

**Text: Genesis 3:8-12**

**Theme: “Who Told You?” - God’s second question**

**Sermon delivered by Reverend Dele Agbelusi on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2011 at 10:30am.**

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The second question we will consider which God asked Adam is: “Who told you that you were naked?” (Genesis 3:11). In asking this question, God is seeking to explore the process by which Adam has come to realise his nakedness and the shame he feels in the presence of his wife and God.

But there was no immediate answer forthcoming. Adam seeks to avert the question by off-loading the blame onto God and Eve. He said “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Gen. 3:12). They were defensive and not being truthful. But God wanted him to face up to the reality of his situation. God wanted him to state where his ideas came from. ‘Who influenced you to think like that?’ ‘What circumstances, situations and forces have conditioned you to hold and entertain such thought?’

One Christian counsellor often asks his counselees this question: “Do you hear voices?” “No”, they respond. “Well there is one voice you definitely hear and that is your own inner voice.” He goes on to share that we all talk to ourselves.

An explorer deep in the Amazon jungle found himself surrounded by a group of bloodthirsty cannibals. The explorer said quietly to himself, “I’m doomed!” Suddenly, a ray of light appeared from the sky, and a voice boomed out, “No, my son, you are not doomed. Pick up that stone at your feet and bash in the head of the chief standing in front of you.” The explorer picked up the stone and attacked the chief. After a few swift blows, he looked down at the chief’s lifeless body. The rest of the cannibals stared silently at the explorer. Then the voice boomed out again, “Okay...now you’re doomed!”

Sometimes it’s a good idea to double-check your sources. Not every voice that sounds authoritative is actually looking out for your best interests. You can find advice just about anywhere these days, and much of it can sound pretty convincing. But how do you know what to believe or who to trust?

When you’re trying to decide what to do in a tough situation, how do you determine what God’s will is? You may not hear the voice of God booming from the heavens, but what about that ‘still, small voice’ that prompts you in a particular direction? How do you know whether or not that voice can be trusted?

You must always test what you hear against the Bible. If someone or something is prompting you to do something that contradicts the Word of God, then it can’t possibly be from God. Some people commit sin and say, ‘God led me to do it,’ but they’re mistaken. It’s impossible for God to commit sin or to recommend it (1 John 3:8-9).

If you want to be prepared for the difficult situations you may face, don’t wait for God to give you directions in a booming voice from heaven. Study his Word. You’ll be ready for just about anything that comes along (see 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV).

Read Esther 6:6 - 11. What voice did Haman hear? What prompted him to suggest to the king such grandiose plans to elevate that unknown benefactor?

It is necessary that we get beneath the assumptions we hold if we are to be the responsive and responsible people God designed us to be.

It is all too easy to believe that we are overtaken by some outside force when yielding to falsehood. It was not a supernatural power that led the first human pair astray. It was simply words containing a thought which should have been resisted by the word God had given them: "...you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..." (Gen. 2:17).

Lies are lies whether they are spoken by the devil or not, and though sometimes we cannot avoid acting on them. And it is also a wise thing to discern who is making suggestions to us.

Let's read again Genesis 3:1. The serpent is described as crafty and his craftiness aided (not produced) the downfall of Adam and Eve. Consider for a moment the extent of his craftiness. He was both intellectually and religiously crafty. He quoted God's prohibition but subtly overstated it by adding "any tree" to the one they were banned from eating. This of course raised doubt in Eve's mind about exactly what God had said.

There was nothing wrong in Eve's doubt. It was her willingness to entertain the doubt and not subject it to the word God had spoken that caused their downfall. Difficulties begin when we do not lay our doubts alongside God's truth. How sad when a man or woman, instead of submitting to God's word, stands in judgment on it.

Think too about Satan's religious craftiness. He pretended to have privileged insight on what God's real intentions were. "You will not surely die..." (Gen. 3:4). 'God's intentions are not noble hence he would not have prohibited you from eating this wonderful fruit.'

The voice heard in the Garden of Eden is a voice to which we are still exposed. We should beware of those who claim to have superior spiritual knowledge and mystical understanding not available to the ordinary woman and man who sits humbly before God's Word.

"Who told you?" In asking this question, God seeks to ask what is going on inside us, to drive away confusion and gain a hearing with us. He queries if we are listening too much to the opinion-formers in the world around us; if we are bowing too easily to peer-pressure or the fashionable trends in our culture; or if we are paying too much attention to those damaging voices from the past that still reverberate in our memories. So God's question 'Who told you?' challenges the ideas we have based our lives upon and confronts us with the possibility that we may be believing and trusting in lies.

There is only one voice that can guide us safely through this world and that is the voice of our gentle Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. A voice is ringing in our ears: 'Follow Me . . . I am the way and the truth and the life' (John 14:6). "He who has ears, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15).

As we are beginning to see, there are many voices in this world calling for our attention – voices that spell out ideologies which often run counter to our Father's will. At a more personal level, think about how some of the voices you may have listened to have influenced, shaped and perhaps, dramatically changed your life. But there is one voice, which if listened to, will guide you throughout your life. Let me close by telling you a story:

Once upon a time there was a little river that said, "I can become a big river." It worked hard to get big, but in the process, encountered a huge rock. "I won't let this rock stop me," the river said. And the little river pushed and pushed until it finally made its way around the rock.

Next the river encountered a mountain. "I won't let this mountain stop me," the river said. And the little river pushed and pushed until it finally carved a canyon through the mountain.

Next the river came to an enormous forest. "I won't let all these trees stop me," the river said. And the river pushed and pushed until it finally made its way through the forest.

The river, now large and powerful, finally arrived at the edge of a vast desert. "I won't let this desert stop me," the river said.

But as the river pushed and pushed its way across the desert, the hot sand began soaking up its water until only a few puddles remained.

The river was quiet.

Then the river heard a voice from above. "My child, stop pushing. It's time to surrender. Let me lift you up. Let me take over."

The river said, "Here I am."

The sun then lifted the river up and turned it into a huge cloud. And the wind carried the river across the desert and let it rain down on the hills and valleys of the faraway fields, making them fruitful and rich.

Ambition and determination are wonderful attributes but, apart from God, they won't get you very far. When you're young, you tend to feel invincible. You think you can accomplish almost anything on your own. 'Who needs God?'

But what will you do when you get to the desert? There's one up ahead, you know. There will come a time when the heat will be intense, and you won't know what to do. You won't have the strength or the resources to make it through. Your desert may contain failure, rejection, disappointment, or loss. What will you do then?

When your desert comes, you may not have the opportunity to hear the voice of God saying, "It's time to surrender." But you can hear him now. He wants you to stop pushing and give your life to him today. He wants to lift you up and make you fruitful for him in ways you never imagined. Can you hear him?