

GOD'S FAVORED ONES

Genesis 3:8-9

TEXT: *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?"*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

He's coming! There is excitement in those words. Sometimes the excitement is of happy anticipation, like when planning a surprise party for someone and everyone is waiting for the guest of honor to appear, to shout out the word SURPRISE! And then have the party begin.

He's coming! There also could be an excitement based on fear when the one who is coming is expected to bring some sort of vengeance or pain. Remember when Mom, breaking under the stress of a bad day, made bad because of your naughty behavior, declared: "Wait until your father gets home!" Perhaps she would mellow by then. But then, when you hear your father's car drive up, the car door slam and his footsteps entering the front door, and the pleasant greeting of your father met with a tearful complaint of your mother, then followed by the sound of Dad's footsteps coming closer and closer. Doom, despair and agony on me!

Advent is the coming of our Lord: his coming to the world as an infant, His coming to the world on Judgment Day as our King, and His coming to this world to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify His whole Christian Church, to keep it with Him now and forever.

Before us is the history of how this first happened. We go all the way back to the Fall into sin to see how God sought and found His Chosen Ones. What is significant and of up most importance to us is that nothing has changed in regard to God's Favored Ones, His Elect, His Church. Just as the Lord sought Adam and Eve in order for them to hear the Gospel, so He also has sought out and found you, His Favored One.

I. The battle is heating up. The atheists and the ungodly are more vocal and violent than ever before. They take us to court for displaying a cross or nativity scene. They force little children to change the words of Christmas carols in the public schools and make them say "Happy Holidays" instead of Merry Christmas. And on a more serious vein, they demand legislation that declares the perversion of homosexuality to be honorable within the sacred estate of marriage. And I fear that it won't be long before the teaching of God's Law and Gospel in its truth and purity will be classified under the new heading of "hate speech" and the persecution that drove the Pilgrims from England could be an experience that Christians might have to face here in this "land of the free" within this century.

Why are they doing this? What are they afraid of? It's simple. They are terrified that the baby Jesus might be the Son of God. They fear his first Advent because it also means that there is the second Advent of our Lord's coming to judge heaven and earth. So they run and hide behind their denial of the truth. How foolish! In fact, the Bible clearly says in Psalm 14: *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."*

Before us is a demonstration of the foolishness of unbelief. Adam and Eve did not deny God's existence, but they surely act like fools as they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves and then tried to run and hide when their Creator came looking for them.

The Bible says: *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.* They had sinned and now that the Lord is making His presence known, they do the most foolish thing: they try to hide. If it were not so pitiful, it would be comical like when a little child spills his milk and tries to hide from his parents. To deny the existence of God and His holiness is the behavior of sinners who are fools.

But God does exist and He says: *I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.* Eze 33 That's why the Lord went looking for Adam and Eve. He had created them in His image, but Satan had destroyed them. So the Bible says: *they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"* Note that the Lord comes searching for His children.

Yet when the Lord confronts them, look at how they behave! They become insolent like little gods! Adam stands in defiance and blames God for giving him a sinful wife. He declares that it isn't his fault, for: *The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.* Ge 3 Now Adam hates God and despises God's gift of a wife. Now the wife hates her husband for not protecting her and loving her.

So what is the Lord going to do with these sinners who hate him and each other? He reveals to them a love that surpasses all comprehension.

II. The Lord's seeking and finding them meant nothing but condemnation until they heard what the Lord proclaimed to Satan. The Bible says that even while His sinful children stood before Him in self condemnation and hatred toward their Creator, the Lord declared to Satan: *Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.* Ge 3 The Lord would come again, this time in the womb of a sinful woman. The Lord would be the Descendant of Eve who would crush Satan's head, defeat him and redeem His lost creation.

This would be the first Advent, and all who hear and believe this promise have no fear of the Second Advent. They are like Job, that ancient Christian who lived some 2000 year before Jesus was born, who declared: *Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-I, and not another.* Jb 19 Some 2000 years later, angels were sent from the Lord to some everyday hard-working shepherds outside of Bethlehem. They were not sent to the Jewish religious elite, but to lowly shepherds. Their message: *Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.* Lu 2 Then the angels declared: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.* Lu 2 Obviously, God's favor certainly rested on these men! Angels announce the Lord's birth and gives them a special sign that assured them of the presence of their Savior!

Do you see any similarities between the two historical events before us this morning and your personal lives? Believe me, there are many more identical situations in Scripture that reveals that the Lord searches out and finds His Favored Ones, but we only have time today for these: the Fall into Sin and the First Advent that is the birth of the Promised Savior. You and I are no different than Adam and Eve. We've sinned and our sins move us to hate God, and our fellow man. But the Lord had declared our salvation through His Son Jesus, and He has favored us with a sign just as He favored those ancient shepherds. It is the message of the Gospel. Instead of being wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, Jesus comes to His Favored Ones today wrapped in the pulpit, the water, and the bread and wine. He comes to us through the Gospel in the word that is preached, the water of Baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. He makes His presence known to us personally through these signs of His grace.

What did the shepherds do? They hurried to Bethlehem to worship Jesus. May that be our daily and weekly activity until the Day comes when our Savior returns at His Second Advent to claim all who believe in Him and long for Heaven! Amen.