

Cover Me

Genesis 2:24

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Peter Hiatt

Song: *Cover Me* by Bruce Springsteen

The times are tough now, just getting tougher
This old world is rough, it's just getting rougher
Cover me, come on baby, cover me
Well I'm looking for a lover who will come on in and cover me
Promise me baby you won't let them find us
Hold me in your arms, let's let our love blind us
Cover me, shut the door and cover me
Well I'm looking for a lover who will come on in and cover me

Outside's the rain, the driving snow
I can hear the wild wind blowing
Turn out the light, bolt the door
I ain't going out there no more

This whole world is out there just trying to score
I've seen enough I don't want to see any more,
Cover me, come on in and cover me
I'm looking for a lover who will come on in and cover me

Looking for a lover who will come on in and cover me

Amen!

And so Lord that's our prayer. It's not only our prayer, it's the prayer of this whole fallen world. And now Lord God, we pray that you would cover us. That you'd help us preach. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Genesis 2:24 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

They were naked and were not ashamed. That's a fascinating statement. For why would they be ashamed? Why are any of us ashamed?

The animals aren't ashamed of their nakedness, and even more, we're not ashamed of their nakedness. I've never heard of a campaign to cover the animals or a law against naked animals in public: "Why it's just shameful how those squirrels frolic about not wearing a thing." But people are another matter. What are we ashamed of?

To feel shame is to recognize that something is wrong or missing. What's missing?

We don't wear clothes simply for warmth. If we did, then last summer when it was 95 degrees in this room, we would have all been worshipping buck naked. And we don't wear clothes only to inhibit sexual desire. That's part of it, but not all. Some people wear clothes to enhance sexual desire, to be more enticing. Even if we were all guys or all gals or all eunuchs, we'd still feel uncomfortable walking around naked all the time. Why is that?

You know even in the most primitive and tropical societies, all around the globe, people feel the need to wear something. Even if it's a string or a gourd or a tattoo or the sign of the covenant, if one happens to be Jewish they wear that. When we wear that, we wear that in one particular spot. When we wear the gourd, the string, the tattoo, we prioritize that spot on the body where a man completes a woman and a woman completes a man in the image of God. I mean gosh, you just look at those parts, you know, and something tells you that needs something—a gourd or a string or something. 'Cause that's not right, that's incomplete. That's not finished.

We especially feel that way about our private parts, but not only about our private parts, our entire bodies are kind of like private parts.

Psychologists say two of our greatest fears are public speaking and the fear of being exposed in public naked. Have you ever had dreams where you were caught in public naked? If you're mortified in you dream, I've heard that it may mean you're hiding something. If no one seems to care, I've read that it means you're free and your fears are unfounded. The last couple years, I've had dreams like that--that start out like that—"there's Peter Hiatt...no problem." Then the dream shifts and it's a big problem. I get angry at myself for having exposed too much and I can't wait to be covered.

Nakedness exposes us. Nakedness exposes our weakness, our incompleteness, our vulnerability. And it's not just skin deep.

When I was a kid I got teased a lot. I was the pastor's kid. And I was a dweeb in my own right, too. I remember coming home from school sometimes just feeling so incredibly naked and ashamed, and I just couldn't wait to crawl up in my dad's lap. He'd wrap his arms around me. Cover me with his kisses and cover me with his love. And then I would feel complete. I could rest. Well that's just huge because you see if I wouldn't have felt that, if I wouldn't have been covered by him, I would have found something else to cover me completely. I would have covered myself with bitterness, hatred, anger, or worse. And to some extent I suppose I did cover myself and cover my heart.

Nakedness means vulnerability and who covers you and what they cover you with makes all the difference in the world.

Video: Monk

MONK: There's something I never told you. Something happened when I was a boy. There was an incident with a man.

COUNSELOR: Who was that?

MONK: I never seen him before. He was a stranger.

COUNSELOR: How old were you?

MONK: I don't remember. Young. I was so small. I remember, I remember I was naked.

