

“Caught!”

Sermon from 9-18-22

John 8:1-11, The Woman Caught in Adultery

"But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning, He came again to the temple. All the people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ And once more, He bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

(John 8:1-11, ESV)

SERMON:

Today, we're looking at one of my favorite passages in the Bible. For I've always found John 8 to be a very, moving & meaningful passage! Because it's so easy to envision this scene, where the Pharisees have dragged, this unfortunate gal, before a crowd of sneering men! In fact, they're "in the Temple," or you could say, "in the Jewish Church." So in v.2, we see Jesus teaching in the Temple, when they drag this woman in! Yes, they interrupt this bible teaching time, because they're hoping to use this gal to trap Jesus into saying something careless & unwise!

Little do the accusers of this woman care, how the Bible says in Deut., 22:22, "If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, BOTH THE MAN who slept with her AND THE WOMAN must die! You must purge the evil from Israel." So they're using, half of a verse, & half of a truth to accuse the woman involved, but not the man, as they try to trick Jesus! But of course, Jesus, isn't fooled, even though the Scribes & Pharisees certainly thought, they had Jesus backed, into a corner!

So this morning, let's look at John 8, & consider two truths this passage teaches. And the 1st truth is simply this:

1. GOD IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT COMPASSION & JUSTICE.

In other words, "*Where's the guy? And why is the woman the only one being accused of sin?*" For people don't commit adultery all by themselves!

In other words, Jesus knows that they're just trying to throw Him a "curve-ball"! And He knows they're not really concerned about the Bible or this woman! Also, they're certainly not concerned about, "*purging evil, from Israel,*" like the verse says, or they would have brought the sinful man along! But instead, they're just trying to test & trap Jesus! And yet, they learn that trapping Jesus isn't quite that easy!

For I'm sure that this trap (of asking your enemy a tough question, in public, & hoping he says something wrong), that trap probably worked pretty well with ordinary people. But, of course, Jesus was not ordinary!

And so the trick backfires on the Scribes & Pharisees! Because Jesus calmly uses the situation to accomplish 2 important things! First, He disarms His opponents who are not acting fairly to the gal, but instead have this unfair double standard between men & women! And then, secondly, Jesus gives this woman both compassion & justice, as well as a brand new start in life! So imagine this scene in John 8. For the passage tells us, that early one day, Jesus showed up at the Temple! And when He did, v.2 tells us that "all the people came to Him!" So a big crowd of temple-goers started to gather around Jesus, in what was like, a large impromptu Bible study!

But, not to be out-done by this itinerant teacher with no credentials, the Scribes & Pharisees barge into this crowd of people who were listening to Jesus! And they quickly get everybody's attention! Because they were dragging a disheveled woman with them! For she was their weapon to trick Jesus with tough questions about the 7th commandment in Ex. 20:14, that forbids adultery! Then the Pharisees say in v.4-5, in a very pompous voice, "4 Teacher, this woman (*how sad it is*), but she has been caught, red-handed, even in the very act of committing adultery! And of course, none-other than Moses gave us orders about what to do *such* women! For he tells us, very plainly, to stone to death each & every woman, who does this! And, Teacher, You have quite an incredible following! So naturally, we wanted You to weigh in on this topic! And so Jesus, "*What do You say, should be done with her?*"

Yes, I'm sure the Pharisees smiled with a sense of triumph! For it really was a well-planned trap, & a well-designed trick! Because, they thought they had Jesus trapped whatever He would say! For if He shows compassion & says, "*Don't stone her!*" Then He would be guilty of opposing the Law of Moses! Or if He said, "*Yes, we must stone her!*" Then His reputation as the "*Friend of Sinners,*" would be greatly, tarnished! So, either way, they thought, they had Him cornered! And so this dramatic scene in the Temple Courts was about to reach its finale! For the woman, caught, in her sin, was terrified, humiliated, & about to be stoned to death! Also, the Scribes & Pharisees were ready to cry, "heresy!" if Jesus said anything wrong! So I imagine the crowd was hushed, as they watched, intently! "*What would Jesus say?*" and "*What would He do?*"

Yet surprisingly, Jesus said nothing for the moment! But, seeming to ignore these accusers, Jesus bent down, & wrote on the ground with His finger! So His accusers were puzzled by His lack of response. And so they kept pressing Him for an answer, & even demanding a reply!

