

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, AUGUST 31, 2025
SERMON SERIES PART 2: BACK TO THE BASICS
SERMON: WHERE ARE YOU?
SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 3:1-13
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GENESIS 3:1-13

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3** but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. **5** “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. **7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 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. **9** But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

10 He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

11 And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

12 The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”
The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Sermon: Where Are You?

Welcome to Week 2 of our eight(ish) week sermon series, *Back to the Basics: A Walk Through the Book of Genesis*. In this series we are examining God's intentions in creating the world, what we were originally made for, and today, what happened when it all went wrong.

As I mentioned last week, our Sunday messages will run alongside our Bible Study at the Plaza in Kaneohe. The difference between the two is that Sunday is about the spiritual message, while Thursday's study is more about history, theory, and the craftsmanship of the text. Of course, there will always be overlap. For example, at Bible Study this week, we looked at the different theological theories of what's called *Original Sin*, which is the centuries-long conversation about the nature of sin and grace based on Genesis 3.

Over the years, theologians have wrestled with what really happened in Eden and how it impacts human behavior today, especially in light of what Jesus accomplished on the Cross. If you want all the details, I can share the Bible Study notes, but the general overview is that the debate boils down to responsibility. Is culture responsible for the corruption and sin that we all inevitably slide into—meaning we are products of our environment? Or is each person born inherently sinful, carrying something inside that bends us toward wrongdoing? Put more simply: is sin something that happens to us, or is sin something we naturally do?

Now, I tend to think of myself as someone always asking “why.” Why does it matter where sin, or the pain, suffering, and separation from God, comes from? Because whether it is something we inherit, or something we choose, or something that happens to us, all of us sooner or later face it. Every one of us knows what it means to experience pain. Every one of us knows what it means to suffer. Every one of us knows what it means to feel far from God. So what difference does it make?

Interestingly, this same tension shows up in modern conversations about trauma, which as you know, is a topic close to my heart. Trauma happens when something terrible breaks down a person's ability to live as they once did. It can be physical, like shattering a leg, or it can be emotional, like witnessing violence. For decades, researchers have studied trauma, and yet there is still no one clear way of healing it. Treatments range from talk therapy to support groups to new experiments with psychedelic drugs, with mixed results all around. At its core, the question is the same one theologians wrestle with when discussing Original Sin: how much responsibility to heal brokenness belongs to the systems and structures around us, and how much responsibility belongs to the individual who has been hurt?

This is why I believe Original Sin can be understood as a kind of trauma. In Eden, something catastrophic happened. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, but the effect was not only guilt—it was rupture. They were torn from the way things were supposed to be. Suddenly they were hiding from God, covering themselves, ashamed, fearful, disoriented. Trauma does this. It leaves us with a sense of vacancy, as though we are no longer who or where we once were. We feel lost. For some, this lostness comes through drugs, or anger, or other coping strategies that dull the pain but never heal it.

It is the deep dislocation of no longer being at home in our own skin, or in the world, or even with God.

And it is into this scene of hiding, shame, and vacancy that God comes with a question: “Where are you?” Not “What have you done?” Not “Why did you betray me?” But “Where are you?” It is the voice of God searching, calling, seeking. For those who have been traumatized—whether by sin done to them, sin they have done, or simply the brokenness of the world—this question is the one that begins healing. Because trauma is dislocation, and God’s question restores orientation. It tells us that we are not beyond God’s sight. It tells us that even if we are hiding, God is still seeking.

This question God asked Adam and Eve in Eden is one I’ve often asked in my career from homeless shelters, to refugee offices, to churches. We’ve all experienced trauma – question aside about where it came from or who is responsible for it – and all of us have experienced disorientation from the circumstance of being traumatized. I’d often listen to homeless folks at IHS drone on and on about the injustices of their lives, being robbed, raped, broken by the system, and generally caught in a loop of rage around What Has Happened. As an outsider looking in, I ask them “Where are you?” when I hear these stories, as they seem lost in the sin, the suffering, whether it’s of their own doing or someone else’s. As someone listening to these stories, I can’t identify who this person is anymore outside of the suffering. Where are you? They are lost in the pain, unable to remember who they are.

I had the same question when I saw my first refugee camp in northern Syria many years ago. What should have been hundreds of children joyfully playing soccer and creating imaginary playworlds around them was a cold reality of kids missing body parts and parents, carrying weapons and chanting war songs. It felt so shockingly unnatural to see such little people dislocated into such a way. In that place, I returned to God’s question – where are you? Where is the child alive in imagination, joy, and wonder? She is lost in the pain, unable to remember who she is.

I have the same question for this church as a collective body. You’ve experienced trauma as a people whose dreams have gone unrealized, foundational relationships broken down, and a future that may look unrecognizable. The disorientation of unmet expectations and a loss of What Once Was also invites God’s question: Where are you? We try our best to work through it with God’s grace and guidance, but very often I think this church is still lost in the pain, unable to remember who we are.

So today, I invite you to hear this question as if God were asking it of you. *Where are you?* Where are you in your pain? Where are you in your shame? Where are you in your lostness?

You may not have words to answer, but you don’t need to. Because God’s question is not an interrogation—it’s an invitation. It’s His way of saying, “*I see you. I have not abandoned you. Even in your hiding, I am here.*”

And that is the beginning of grace. Not that we fix ourselves, not that we erase our trauma, not that we undo Eden—but that the God who still walks in the garden comes searching for us.

Friends, the story of Genesis reminds us that sin is not just a rule we broke—it is the rupture that left us disoriented, displaced, unable to remember who we are. But the good news is that in Jesus Christ, God doesn't leave us in our disorientation. The same God who asked Adam and Eve, "*Where are you?*" came into the world to seek and to save the lost, to reorient us to Himself, to restore us as His children, and to remind us of who we are.

So when you feel lost—individually, or as a church, or as a world—hear this question not as condemnation but as comfort. God is calling you out of hiding. God is reminding you who you are. And God is still walking with us, even east of Eden, even here and now.

And maybe that is why the question of responsibility matters less than we think. Whether sin and brokenness come from a corrupted culture that shapes us, or from within our own hearts, the truth is that none of us escape it untouched. What matters is that God still comes looking. The question is not simply, "Where did the sin come from?" but "Where are you now, and will you let yourself be found?"

That is where healing begins. That is where grace takes root. That is where we remember again that we are God's beloved.

Amen.