COUNSELOR: Take your time.

MONK: I was so naked. I hated being naked and I remember I was crying and he hit me.

COUNSELOR: Adrian, I am so sorry.

MONK: There was blood. There was blood everywhere. I was screaming. I wanted him to stop.
My mother, my mother was smiling.

COUNSELOR: Your mother was there?

MONK: Why didn't she stop him? She was suppose to protect me. He kept hitting me.
Swinging me around upside down.

COUNSELOR: You were upside down? Was he wearing a mask?

MONK: I never wanted to be naked again.

COUNSELOR: Adrian, that man was a doctor. You're remembering your own birth.

MONK: Doctor? Doctor? Anybody else I wouldn't have believed it. Do you..? Doctor? Well
that would explain a lot actually—the lights and my father in the doorway holding a
balloon.

COUNSELOR: Do you feel better?

MONK: Yeah, I do. Wow!

Well in all seriousness, some of us are born to the best parents--fathers holding balloons. And some are born to the worst of parents--abusers. But you see we're all born naked. And in all of us our nakedness has been abused for our nakedness is much more than just skin deep.

In fact look around this room. Look at the people. I want to tell you something about them. They were born naked. Just look at them. And not only that, right now they are entirely naked under their clothes. It's true. And just a statement of that obvious fact fills some with terror and others with hope, and some with strange desires. You see our nakedness is about far more than exposed skin. And it takes far more than a layer of Dacron polyester to cover what we feel ashamed of.

But Adam and Eve were both naked and unashamed.

Genesis 3:1 "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made."

He tempts the woman to create herself in God's image by taking fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She does, and she gives some to her husband who is "with her."

Genesis 3:7 "Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked."

Isn't that amazing? The tree operated like something of a mirror and so--get this, cause I think this is fascinating: they were naked before, they just didn't know it.

And what exactly is it that they know now? They know that they're lacking something. And surely they're lacking more than just loin clothes. They're going to have those in just a few minutes. And they're not going to cut it. They are still going to feel naked.

And so what does the tree reveal? Well it's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the knowledge of good and evil is the Law and scripture says the entire law is fulfilled in one word and that word is Love. They looked in the mirror of the Law and realized that they lacked Love. They were naked of love. Incomplete without love. They were not yet finished and completed in love in the image of love.

You know all shame is a knowledge of a lack of love—that we haven't received love or we haven't given love. It doesn't mean that you aren't loved. I mean God never stopped loving Adam and Eve. Yet they lacked the capacity to receive love and give love and you see this was not a new problem. They were naked before. You remember Adam—he didn't even recognize his helper and who was his helper? God. And who is God? God is Love. We don't recognize our helper. Naked of love, but now they know it and knowing it they try to not be naked. They try to dress themselves which reveals how naked they really are.

You know, we all try to love with our flesh, according to the law. But if I love because I'm told to love by the law, it just reveals that I really don't love Love. Right? It reveals that love is not my nature. God is love and He doesn't love because He's supposed to love and someone says "you better just start loving those people. You better love, it's the law." No, God is love and love is His nature; He is love.

Adam and Eve were naked of love and so try to cover themselves with Law and pretend that it's love. They cover themselves with leaves from the tree.

In Romans, Paul writes "Law came in to increase the trespass." Then in chapter 7 he writes, I agree with the Law that it is good. I have the desire to do what is right (to love), but I lack the ability to carry it out. Then in verse 24 he says, "Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death."

A Body of Death.

We've been talking about the body of death, so we should all be real familiar with this picture.

[image]

The Old Man. I think this is the "Me" that "I" create.

In the beginning, like we preached on a year and a half ago, God gives me an “I,” a breath, a spirit breathed into about 8 pounds of dust and water. But I’m born naked and incomplete. Knowing my nakedness, but not knowing my creator, “I” try to create “Me.” “I” try to add more dust and water. “I” put more flesh on “Me”—diplomas, resumes, things of this world. “I” put more flesh on “Me” and become trapped in “Me.” “I” hide in “Me.”

