

Let us pray... God of wonder, you are holy. Create a space for holiness in our lives. Usher your Spirit in our midst. Infuse your loving presence in our hearts, calm our minds, and bring us peace... Amen.

I found the opening line to our confession today very powerful... If God kept track of sins, who would stand a chance?

I don't know about you, but for me, when I do something wrong, and I know it, I tend to ruminate on it.

Why did I say that? Why did I do that? Why didn't I do that? Why didn't I say something?

It's not that I think I can be perfect, but I do have the tendency to strive towards perfectionism...

Which means that I can be pretty hard on myself...

But as I often remind others, I also need to remind myself, that I am human... And that no matter how hard I try, I am going to make mistakes.

Mistakes that are a result of being human, of living in a broken world, and being bound to sin.

And sin is such a strange thing to wrap one's head around.

There are many different ideas and definitions out there—such as doing something wrong or immoral... Or breaking one of the 10 commandments.

But I have come to think about sin in a different way...

As theologian Dr. Karoline Lewis states, "Sin is not a moral category, a way to designate unlawful or iniquitous behavior; sin functions as a synonym for not being in relationship with God."

A relationship that was first broken in the Garden of Eden, as we heard in our reading from Genesis.

This famous story, a story depicted by many artists, commonly known as the fall or original sin, is often highlighted by what Adam and Eve did...

The snake who tricked Eve... Eve who ate the forbidden fruit and then gave it to Adam to eat...

Which in turn, has given us the pervasive idea that sin is about something we do in regards to immoral or unlawful behavior.

But when we look at this passage from Genesis, we will notice that the first thing God does after Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit is to ask...

“Where are you?”

A question not about a physical location, because God of course knew where they were...

But a question that was meant to get to the root of the problem, by asking where are you—in relationship with God... After all they were the ones who thought they could hide from God.

And God, of course, saw all of this... God knew their hearts and that they were trying to hide... Hiding by not being honest and open with themselves or with God...

Hindering the relationship that they had with God, with one another, and with themselves.

Which means that God’s question is spot on for them... Where are you??? Was a nonjudgmental invitation from God to them to dig inwardly and honestly...

To turn toward introspection and how their relationship with God has changed.

And because their relationship with God has changed, their relationship toward one another has also changed.

Adam blames Eve instead of taking responsibility for his actions... And Adam even goes a step farther and blames God—by reminding God that God gave him Eve in the first place.

The blame game cycles around this passage with Eve blaming the snake, rather than both of them taking time to pause and answer God's question...

A question that God took the time to ask, even though God knew what they had already done.

And for God to ask this question—is just the beginning of the good news...

Not only does God forgive us our sins, but God wants to bring us into right relationship even when we continue to sin, when we fall short, or mess up.

Because this is a God who loves us deeply—flaws and all.

This is a God who stays with us, even when we walk out on God's story...

This is a God who stays with us, even when we try to hide...

This is a God who invites us into relationship, into conversation, over and over despite all that we have done or not done...

Because God doesn't want us to ruminate on what we did wrong or didn't do right...

Rather God wants us to dig deeper into our relationship with God and reflect where we are at.

As God knows that when our hearts are right with God, all other things will fall into place...

Which doesn't mean that things will all of a sudden be perfect... But rather it continues to open the door for the kingdom of God to come near...

And when the kingdom of God is near, we find ourselves in the presence of God...

Where we are invited into wholeness, restoration, and love...

Which in turn impacts our other relationships—the ones we may have botched, or the ones we may have been a victim to—and offers a way forward.

A way forward that may lead towards forgiveness, reconciliation, understanding and a deeper relationship.

Or a way forward that may lead towards separate pathways, so that you can step into the fullness of life that God desires for you.

And maybe that is why Adam and Eve had to leave the garden after eating the forbidden fruit...

As leaving the garden was a physical separation—an illustration that we can wrap our minds around—by seeing they were no longer in a place that was meant for them...

And even though they were no longer in a place that was meant for them, God did not abandon them... God went with them...

Showing that even when our relationships change or end, new beginnings follow...

New beginnings that may be heartbreaking and hard, or new beginnings filled with excitement and hope.

And no matter what you are going through, God is there, which means there is always something new, good, and beautiful waiting...

Even in this broken world, our journey through it continues... Each new day and in every new breath.

With the promise that no matter what, we have a God who loves us deeply.

A God, who because of that love, doesn't keep track of our sins...

Who stays with us even when we walk out on God's story... Who stays with us even when we try to hide...

And who invites us into relationship, into conversation, over and over by asking a simple yet life-giving question... Where... Are you???

Amen.