

Wednesday, May 27

Unmasked.

No, don't worry, this is not a devotion centered on whether or not to wear a mask in this Covid-19 season of life. It's about God unmasking us by His redemptive power. Let's begin with a test: Can you guess where the first mask in Scripture is found? If you answered Genesis, you'd be right (especially since it's the first book in the Bible).

The story is familiar to most. Adam and Eve are created by God without sin in a sinless environment. We read (2:25) *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

There was an openness and a unity between them, not masked by guilt, not damaged by selfishness, not impeded by shame. Then one day, Satan approaches, gives a convincing spiel about how God is withholding blessing from them, and tempts them to disobey God. They do.

And let me go off topic for a moment and share a vital masking truth. Temptation, more often than not, begins with trivia. Think about it: one bite of forbidden fruit. It's not like it's the whole piece of fruit; or the tree was cut down in anger. It's not murder or adultery.

And yet, so often, our spiritual health and journey rests on (what we would consider) one trivial thing in our life which we don't think is such a big deal. We know that (James 1:17) *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

For each of us, our God gives us all things abundantly to enjoy, but He also asks that we trust Him. What we read is that Satan tempts Eve at the one small, trivial point in her life where she wasn't ready to give everything over to God. In the same way Satan touches us at the one thing in our lives where we'd rather God leave us alone and let us be. We'll relinquish everything else, but this one part of life - it's ours - and we're going to hold onto it with all our might. That's a critical part of masking.

And then we read this (Genesis 3:7) *Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

There's the Bible's first mask. Adam and Eve could no longer be honest with God, with each other, or with themselves. They experienced true guilt and felt ashamed, so they covered themselves and hid. How well do you think that works when you're dealing with an all-knowing God? Adam and Eve didn't think through that very well. When we mask ourselves before God our thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions are all affected - and not for the good.

Jesus had some words about masking. Speaking to the Jewish religious leaders He said (Matthew 23:27) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.*

I'd say whitewashing is like wearing a mask. They were pretending to be someone they weren't. God, in His mercy and grace, unmasks us - He unmasks our idols. Our reality is that when we seek God, we find ourselves - unmasked, loved, and embraced.

Here's who we are as God sees us unmasked standing in the shadow of the cross.
Colossians 3:12 . . . *God's chosen ones, holy and beloved . . .*