Remember the legend of Narcissus? He looks in the mirror and becomes so occupied with himself that he cannot see the one that loves him. You see we are all Narcissists. The law says to love and then I evaluate and judge my love and so try to love and the harder I try to love the more I judge the lack of love in me and the more I’m stuck on me and the less I do love. I’m stuck in a prison of me, unable to love.

Love is God. God’s a trinity. God is a communion. Three persons, one substance. Constantly giving, receiving, giving, receiving, giving, receiving. The great dance. Constantly connected. To love is to “weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice.” It’s to be connected. And the law tells me I should love but this body of death reminds me that I don’t.

A Body of Death.

I mean if you eat a slice of pizza, I don’t taste it. So instead of sharing your pleasure, you know what I want? I want to take it, I want to take your pleasure. I want to steal, I want to slander, I want to gossip. I want to lie, murder and cheat ... for your pizza.

You see the problem isn’t pleasure, but that this body of flesh only feels its own pleasure. The problem isn’t that the flesh enjoys a glass of wine, the problem with the flesh is that it only enjoys its own glass of wine. The problem isn’t that the flesh enjoys a vacation at the beach, the problem with the flesh is that it only enjoys its own vacation at the beach. And you know it’s true. If it weren’t true, you’d be just as concerned that all your neighbors enjoyed a glass of wine and a vacation at the beach, as you are concerned that you enjoy a glass of wine and a vacation at the beach. And it wouldn’t be because you thought that you should be concerned that your neighbors enjoyed a glass of wine and a vacation at the beach, you just would be concerned that they enjoyed a glass of wine and a vacation at the beach, because you would feel what they felt. Tasted their wine and felt their joy.

And so ever since I was a kid, I remember thinking to God and praying to God and going “God it’s just so hard not to be selfish. It’s really, really hard not to be selfish because God I only feel what myself feels. I only feel me.”

And the Apostle Paul says “ Exactly Peter, you have a body of sin and death.”

So I realize I should love, but I don’t love. And it’s hard to have faith that I ever could really love. It’s hard to even conceive of real love. It’s hard to conceive and when I do it’s even kind of frightening because I think: if I really did love, wouldn’t I lose me in all the loving?

I’d give myself away. Lost. It’s hard to conceive, unless my body was part of another body. Not a body unto itself, but a body part—like a hand or a mouth.

You know my mouth yells when my hand is burnt. Isn’t that weird? And my hand feels that my mouth is hungry and feeds it. Nutrients flow between my mouth and hand carried by blood and my hand is not

lost when it feels what my mouth feels and what my body feels. My hand is lost when it doesn't feel what my body feels. Actually it's when my hand loses itself that it finds itself in my body alive.

You see love is hard to conceive. Unless we were meant to be part of a body, parts in a body, like stones—living stones—in a building of some sort. And maybe God created the stones first or the body parts first but even now is building them into a building or a body. Perhaps he makes us individuals first so that we can lose ourselves and find ourselves in another so we can love like Him.

Yet it is just hard for me to imagine that kind of love; what that would really feel like; where I was a part in another body; where I would actually feel another's pleasures as if we were one body, one flesh.

Hard for me to imagine except perhaps for sex. That's why we preached on it. Because it's right there at the start of the bible, and it's communion and the sacrament of the covenant of marriage.

And I don't mean to be rude, in fact just the opposite, but in great sex I really don't experience pleasure unless my bride experiences pleasure. I mean her pleasure is literally my pleasure. I taste her pizza. It's like two people have become one flesh, one body and that happens when we cover each other's nakedness with life.

Isn't that weird?

Yet when Adam and Eve look into mirror of the law, they don't let the other cover them with love and life. They cover themselves with law and death. They make their parts private. And then they make themselves private, they hide from God, the Father.

Well, sexual communion—and be clear about this, there are great reasons for this—sexual communion is solely for the covenant of marriage in this world and yet out of that communion comes another communion, one other place where I think maybe I feel another's pleasures and pain.

