

Do you remember the movie Four Weddings and a Funeral? In [one of the weddings](#), comedian Rowan Atkinson plays a young priest who gets his words muddled and concludes a prayer with the words, “in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Goat”. Determined not to make the same mistake a second time, at the end of the wedding he blesses the congregation in the name of, “The Father the Son and the Holy Spigot.”

Was that it? Was that the eternal sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? This gospel reading can be rather worrying can't it? Have you ever worried about whether you have committed the unforgiveable, eternal sin - blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Yes, me too.

But what is it really? Is it as simple as calling him or her a Goat or a spigot or otherwise taking the name of the Holy Spirit in vain?

No, it's more than that. In this passage the scribes were accusing Jesus of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub – the chief demon. But Jesus was doing it not with the power of evil but with the power of the Holy Spirit. This then is the great eternal sin – to say that something which is of the Spirit of God is of the devil.

But in getting all caught up in the unforgiveable sin, we missed the headline, the great announcement. “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter.” Yes, Jesus just said that people will be forgiven their sins. That's a rather bland version. Here's a rough version of the original Greek, **Amen I say to you that all will be forgiven to the sons of men, the sins and the blasphemies which they might have blasphemed.**¹

Amen I say to you that all will be forgiven to the sons of men. All will be forgiven. Yes, Jesus was a man of his time, but we can be sure that he meant “all will be forgiven to the children of men” which we all are biologically speaking.

All will be forgiven. No ifs, ands, or buts.

¹ Thanks to Mark Davis, [Left Behind and Loving It](#)

That's grace. That's the grace of God forgiving us for our sins and blasphemies. Forgiving us for being human.

In the first reading we heard part of the ancient story of the fall – the way that our spiritual ancestors explained why we hide from God, why we feel alienated from our Creator. The earliest people did what they were told not to do – they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and they lost their naivete, their innocence. Now they had the option to keep doing the wrong thing. And it wasn't long, so the story goes, before anger and violence entered the picture and became normal for humans.

Were we alienated from God and therefore sinful or sinful and therefore alienated from God? It's a good question but we don't know the answer. The two things go together so closely that they have become synonymous. Our sinful nature orients us away from God's path.

And remember I'm not just talking about sinful acts but about a basic orientation toward sin which exists in us individually and in human society – what I call the sin matrix. A glance at the headlines any day will show you the sin matrix. It's in our basic inability to get on with one another and to live the reign of God.

But the amazing grace of God is that “All will be forgiven to the children of men.”

If we start from that basic assumption, then we can read all of Jesus' teaching as about how we live that reality. He's not telling us that in order to be saved we have to obey a set of rules or be nice middle-class people. He's actually giving us a radical re-orientation; an education and a re-orientation towards the ways of God. After 2000 years we can be a bit “bah humbug” about his message but look how radical it was in his day – people accused him of being insane or of having a demon. His family were so worried by the reports of his ravings that they came to take him home.

And his teaching was so different that Jesus told them no, my new family are those who do the will of God. His teaching was so radical that it actually took people out of their families and into a new community. A new community of those who are living the two great commandments – to love God with everything they have and to love their neighbor as themselves. Dr King called this the “beloved community” where people live together in love and equality.

There is an extraordinary equality in the commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself. This love does not support privilege – it does not countenance a world where the rich get vaccinated and the poor do not. It supports a world where all have equal access to education, where everyone is respected, where no-one is victimized because of their skin color or ethnicity.

Jesus’ message is totally radical today as well. All will be forgiven the children of men.

God welcomes us back. Even though we have run away from her. Even though we were scared and ashamed of our sin and we hid when she walked in the garden in the shade of the evening.

A lot of people sitting here today are ashamed of something. We are ashamed of something that happened in the past where we were much less than our best selves and caused pain and suffering. We are ashamed of aspects of ourselves – our vulnerabilities, our failings. We are ashamed of our addictions. We are ashamed of ourselves and our behaviors. Like Adam and Eve there are bits of ourselves that we would rather even God didn’t see, or perhaps especially God.

If God were to invite us to an evening walk, we sure wouldn’t want those bits showing up.

But, people of God, I am talking as much to myself as to you when I say that this is screwed up thinking.

It is not God who shames us, it is we ourselves. For all we know, God might look at those painful, shameful places and find them rather endearing. But I bet she wishes we would give ourselves a break – loving ourselves means letting go of things that hold us back and having the courage to change the things we can.

God showed up for her evening walk with Adam and Eve even though she must already have known that, as she expected, they ate the fruit she told them not to eat. Yes, there were consequences of their fruit-eating, some of them very painful, others rather wonderful. But God did not hide. Humanity hid.

Jesus calls us back. Jesus calls us back into right relationship with God. Despite all the prophets calling us back, humanity continued to hide from God and so God came to us – God became human and walked among us. In Jesus, God showed up again for her walk with humanity. And Jesus tells us it's alright, we can stop hiding. All will be forgiven the children of men.

And what is forgiveness but reconciliation with God? All the children of men will be reconciled with God. All the children of men will be reconciled with God and become truly the children of God, “the brother and sister and mother” of Jesus the Christ.

What are we waiting for? Let us be reconciled with God today and join her in her daily walk in the garden which is the reign of God.