

1st Sunday in Lent, February 26, 2023

Genesis 3:8,9.

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden ... and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" Genesis 3:8,9.

Genesis three tells the story of the first ever game of hide and seek, or maybe it would be better to say *the now and always game* of hide and seek, where Adam and Eve dove for the bushes as they heard God walking in the garden. They hid from God out of fear ... out of shame ... out of foolishness ... assuming the worst about God. Are we so different?

Our impulse is to hide when the Lord comes looking. We know we have failed to live up to God's intentions. We don't want God interfering with our chosen paths and calling us in some other direction. We're always dodging God, just a little. As if we could hide from God.

God seeks Adam and Eve ... *"Where are you?"* How shall we hear that question? Does God ask it in "wait-'til-I-get-my-hands-on-you" anger ... or with fear ... like a frantic parent searching for a lost preschooler? Or is there a deep and knowing sadness behind the question. Perhaps Genesis three wants to tell us that we don't handle our relationship with God in a healthy way ... and that it has terrible consequences for us the rest of *our* lives.

But here's the grace ... God never gives up the search. Long into the nighttime of our distress, God walks the streets ... wanders the highways and by-ways ... searching, longing, asking ... "Where are you?"

Prayer:

Parenting, nurturing God,

Lost and wandering ... hiding our shame and guilt ... hiding from you ... from each other ... from ourselves ... you have found us. Here we are, Lord. Here we are. Amen.



Rev. Mary Anne Biggs retired from ministerial service and moved to Richmond, Virginia with her husband, John, after most recently serving at Oakland Christian United Church of Christ in Suffolk for three years. She earned her Master of Divinity at Chicago Theological Seminary in 2007. The Texas native spent her first 12 years as an ordained minister in Wisconsin. Her first six years were at Nekoosa United Church of Christ, and the second six were at First Congregation United Church of Christ in Eagle River. She presently serves as Secretary of the Virginia Council of Churches.