You see, I'm a groom and that has also made me a father. I watched the birth of all my children. When I watched the birth I remember being overwhelmed with this idea that that really is my flesh, genetically that really is my flesh. Flesh of my flesh. And so I've sat in my car and I've watched as my son was teased and excluded like I was, and my heart broke for him. I think more than it broke for me when I experienced it and my father held me and my father covered me and my naked heart. I so I longed to cover him not because I had to, but because I wanted to.

Several years ago, I was working in the back yard of our house in Golden. And the neighbor lady came running over. She was just in a panic. She was screaming. She was the mother of my daughter Elizabeth's best friend at the time, Laura. She came running into the back yard screaming "Peter, Peter, is Elizabeth alright. Is she Okay?" I looked at her and said "What are you talking about, MaryAnn, I don't understand. And she said, "Peter, I went to the door, the doorbell rang, I went to the door, I opened the door like this, and there was Elizabeth standing there, stark naked, in broad daylight. I screamed at the top of my lungs. She looked down at herself; she screamed and then she ran away. "

Elizabeth was about 5 years old at the time, and so I went into the house to try to find her. I looked around upstairs and I found her. She was in her closet in the back corner, still naked, curled up in a ball, in a fetal position, crying. And so I got a blanket, and I got her out of the closet and I set her on my lap and said "Honey, what happened?" Sobbing, she said to me "Daddy, I was with Laura and Laura invited

me to go swimming in her new swimming pool. (it's like a kiddie pool that they got at Costco that day), and I was so excited, I was so happy, I ran home and in order to get ready to go swimming I took off all clothes but forgot to put my swim suit on so I ran back over to her house and I knocked on the door and Miss MaryAnn opened the door and she looked at me and she screamed. Then I looked down at me and I screamed, cause I was naked." And then she just started sobbing, sobbing, sobbing into my chest. And I covered her with my arms and she hid in my love.

I wonder what would have happened if Adam and Eve hadn't hid themselves in the tree of law but hid themselves in the arms of the Father. Maybe it's not too late. Maybe it's still happening.

Well my point is the good Father feels his children's pain. You know Jesus told us to pray "Our Father," not *my* Father, but *our* Father. In Ephesians 4, Paul writes "There is One God and Father of all." I think that means that he feels the pain of all. And maybe that's why Jesus on the throne says, "Whatever you do unto the least of these, my brothers, you do unto me." And maybe that's why He came to seek and to save the lost. And did you know that word *lost* is also translated "perished or destroyed." And maybe that's why God in Christ Jesus even descends into hell to set the captive free according to scripture.

You see, if I know anything about being a father, I know this: if one of my kids was naked and ashamed and trapped in hell, my heart would be naked and ashamed and trapped in hell with them. I couldn't rest in heaven if one of them remained in hell. For me, my work would not be finished. You know, Origin was one of the greatest early church father, probably the greatest, and he said this, "Christ hung on the cross, so long as one sinner remains in hell." That's what he said.

In Genesis 2:8, Adam and Eve are naked and ashamed and hiding in Hell, the edge of death, the grave. Sheol, naked. They are naked but pretending they are not naked for they're wearing fig-leaf bikinis. Well, God finds them and damns the world, curses the world, damns the world.

Have you ever tried to hold together a fig-leaf bikini in a God-damned world? I mean floods, tornadoes, pestilence, pain, toil, disaster. I mean fig-leaf bikinis are not the most durable of clothing options for a God-damned world. Well it seems to me that if God were to clothe us with something truly durable, something eternal, he might want to strip us of all that is temporal—those fig leaves. And you know that is what's happening in this God-cursed world, isn't it? We clothe ourselves with diplomas, resumes, jobs, institutions, flesh, only to have them all stripped away. Dust to dust and ashes to ashes.

Well in chapter 3, God finds Adam and Eve, issues the curse, stripping them of their fig-leaf bikinis and then says, "You are dust and to dust you shall return."

