

A LESSON FROM THE GARDEN OF EDEN

by Rev. Donald L. Rose

I do not believe that the story of Adam and Eve is merely an empty myth. Neither is it simply a record of literal historical facts. I believe that as part of the holy Word of God it contains treasures of wisdom and lessons of life. Each detail of the story is significant.

Let us consider one facet of the story in Genesis chapter three. Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and they went into hiding among the trees of the garden.

If you were in the place of God, what would you have done? What God did appears in verse nine of this sacred story. "Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?'"

Suppose you had warned a child not to do something. You find that the child has done it, and now is hiding. Should you administer swift punishment? Perhaps shout, "I know where you are!" You might rather begin simply by asking a question. "Where are you?"

In the Genesis story the question evoked response from Adam, and he said, "I was afraid and hid myself." Theologian Emanuel Swedenborg wrote eight volumes about the stories in the book of Genesis, and he said that those volumes contained only a few of the many things enfolded in those chapters.

Concerning God's words to Adam we read, "It is common in the Word for man to be first asked where he is and what he is doing, although the Lord previously knew all things." (Heavenly Secrets number 226.)

What is the purpose of a question, when you already know the answer? Well, a question evokes thought. Swift punishment or immediate accusation might not leave room for thought on the part of the offender.

It is important that the thought process should be initiated. When young people do foolish things it is often due to an absence of thought. Take as an example acts of vandalism. How many times do we observe broken windows or windshields and other damaged property when there was no plan or purpose?

Beyond restitution one hopes that transgressions can be part of learning and development of responsible consideration. Ideally thoughtless acts will be replaced by thoughtfulness.

When you and I are in the realm of thoughtlessness, we are in a bad place. Our immediate need in a bad place is to realize that we are there. A subtle voice from within can give us the realization. It is as if God is saying to us, "Where are you?"

Someone who is lost needs to discover that he or she is lost. An example of someone who was lost and was found is the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. Off he had gone pursuing his

own cravings as so many do. But a time came when he “came to himself.” You could say he realized where he was.

When he knew where he was he could say, “I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.” While he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion and ran to him and embraced him rejoicing, for he had been as if dead and was alive again, was lost and was found.

May we all be vigilant as to where our life is going, and may we be open to the voice of God which mercifully calls to us and asks, “Where are you?”

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