

“You Can Run But You Can’t Hide”

July 30, 2017
Romans 8: 37-39

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Wall Street United Church

Psalm 139

O Lord you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.

The difficulty with weekly sermon prep is that unlike a weekly TV series, I can't tell how many followers I have — and it is tricky to go back and catch up on what you have missed, and many of you might just be tuning in for the first time to 'Wall Street Live' and therefore you won't know you have missed anything at all. So what you need to know this morning is that the last time I spoke, I left you the audience with the question/thought...(and trust me it was not intentional – I did not realize I would have to answer it myself—) I left you with this.....

What is your story? Who do you say Jesus is? – May you have the eyes to see it, and the courage to tell your story to others. With those questions and more importantly that challenge in mind, I began to think about my sermon for today.

Many of you have asked why I have not pursued ministry jobs, and you are wondering who I am.

As I thought about preparing for today's sermon I was reminded of a favourite childhood game.....How many of you remember playing Hide and Seek as a kid? How many of you like the game? Were any of you the best hidiers in the room? As a camp staffer for over 30 years, one of the favourite games the campers played was Leader Hunt, a glorified hide and seek, where the leaders scatter and hide through the property and the kids have to go find them. For the longest time I always prided myself in being

able to hide and not be found.... And then one summer I realized that as much fun as it is to hide and not be found, it is even more fun to hide well, but still be found by the campers and returned to the central check in table and claimed for points and to be part of the community again, not hiding from it.

So it got me thinking about hidingwhy do I hide from God or from others? Why do you hide? I certainly don't have an exhaustive list, but let's look briefly at a few examples in scripture of people hiding either from God or others.....

Right from the first book of Genesis, there is hiding going on. God said to Adam and Eve; "Don't eat from the tree of Knowledge!" But like most of us when we are told not to do something... Adam and Eve ate from the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and their eyes were opened. They recognized their nakedness and they felt a need to hide from God. But, God came looking for them....

Jonah — some of you will remember the story of Jonah and the whale. The story goes that he was asked by God to do a task for him. Jonah didn't want to, and so he tried to hide from God by going the opposite direction. God said go to Ninevah — Jonah went the opposite way, completely opposite — to Tarshish. He thought he could hide from God. He escaped in a ship, hid in the bottom of the boat...as far as he could get from God. But God intervened and came looking for him.

The OT scripture reading for this week (although we did not read it out loud, I did read it over a few times), is the story where God promised Isaac & Rebekah that her youngest twin son, Jacob, would be blessed. This is out of the ordinary, as generally speaking it is the oldest son that gets the blessing. But she did not trust God enough to make it happen in his own time or way, so she contrived a plan that helped Jacob deceive his father and thereby steal the blessing from his brother Esau, the rightful son to receive the family blessing. This caused great tension in the family. In fact Esau wanted to kill Jacob, so Jacob fled, leaving his whole family behind. He had to hide from his brother so he fled to the country of his mother....but God pursued him.

My observation from Scripture and from my life is that when we try to hide from God because we have done something we know is not right: aka sinned — he pursues us.

I've got a video I would like you to watch....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WC-70-Otk8>

Hmmmmmm... Nothing can separate you from the Love of God!!
That's pretty cool!

BUSTED - You know that moment when your junk catches up to you... stop and think about this for a moment... When were you busted? When should you have been busted? When would you rather have hidden than face the music you deserved? Are there things you are still hiding? I was a teenager and I threw a party at my grandmother's house the spring I was 16 yrs old – Busted....but God pursued me —

I went on to Summer camp where I experienced God in new personal ways and felt a call on my life to camp ministry.

This week my mom asked: "Did you get Scott's ticket booked for the train?" I said "Yes" of course, expecting to do it when I got home. BUSTED! I had to later admit the train was sold out and I had to get him there another way. I felt bad like I wanted to hide under a blanket....how could I deliver a sermon when I lie....aren't ministers supposed to be perfect...But God pursued me.....

There have been times I have legitimately been busted, i.e. sinned, and rightly so — but I have to tell you another reason some of us hide from God or others.....

And that out of a sense of shame — Rob Bell said "You know the kind of shame that he would hide under the covers for that long....like I'm doing something so bad." Yet, there is another reason we hide, and that is out of shame and fear.

A number of you have been asking where I come from or told me I missed my calling as a minister or church worker; and the truth is I spent much of my younger years in a conservative church, a Christian school, and then studying at seminary and working for years in a large Christian organization — but in these settings, I was told it was wrong and sinful to be gay. And so I hid, I hid that I was gay and I went about life as it was expected of me, wanting to be part of the communities that I knew. I raised a beautiful family, worked in ministry and loved those around me. However, I knew I wasn't being authentic.

But friends at Wall Street, over the last number of years you have provided a safe place for me to begin to come out and acknowledge that who God created me to be is beautiful. Being gay is not a sin. Hiding and not accepting who God has made me to be and embracing the plans he has for me, feels like sin to me. However, I want to come out of hiding, and have begun to do so and embrace who God has made me to be. And so I say today, that if you are struggling with your sexuality, or if you are hiding for another reason, you are smart enough, wealthy enough, confident

enough — let me encourage you — don't hide from God. He has plans for you.

Romans 8:37-39 (New Revised Standard Version - NRSV)

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is my story — I am a follower of Jesus, I am a Child of God, and I happen to be Gay. God loves me, God has plans for me, and I will continue to claim that nothing can separate me from the Love of God. What about you? Do you need to come out of hiding and let God show you His love for you?

This is my story. The next hymn speaks of our “Blessed Assurance” in the love of Jesus. Amen.