



“Where are You?”

YEARS AGO I SENT our niece and nephew a satellite image of their small town in rural Alberta, Canada, requesting that they place a mark at the location of their home. I entitled the e-mail: “Where are You?”

For some time after that, the question looped repeatedly through my mind—“*Where are you? Where are you? Where are you?*”—becoming one of those nagging refrains that occupies one’s thoughts in the shower, or wakes one in the dark hours before dawn.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?”

Genesis 3:8-9

Does God ever have to come looking for me? One day when I was still in grade school, one of the Nelson boys invited me to join him catching crawdads down at Linn Creek. I knew it was wrong. I knew I’d get into trouble for it. And I did it anyway. Instead of going right home after school that day, I went down to the creek with the Nelson boy. I was one half-hour—all of thirty minutes—late getting home from school, and my mom was beside herself. “Where have you been? What happened to you? Are you hurt?” (After which I received a well-deserved spanking.)

Does God ever have to do that with me? Does He ever have to ask, “Where have you been? What happened to you? Are you hurt?”

He said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

Genesis 3:10-11

Wrapped in this ungainly flesh it is easy to forget how sweet are the hours spent with Him, those cool, refreshing moments of communion in which we share our lives with Him, and He shares His with us. These are moments of revival, of reawakening. Yet our flesh would pull us away from that, away from the blithe innocence we enjoy in His company.

Away from Him we become less innocent. We discover that we have been naked all along, but now, outside of the Father’s presence, that discovery brings upon us a disturbing yet strangely inviting darkness. The Light that had earlier seemed comfortable and natural now hurts our eyes. And we draw back into the shadows. He comes to the garden at the appointed time, our customary hour for meeting with Him. But we are not there. He waits, for He is ever patient. But still we do not come. And He treads the path, peering left and right into the shadows, and calls out, *Where are you?*

All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity
of us all
To fall on Him.

Isaiah 53:6

We do not answer His call right away, for now we know we are naked. And we are ashamed. We consider ourselves no longer presentable, no longer worthy of His presence. We have stood Him up. We have gone our own way.

When I am in the shadows, it is easy to forget who God is. My mind reverts to an earlier ignorance that whispers the lie that He is angry with me, that He seeks me out to punish and abuse me.

But the voice that calls out, *Where are you?* is not angry, but gentle and warm. For it is, as well, the voice of the Good Shepherd searching for the lamb that has gone astray. God no longer sees my nakedness—my sin—for He placed all of it upon the shoulders of His Son. In Christ, He seeks my company to dispense forgiveness, kindness, and compassion. And He asks only my love in return.

So I stumble out of the shadows, blinking, my eyes bright with tears. I gaze up into His warm, gentle face, and cry out, “Oh God, I am *here!*”