

NEWSLETTER

July - 2025

CHURCH SCHEDULE

*Sunday School & Bible Study
will resume in September*

Sunday Service: 11:00 a.m.

**Wednesday Bible Study:
7:00 p.m.**

SPEAKERS

July 6: Ivan Niemela, *Holy Communion*

July 13: Charles Korhonen

July 20: Ivan Niemela

July 27: Ivan Niemela

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TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH

Confession, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them"
Gen 3:21

Adam and Eve, the first humans created by God in the Garden of Eden, were perfect and without sin. They were permitted to eat from every tree in the garden, except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Tempted by the serpent, they disobeyed God and ate from this tree. As a result, Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness, felt shame, and realized they had disobeyed God's command. Immediately, they covered themselves with fig leaves and hid among the trees in the garden when they heard God approaching. God knew what had happened. Instead of searching for them, He called out, *"Where art thou?"* (Gen 3:9). They willingly came out of hiding, explaining that they had hidden because they were naked. God then asked them, *"Who told thee that thou wast naked... Hast thou eaten of the tree?"* (Gen 3:11). Although both Adam and Eve tried to shift the blame, they ultimately admitted, *"I did eat"* (Gen 3:12, 13). This simple confession satisfied God, who then shed the blood of an innocent animal and used its skin to cover their nakedness as a token of His forgiveness for their sin, thereby reconciling them with Him.

The "coats of skins" mentioned in our subject text point toward a sacrificial offering essential for reconciliation with God, a theme that becomes clearer in Leviticus and throughout the Bible. This event in the Garden provides two key insights into God's plan of salvation for mankind. First, it demonstrates God's desire to forgive the sins of anyone who responds to His call to repent, just as Adam and Eve did. Second, it foreshadows the crucifixion of Jesus, whose blood atones for the sins of the entire world. The term "atone" literally means "covering". While the sacrifice of animals provided a limited covering, Jesus' death on the cross provided a permanent one (Heb 10:4,10). These truths are affirmed in the New Testament: *"The Lord... is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9), and *"... there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Thus, it was in the Garden that God established the necessity of shedding blood after sin was confessed, as stated in Hebrews 9:22: *"without shedding of blood is no remission"*.

Moving from the Garden of Eden to the parable of the Prodigal Son provides another compelling example of forgiveness and reconciliation. In this parable, Jesus speaks of a younger son who demands his inheritance, leaves his father's house, and squanders his wealth in reckless living. This leads to his separation from his father and family, ultimately resulting in his spiritual poverty. By the grace of God, the wayward son eventually realizes that he has sinned against his father. He set out for home with this thought, *"I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee"* (Luke 15:18). Before he can even reach home, his father runs out to embrace him. The son confesses, *"I have sinned"* (Luke 15:21). Like Adam and Eve, his heartfelt confession pleases the Father, who then directs his servants to place a robe upon His son. The Father joyfully declares, *"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found"* (Luke 15:24), demonstrating God's unconditional love and acceptance for sinners.

The use of skins and robes, illustrated above, is more than just a physical action; it is a profound token of God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Isaiah 61:1 describes the coverings placed upon Adam, Eve, and the Prodigal Son as "*garments of salvation*" or "*robes of righteousness*." These same coverings are also mentioned in Revelation 7:9 and 14, where believers standing before the throne of God on Judgment Day are portrayed as wearing white robes, made white in the blood of the Lamb. Thus, all born-again Christians are clothed in a white robe that fully conceals their sinful nature. However, God cautions us that as we journey toward the Promised Land, we have the potential to soil this robe. Therefore, it is essential to keep it clean and white, but only in response to God's calling to do so throughout our lives.

Dear reader, we, too, may freely confess any sin that God brings to our attention (Lev 5:5). In the Old Testament, penitent souls would voluntarily confess their sins at the door of the Tabernacle before a priest. The priest would then sprinkle sacrificial blood to atone for the forgiveness of their sins (Lev 4:20). Today, we can confess our sins to one another because Jesus entrusted believers with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, granting us the authority to proclaim forgiveness: "*whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (Matt 16:19). Through this proclamation, the robe of righteousness is placed upon the penitent individual. The need for confession and forgiveness of sins has remained constant throughout the Bible, demonstrating God's never-ending grace and mercy through the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ on the cross. Therefore, Jesus' sacrifice was not only the fulfillment of God's ancient plan but is also essential for our salvation, as decreed by the Lord.

God's Peace,
Charles Korhonen