

Holy God, Fountain of Knowledge and Life. Meet us today and speak your words of truth and light. Amen.

Where are you?

Where are you?

This is the first question that God asks in the entirety of Scripture. Prior to this scene in Scripture, we've heard God's voice quite a bit: You know what I'm taking about – "Let there be light." "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth..." "Let us make humankind in our image..." Each of these a declarative sentence of monumental proportions. Words powerful and evocative enough to withstand millennia of criticism. Words whose mere utterance awes the speaker.

Creation it seems depends on nothing more, yet nothing less, than words. How true that is even to this very day.

God is good with sentences... which is why I'm struck that at the first major setback the holy One doesn't rush to their strength with sentences, but turns to questions. In a flash we hear the all-powerful speaker of "Let there be light" utter a question loaded with longing and loss. "Where are you?"

Are we to believe that God can make light, seas, birds, humans, etc. but that God cannot find a human who does not want to be found. Perhaps.

Rather than a question of ability though, is it not more worthwhile to consider what it means that when we hide from God, God gives us the courtesy of playing along.

This has got to be good news for some of you. If you are hiding from God, take heart, the Holy One will not jump out of any metaphorical bushes, and scream "Gotcha!" At the same time God won't ignore you, won't pretend that you're not hiding. Even now God is coaxing us out of our hiding places, asking the primordial question that God has been asking humankind from the beginning "Where are you?"

Are there bits of you that you've been hiding away from God. Are you adrift – disconnected from yourself, from others, from God. Or Are you standing on solid ground – confident in the love of God, secure that this moment in time is where you're supposed to be. Where ever you are, the question is still worth considering as if God were the one asking.

There is much to be gained by asking ourselves this seemingly simple question from a new vantage point. In fact, the whole entirety of the Creation Story is begging us to do just that. Look again at something we know well, but from a different vantage point.

A casual reading of this text is impossible. We simply can't read these Genesis passages without tons of cultural baggage. We're acutely aware that this part of the creation story has often been used to justify the oppression of women, the exploitation of creation and the supremacy of men. While there are many feminist scholars, and I guess a few non-feminist scholars, who have spent years doing the holy work of rescuing the story from the clutches of misogyny, there is no doubt many folks who still find today's reading complicated – to say the least.

In her book, *Helpmates, Harlots and Heroes*, the Hebrew Testament Scholar, Alice Ogden Bellis lays out a number of theories and research that helps us better understand what is going on and how gender itself develops and evolves in the Creation stories. Based on the nuances of the Hebrew text, the reader is told a story where gender and sexuality are not at all static but rather both Adam and the woman become more and more sexualized beings as the story progresses.

The research is compelling, yet ultimately Ogden Bellis summarizes her chapter on Eve this way: "The story of Adam and Eve is a bit like a hologram. What you see depends on the angle from which you view the story. This is one of the reasons the story is so rich and so difficult. Whichever interpretation(s) one prefers, the feminist reader is confronted with the question: Is it sexist? The story itself does not depict women as inferior or as the origin of evil. Such depictions are the product of the sexism of the commentators. The story is certainly androcentric. Is it intrinsically sexist? That is the question each reader should consider."

I've considered the question, and I have landed on this answer... kinda. The writers of this portion of Genesis undoubtedly did not believe that men and women were equals, and so they wrote the story that way; but the commentators who came after them took the androcentrism that was a fact of life for the early hearers and writers of this text and extrapolated a world view of male supremacy that the text does not support.

Regardless of what commentators have said throughout the ages, the text does not blame Eve for the fall of humanity. That's not in the story. Depictions of Adam stumbling upon Eve with the serpent, are not based on anything we get in Scripture. The text says that after Eve bit the fruit, she gave some to her husband "WHO WAS WITH HER." They did it together. They did it all – they listened to the serpent together, ate the fruit together, and then they hid together. And then God found them together.

Either way, the ultimate value of this story isn't that it tells us who to blame for sin, the great value is that this story has been remarkably useful in helping humans come to terms with why so much in life is so hard.

This is a story of brokenness, rupture, loss... that we look for harmony and perfection within it is weird to me. So yes this creation story is complicated and uncomfortable, with the fingerprints of human prejudice, bias and ego strewn throughout... in that regard the writers of our creation story really stuck the landing.

Humans are complicated - both the writers of this story and the characters within this story. Is it any wonder then that when we hear God's voice here it's full of questions. Cause God doesn't just ask one question – oh no, God's in full detective mode.

After asking where are you?

God proceeds to the next line of questioning... Who? Who told you, you were naked? Who told you something was wrong with you?

And then God finishes his inquiry by asking a seemingly simple question... what... what is this you have done? Now God's not really in need of an answer that either human can give.. God has already established what the infraction was when they

asked “Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat?” This question is not simple at all. I get a sense of the Holy One themselves just trying to absorb the enormity of what has just unfolded. A rupture so big that it would ultimately compel God’s creatures to hide from their beloved Creator pretty much for all time. God does not hide from us. We’re the ones in hiding. Then and Now. My friends, wherever you are, it is safe to step of hiding and call out to the one who has been asking all along “Where are you?” Amen.