Genesis 3:20-21 "The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all life. [that's what we preached about last time] And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin."

Now the word *skin* is singular in the Hebrew. He made for them garments of skin and clothed them. Maybe they needed skin because they didn't have skin. Or they were like people without skin. You know skin is how we feel, touch another. He covers them with skin and it doesn't say whose skin. But somebody died, because you don't lose your skin without dying, without losing your life. Someone or something died to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness. And you know, so far, we've been reading how

Adam and Eve tried to clothe themselves with the knowledge of good and evil, right? And now we read how God clothes them with life. Someone's life.

You see, Genesis 3 contains two creation accounts.

1. How humanity creates itself with the knowledge of good and evil.
 - The Old Man
 - The "Me" that "I" create

2. How God creates us with life, the sacrifice of life.
 - The New Man
 - The "Me" that God creates

Garment of Skin.

The word for "garment" is normally connected with what the priest would wear in the tabernacle and we saw how the garden foreshadows the tabernacle. You know, for thousands of years, the Hebrews were to sacrifice animals at the tabernacle or temple, animals like lambs, goats, sheep, lambs. The sacrifice would make atonement for sin. That word *atonement* literally means "covering." The priest would cover the law (the knowledge of good and evil) contained in the tablets and the ark in the Holy of Holies. The priest would cover the law with life, the blood of the sacrifice, making atonement.

But now this sacrifice in the garden isn't made by any human priest. The sacrifice in the garden is made by God and is a picture of the ultimate sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. The ultimate Adam, Jesus, nailed to the tree of the Law covering us with His Life. When He was crucified, he was crucified naked, for we received his garment. In Isaiah's words the garment of salvation, the robe of righteousness.

Jesus told stories of the father who wrapped his robe around his prodigal son; of the man, the friend, who was found naked at the wedding feast with no wedding garment, but everybody else had a wedding garment. I think that guy was Jesus because He gave it to everybody else. Paul tells us to consider ourselves "dead to sin" and alive to God in Christ Jesus, hidden in Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians, Paul tells us to put off the Old Man, the old self, the old Adam. This [picture of the old man], like we said last time, has been nailed to the cross. On the cross, Jesus condemned sin in the flesh.

In 2 Corinthians Paul says, "the love of Christ controls us for we are convinced of this: that One has died for all and therefore all have died." In other words all sin has been nailed to this cross. You can't hold this old man against anybody. You have to forgive everybody. Paul says put off that old man and then he says put on the New Man.

He says it this way in Romans 13, "Put on Jesus."

In Galatians 3, "You have put on Christ."

In 2 Corinthians, "We long not to be unclothed but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by Life."

In Colossians 3, "Put on the New Man, the new self, which is being made in the image of its creator." He then writes "Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, etc., etc., and then above all, put on Love." Put it on.

You see Jesus is God's love. And now do you get it?
It's all a set-up. Love is what we lack. A lack of love is why we feel naked. Love is Jesus and Jesus is our Bridegroom. Put on Love, Bride of Christ.

Paul writes "Put on Love, which binds everything together"—everything!

You know when we put on flesh and law, we separate and we die.
But when we put on His spirit and love we connect and we live.

Love is the blood that connects all the parts of the body.
Love is the mortar between the stones in the heavenly sanctuary.
Love is Christ and Christ is the Head and through the Head, I connect to every other member of the body.

Through Him, I weep with those who weep.
Through Him, I laugh with those who laugh.
Through Him, I taste somebody else's pizza.
Through Him, I live.

And I'm only beginning to experience it now through faith, but soon I'll feel it in an eternal and imperishable body of life.

You see God is still creating us in his image. He is not done yet. Even now he is clothing you with Christ. We are completed in him finally as He's the one that cries out, "It is finished."

He's the end. You see God covers Adam and Eve. He finishes it with Jesus. Literally, in the Hebrew, get this, God covers humanity and the Mother of Life. That's what Adam and Eve means. God covers humanity and the Mother of all Life. So let me ask you, whose not covered?

