

## **SHELTER: THE JOY OF SINS FORGIVEN**

Sermon written by Martha-Jean Fitch

August 9, 2020

TEXT: Psalm 32

What is one of the earliest games that children learn to play? I think it has to be “Peek-a-boo” or “hide and seek”. It is a fun game that our 1-year old grandson loves to play. You take a towel or a napkin and put it over his face and say, “Where’s Isaac?” and he pulls the towel off his face and everyone exclaims, “There’s Isaac!” And Isaac delights us all with his smiles and giggles. Now I am guessing as he gets a little older, he’ll play another version of “hide and seek” that I know my kids played. We didn’t need a towel to put over their face...we’d just say, “Where’s Mary?” and she’d put her little hands over her eyes, to hide! And in just a few moments, she’d fling her arms wide and we’d all shout, “There she is!” And she’d would giggle and be so proud that had “hidden” from Mommy and Daddy. It was great fun! But you know – the whole time she thought she was hiding – we knew exactly where she was.

As we all have grown older, we have played “hide and seek” in a variety of ways – and even into our adulthood we have been known to hide...from our family and friends ... and even from God.

You find it all over the Bible – people looking for a place to hide. It really began in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. They had disobeyed God and tried to hide because they were afraid. But of course, God knew where they were. But there were others. Evil, guilt and fear have a way of spreading throughout the generations. Jacob hid from his brother Esau. Jonah tried to hide from God, on a boat going to Tarshish. Elijah hid from the wicked Queen Jezebel. And the disciples hid in a locked upper room, for fear of the Jews.

David was one who really knew a lot about hiding. He hid in the wilderness from Saul and Absalom, who wanted to kill him. And then when David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he tried to hide his affair by having her husband killed out on the battlefield. He knew it was wrong – but he tried to cover it up. And he hid from God.

As much as we hate to admit it – we do a lot of hiding ourselves, don’t we? When we sin and do something wrong, we still hide. We do bad things – or neglect the good things we should do. We hide or we justify our actions, or our inaction. We avoid God’s presence, because we know it is against God that we have sinned.

Think about those times when you ignored that leading of God and followed your own sinful ways. Perhaps there was someone in need and you ignored them because you were too busy. Or the times when you chose to hold a grudge against someone or tore down another person in gossip. Or those times when you chose to indulge in some “guilty pleasure”, saying “well, everybody does it” or “I’ll do it just this once.” And then, it becomes a habit or an addiction, that tears you away from God. Or what about the times when you have lied or cheated, or...

Well, I could go on with examples, but I think you get the idea. All of us have sinned – we’ve gone against the ways of the Lord and we’ve tried to hide away from God. What is it for you? What sin are you trying to hide from people in your life and from God? Well, here’s the thing. We may think we are doing a good job hiding – but God knows exactly where we are. And He sees how exhausting it is to carry that burden of sin and guilt. He is standing ready to hear our story, as we confess our sins and then He offers us an incredible gift of grace and the strength to start over, with a clean, fresh slate.

David learned this as he finally came to grips with his sin. When he chose to hide from God in his sin – he was miserable. But once he confessed his sin – he knew deliverance and joy in the forgiveness from God. In fact, he wrote a song to describe that journey. It is recorded in Psalm 32, our Scripture reading for today. I invite you to get your Bible open and follow along as we hear Parker Stecher read it to us today.

### **PARKER READS PSALM 32**

Thanks so much Parker!

As you listened to Parker read Psalm 32, did you hear how David described his pain and anguish when he refused to confess his sins? All day long, he felt the heaviness and the burden of his guilt. He was actually sickened by it. His body was wasting away, he groaned all day and his strength seemed to evaporate like water on a summer’s day.

Does any of that sound familiar? Are you ever just sickened by the guilt you feel over something going on in your life?

Billy Graham once noted that – everywhere he went – he saw a universal sense of guilt. It is a common emotion in everyone. And when we have unresolved guilt, it can really be damaging. Pastor Jeff Strite shares how – when we have unresolved guilt, it is much easier to get sick. Apparently, a high percentage of the illnesses people suffer from can be a direct result of guilt that folks have never dealt with. Psychiatrist, Karl Menninger once said that “*unless one deals with their conscience and guilt, there are many internal conflicts counselors simply cannot fix.*” He once said that if he could convince patients in psychiatric hospitals that their sins were forgiven – 75% of the patients could walk out the next day!<sup>1</sup>

What do we need to do with those feelings of guilt? Continuing to hide and just cover it up or bury it, is not the answer. David discovered that. He says: “*Finally, I confessed all my sins to You and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, ‘I will confess my rebellion to the Lord.’*” And what was the result? Did God give him a tongue lashing – shaming him or shunning him? Absolutely not. God forgave him and all his guilt was gone.

His confession and repentance brought great joy and freedom. That’s what a clear conscience does. It removes the burden and lifts the spirit.

That's a promise God has made to us all. 1st John 1:9 (a Scripture you really need to memorize) goes like this: *"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

When we admit what we did (or failed to do) was wrong – and come out of hiding – God will forgive us. He takes that sin and throws it as far as the east is from the west. He throws it into the deepest sea and remembers it no more. And takes that burden that we were weighed down by – and replaces it with His strength and joy.

Listen again to how David described it in Psalm 32. There is great joy for those whose record has been cleared. God protects us from trouble and surrounds us with songs of victory. God guides us, showing us the way to go and He gives us His unfailing love. And notice, in verse 7, David describes God as His hiding place. No longer is he hiding *from* God – but now he is hiding *in* God! As Pastor Jeff Strite describes it – God changes the game.<sup>2</sup> David gave up trying to hide from God – God hid David in Himself. It's like the old hymn called, "He hideth my soul". Some of the words go like this:

He hides my soul in the cleft of the rock.  
                   where rivers of pleasure I see.  
 He hides my life in the depths of His love  
                   and covers me there with His hand.  
 He takes my burden away; He holds me up and I shall not be moved.  
                   He gives me strength as my day.

God wants to protect us and be our refuge and shelter. When times are tough and we are tempted to stray and go our own way, we need to turn to Him and hide ourselves in Him – so that He will protect us and keep us on the right way. And as we lean into Him and depend on Him – we can know a great joy and deliverance!

You know, I began my message telling you about my grandson learning to play "hide and seek". Well, now, he is crawling and beginning to walk! I've heard from my daughter that when Isaac is crawling or walking around the house...sometimes he will peek around the corner to see if they see him or not. When they do see him, they will call out his name, "Isaac, there you are!" And then he comes running over with a huge smile – his arms flapping. He doesn't care about hiding really. The object of his game is in being found – and then rushing into his loving parents' arms.

The Lord is your hiding place. He is your fortress, your shelter from the stormy blast. He wants to hide you in the shadow of His wings and hold you in His loving, everlasting arms.

Won't you come to Him today? Stop your hiding! Confess and repent of your sins – and start hiding yourself in Him. And then shout for joy – for that amazing grace and love!

## RESOURCES

<sup>1</sup>Jeff Strite, *Playing a New Game*, sermon from June 4, 2007, found on sermoncentral.com.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## BENEDICTION, BLESSING

People of God, trust this: God's love for you is real and alive in your hearts today.

He is Your shelter – Your hiding place!

Should you find yourself feeling worried or discouraged this week,  
falling into that temptation to hide from God.

Remember to hide in the arms and grace of Jesus.

And may the wondrous love of God,  
the healing power of Christ Jesus,  
and the bold courage of the Holy Spirit,  
go with you today and always. AMEN