

Why Are You Here?

Why are you here? This question seems too open-ended, and if asked the question we will try to narrow down the “here.” Is “here” being on earth or is “here” being in the room where you are now sitting? Depending on how we define “here” will determine how we answer the question, “Why are you here?”

Genesis 3 gives us the account of Adam and Eve’s fall into sin. They ate the forbidden fruit, discovered they were naked and made rudimentary clothes for themselves, sewing fig leaves together. As evening fell, they heard the footsteps of the Lord God as he walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid among the trees of the garden. Although we can be sure God knew where they were, he called out, “Where are you?” Adam and Eve could have responded with the obvious answer, “We’re over here, hiding among the trees,” to which God could have replied, “And why are you there?” Adam seems to have anticipated God’s obvious second question and he answers it first: “We heard you in the garden, and because I was naked, I was afraid.” God’s interrogation continues: Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat the forbidden fruit? What is this that you have done? Adam and Eve’s answers were unsatisfactory. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. And, as we know from the opening verses of Genesis 3, God had made the serpent. Was Eve inadvertently blaming God?

If we go back to God’s first question, it is as if he is asking, “Why are you here?” What are the circumstances that led you to this situation? Adam and Eve refuse to take responsibility for what had happened, not repenting of their sin, but we know it was only because they disobeyed God and ate the fruit that they found themselves in their new and undesirable situation. Even though they refused to take responsibility, it is evident that they were where they were because of what they did, not because of what God had done.

The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree when it comes to refusing to take responsibility, for we can be found doing the same. Increasingly we lay the blame at the feet of others or upon circumstances or even on God. Psychology does a good job of helping us understand why people behave as they do, but psychology can also go a step further and use that understanding to say that we have little choice in the matter. We are victims of circumstance, we are told, and no one should judge us for acting as we do. In other words, we have used science as a justification to pass the blame so that we can excuse ourselves of sin. We tend to be quite like Adam and Eve, blaming others. Yet, we cannot avoid the reality that we must shoulder the blame ourselves. We are “here” because of what we have done.

A Christian can also ask the question, “Why am I here?” Why am I part of God’s family? Why have I been brought close to God? Why am I not hiding from him anymore? Strangely, many people, though they are loathe to accept responsibility for sin, are quite happy to accept credit for why they have been brought close to God. “I have lived a pretty good life.” “God accepts me as I am.” “I’ve made some good decisions, including the decision to follow Jesus.” It is ironic that while we have little desire to take responsibility for what leads us to hide from God, we are quite happy to be at least partial responsible for being close to God.

If we are honest, however, we would have to admit that we are here, in Christ, not because of what we did but because of what God has done. We were “there” because of what we did, and we are “here” because of what God has done. God cannot be blamed because we hide ourselves from him, but he can be praised for calling us back to himself.

I find God’s response to human sin to be quite profound. His “Where are you?” is designed to have us confront our present reality, but it also begs the question, “And why is it that you are where you are?” If we are distant from God, we can blame no one but ourselves. If we have become close to God, it is because God sought us out, asked his Son to carry our blame, and drew us back to himself. The “Where are you?” is a probing question, but it is also a question that God asks us so that we can be confronted with our sin but, at the same time, be drawn back to his presence. When we ask the question, “Why am I here?” let’s be sure to take responsibility for what our contribution to our situation is and give God credit for his.

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