes of anointing Jesus’ body. Oh, how she missed the sound of His footsteps as He walked with her from village to village, to feed the hungry, heal the sick, cast out demons, and even raise the dead. She missed the sound of His voice as He proclaimed that in Him the kingdom of heaven had come, and that He had come to offer forgiveness of sins and eternal life. She wanted so much to hear the sound of her Lord in that garden, but all she heard was the echo of their own feet in the darkness as they entered the garden.

Upon arriving at Jesus’ tomb Mary was met with an even more dreadful disappointment: Jesus’ body was missing. Her report to the disciples was ***“They have taken the LORD out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid***

Him.” In the garden of Eden the LORD had come looking for Adam and Eve who were in hiding, but on that first Easter morning it was Mary who had come looking for the LORD, and He was nowhere to be found. Because, she did **“not yet understand the Scriptures, that [Jesus] must rise from the dead,”** she believed that her LORD was hidden from her.

B. Sometimes we may feel the same way. Our life may seem to be falling apart. Our faith and hope in the LORD has not worked out the way we thought it would. We know how we want to live and serve Christ, but it doesn't seem to work out as we planned. We suffer troubles and hardships, and experience setbacks and shortcomings. Oh, just to hear the sound of the LORD's voice and to know that He is walking with us. But it often seems so quiet, and we do not hear Him “walk[ing] and talk[ing] with [us]” Like poor Mary we hear only the echo of our own footsteps. Because we do not yet understand the Scriptures, as we should, we may think that the LORD is hiding from us. And in a way He is. Just as He hid Himself from Mary, so that she supposed him to be a gardener, and from His disciples on the road to Emmaus, sometimes our Lord hides Himself behind masks in order to more fully reveal Himself to us. He hides His saving power beneath the simple water, and His life-giving body and blood beneath bread and wine, so that His Word and voice may become unmistakably clear. Nonetheless, He is with us, in the garden, in our homes, at work or school, and especially right here where two or three of us gather in His name. As the Lord promises us, **“Lo, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:20)**

C. In our Gospel after the disciples discovered that Jesus' tomb was empty, as Mary had told them, they returned home. But Mary stayed behind, weeping outside the tomb. The first thing she saw was two angels, sitting where Jesus body had been. They asked her why she was weeping, and again she expressed her longing to see and hear her LORD, who appeared to be hidden away from her. And that is when she turned around and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she did not recognize Him. He also asked her, **“Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”** Her question was, **“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”** Do you understand what is happening, here? In the garden of Eden the Lord called out to the people He loved, “Where are You?” And now, Mary, who had come to love her LORD was calling out to Jesus, “Lord, where are you?” Yes, Lord, where are you in my time of grief or pain? Where are you, Lord, when I look for you and you do not seem to be there? Where are you, Lord, in my moments of disappointment and despair.

D. And what is Jesus' response to the troubled woman who went to the garden to find Him? He simply says to her, **“Mary.”** That was all it took. She had heard the voice of her LORD, calling her by name – that familiar voice she had heard so often – that strong voice that had cast demons out of her and called her to a new and eternal life in the Spirit – that sweet voice that had comforted her and assured her of God's love.

And so it is for all of us. So often we do not recognize our LORD when He is right there in front of us, but then we remember that in our baptism He has called us by name. We are His and He is ours forever. It is not, alone in the garden, that we hear the sound of our Lord, but here in the fellowship of His Church where He speaks to us and calls us by the Gospel. This is where He casts the demons out of our lives, calls us to new and eternal lives in the Holy Spirit, and comforts us and assures us of His love. This is where, with Mary, we see the empty tomb and our risen LORD and Savior.

E. And what do we do now that we hear the sound of our Lord? With Mary we run to Him and cling to Him. In the garden of Eden our first parents ran away in shame and fear, but now there is no shame or fear in Christ Jesus. We know that our sins are forgiven, and that because He lives, we will live forever, also. So when we hear the sound of His voice, we will run to Him, here where He comes to us in His Word and Sacrament. We will run to Him to enjoy a renewed relationship of love and trust. And then with Mary we will go out into all the world and tell them, “I have seen the LORD!” and declare Christ is Risen! He is risen, indeed, Alleluia!