Today we get to talk about everybody’s favourite topic – we get to talk about sin! We’ll dive in to what happened in the Garden of Eden that we hear about in our 1st reading with the familiar story of Adam & Eve, and unpack that event to see what is really going on. But when it comes to God, the good news is that we can never talk about sin in isolation – when we talk about sin, we necessarily also talk about *mercy*, because we have a God that is all *love*, and all *mercy* toward his beloved children.

So let’s look at the interaction between God and Adam & Even in the Garden immediately following their original sin of eating the forbidden fruit. The eating of the fruit itself is symbolic of the sin of *pride* – the sin of wanting to be like God – the sin of believing that we can be equal to God, and the sin of believing that we do not need God. And of course, that is the root of all sin, because when we stray from the commandments, we are ultimately straying from God’s way, and futilely trying to do things our own way.

Notice what happens – everyone’s playing the blame game – Adam blames Eve and even blames God himself; Eve blames the serpent. The serpent doesn’t mount any defense, because Satan’s sin is the pride of believing he is equal to God, and is not going to justify his actions. Adam and Eve were playing the blame game out of a *prideful* *fear* since they knew they screwed up – they were acting out of fear, which is something I’m sure we can all relate to – we try to justify our sin out of a sense of fear, rather than just own up to our mistakes.

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Now think about this – what if – rather than playing the blame game – what if - Adam and Eve would have been humble enough to own up to their sin, and *seek out God’s mercy*. We’ve been talking in our bible study about how difficult it is to wrap our minds around the seemingly vengeful God of the Old Testament, but *God never changes* – he has *always* been a God of mercy, but *he can only show mercy when we seek it out*. I speculate here, but the story of Genesis and all of salvation history could have been a lot different if Adam and Eve might have just admitted they screwed up, and sought out mercy rather than deny they had done anything wrong.

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It’s no coincidence then that in today’s Psalm that immediately follows the first reading, we hear about God’s mercy. It is a penitential Psalm of David, who cries out for mercy from the depths of his soul, and expresses his great trust in God’s love. David has sinned gravely, but he also repents, trusting in God with those beautiful words, “*With the Lord, there is steadfast love, and great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all it’s iniquities.*”

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And of course, we fast forward to the Gospel today, where Jesus arrives on the scene to be the *face of mercy*. This passage is about Jesus’ opponents accusing him of having a demon, because he has just cast out a demon. *But never mind that distraction* – the prophecy from Genesis of someone who will strike at the serpent’s head is being fulfilled – it is also no coincidence that Jesus’ first public action in Mark’s gospel is an exorcism – Jesus makes it clear that he is the one to strike at the serpent’s head – he’s the one that will defeat Satan, he has come to defeat sin and reconcile us to the Father.

He tells us all sins will be forgiven – there is *nothing* outside of God’s mercy. The only sin that can’t be forgiven is to *doubt* God’s mercy – to *doubt* that God can forgive all transgressions. That is the sin against the Holy Spirit which he speaks of – the sin of refusing to accept the mercy offered through the Holy Spirit. Like Adam and Eve, we can’t be forgiven if we refuse to accept that God’s mercy is all encompassing.

It’s always amazing in the confessional how many times someone will come in and say, “*Father, I’ve been carrying a particular sin with me for years, never feeling I was worthy of being forgiven*” – but in the Sacrament of Reconciliation – in that great tribunal of Divine Mercy, the burden of their sin is lifted when they are able to bring themselves to accept the healing available through forgiveness, and they leave in *tears of joy* having experienced in a real and tangible way God’s infinite mercy.

We all fall into sin, but Jesus comes to seek us out, to return us to grace, and to free us from all sin. God’s mercy is infinite, a reality that we must never doubt. Jesus comes to set us free, and we should spend our lives in thanksgiving for the great gift of his sacrifice on the cross to accomplish our redemption.

And finally, knowing that God has mercy, we are invited to also know that we are part of God’s family, and he calls us to discipleship. In the gospel, Jesus uses the arrival of his family as a teaching moment – he asks, “*Who are my mother and brother and sister?*” – it is those who do the will of God. Despite the apparent slight to his mother, we know - as Jesus knows - that Mary is at the front of that line – she is the perfect model of doing God’s will in faith and in complete trust. She is the perfect disciple to whom we all look to for inspiration and strength as we strive to live our lives as committed disciples of Christ, knowing with full confidence that *nothing* is outside of the purview of God’s infinite mercy.