1 John 2:2. "Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, the covering, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world."

And so I've asked who is not covered by Him and His atonement?
Who does God--who is love--not love?

Maybe Satan because he is like nothing, I don't' know. But who--because God is love--is not loved.

I don't know.

Listen to Paul: This is what Paul wrote.

Romans 5:18-21 "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness lead to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now listen to

1 Corinthians 15:21. “For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”

1 Corinthians 15:49: “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

We will talk about that some more in the coming weeks, but I happen to believe it's true, that Scripture is true, all Scripture. And yet as most of you know, a couple of years ago denominational leaders informed me that I couldn't preach that stuff: that God loved all or at least that He covered all. For they argued that it pleased God to predestine some to unending torment for God did not choose to make all humanity in His image, but actually only a small portion of humanity in his image while He chose the rest to be a gross distortion of His image that He would then torture forever, without end.

They said “It's a terrible idea, but we have to believe it because Scripture says it.” I trusted their motives and I thought I understood their reasoning. And so I was really genuinely excited to share where I thought we had misunderstood what the Bible said. Yet all but a very few actually seemed interested at all in Scripture or even remotely pleased that Jesus might have died for all because he loves all

About a year ago last November, I grabbed a bag of leaf cut Red-man chew and went for a walk by my house down at Bear Creek State Park. My church of 15 years was debating whether I was fit for ministry and I felt really exposed. My church that I loved was in crisis. My family was in crisis. And I was exposed. My denomination had just publically stripped me of my credentials in front of hundreds of people, many of whom I really respected. Stripped me like the leaves of trees that had just been stripped by the cold winter chill. I remember I walked across this stream and into a thicket of cottonwoods and willows. I just so wanted to hide. I finally laid down on little spot of sand and some dead leaves and just curled up in a ball in the fetal position. I felt so ashamed and so naked. Ashamed of myself that I hadn't been a better leader, a stronger leader. And then I felt ashamed of us. I mean the church, humanity. Ashamed because I had begun to realize that we don't love. We don't love LOVE. I don't think we love mercy all that much, if at all. Even the church sometimes, especially the church, hates mercy. We are sometimes so disconnected from the “last and the least” that we imagine that we could be happy in heaven knowing that brothers and sisters were tortured in hell, even at the hands of our Father who we imagine is happy with the entire situation. Pleased. And years of study and debate had shown me it's not that we can't believe if God covers all and loves all, it's that we really don't want to believe God Loves all.

And so I lay there in the trees feeling so ashamed and I just wanted to cover myself with darkness, and dirt, and bitterness, and vengeance, and hatred, and never preach again. You see I did not want to love at all. Isn't weird how the evil one works? But as I lay there, this picture came into my mind that I think of almost every day. I saw myself from above on the forest floor and behind me was a man, the New Man. He lay down with me, behind me, and he wrapped his arms around me and he pulled me close like my father used to pull me so close to his heart. I felt so naked. But he covered me. He clothed me...with Himself.

You know we're all born naked. And did you know that we're all born again naked? After a time I got up and walked home—born again...again.

So do you feel naked? Do you feel like you haven't been loved? Do you feel like you don't love? Because, you see, those two things are related. We love because He first loved us, and we are forgiven as we forgive. So do you feel naked of Love?

He took the bread and He broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat." And in the same manner after supper and having given thanks, He took the cup and said, "This is my blood of the covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, and do it in remembrance of me."

This is your covering, your atonement. This is the manifestation of the Love of God. So come to the table, surrender all your old fig leaves and justifications and resumes and let Him clothe you with Life.

Believe the gospel, in other words.

Amen.

Communion

Benediction

And the whole earth will be filled, covered, with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. And Jesus, you are the glory of the Lord and I thank you that you've done it.

Lord God, you said "Let us make man in our own image and likeness" and you don't fail.

It's in the name of Jesus that we thank you Father.

Amen.