Then, at last, Jesus straightened up, & said, in v.7, "*If any one of you is without sin, let him, be the first to throw a stone, at her!*" And after making that startling statement, Jesus calmly bent down once more, & simply, resumed writing on the ground!

And so was He writing down the sins, of this woman's accusers? Or writing down the names of others who had slept with her? Or was He just doodling on the ground? Well, we only can guess! But one thing we know for sure is this: Jesus was the only, sinless person who was present, that day! So only He, had the right to throw a stone. But Instead, He just bent down again.

So as Jesus waited, the oldest accuser turned & started to leave! Then another of the older Jews left, & was soon followed by the younger ones, as well. Finally, Jesus was left alone with this trembling woman standing before Him.

And, I especially, find it touching in v.10, when Jesus replies with compassion, & says to this gal, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" Then neither do I condemn you. Go & from now on, sin no more!" (John 8:10-11, ESV)

Of course, Jesus knew He was soon to die on the cross for this woman's sins, & for many others! So He naturally wanted to forgive her! And so his final words to her are also words to us, showing us both His compassion, & His desire to give her compassion & justice. And

now, as Christ's ambassadors, we too need to show His compassion. And we too need to demonstrate His desire that God's people should live with justice & compassion.

In fact, that's just what the Bible says in Zechariah 7:9, *"This is what the Lord Almighty says, Administer true justice; Show mercy and compassion to one another."* (NIV84) So in both the Old & New Testaments, God is very concerned about compassion & justice.

But let's go on to #2! For there's a 2nd truth this passage teaches:

2. God Is Very Concerned About Offering Free Forgiveness To Undeserving.

For here in this passage, this woman was, "undeserving," and she was guilty! In fact as a Jew, she was guilty of a "Death-Penalty," crime, and did deserve Capital Punishment according to Jewish Law! But that raises a question, we should consider!

Because if the Bible is God's perfect book & God's perfect guidance that we should obey today, then why don't we obey it? And *"Why don't we put people to death for adultery any more?"* Well, the short answer to that question is this: The Old Testament is God's perfect guidance to the Jews, & the New Testament is God's perfect guidance to Christians! So there's an old covenant for the Jews & a new covenant for Christians. In fact, there are many commands to the Jews (such as circumcision, animal sacrifices & penalties for sin & etc.) that don't apply to Christians, any more. For Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law, or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them!" (ESV) And, the word "fulfill" means, "to complete," or "to bring to its true purpose." So Jesus came to "fulfill" & to "complete" the Old Testament, & bring it to its truest purpose. And this purpose of the Bible, both Old Testament & New, is to offer forgiveness to the undeserving & to save sinners by grace & through faith! As Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this, is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast!" (NIV84)

So you may be a Catholic, a Lutheran, or a Methodist, or a Baptist, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ person, or Free Church person! But if you are saved & headed to heaven, then you are saved by grace & through faith! So adultery is not an automatic, death-sentence anymore! But instead, adultery is forgivable! *Why?* Because Jesus died in the place of everyone who's ever committed adultery, or other serious sins! So we don't put people to death for serious sins, anymore, even though the Old Testament commands it! But instead, we follow the principle of letting the New Testament interpret the Old Testament. For that's the reason we don't put adulterers to death, today. But instead, we preach the good news of the Bible, that repentance & forgiveness of any kind of sin is always available in Jesus' name! As we see, in this passage, Jesus' "top concern," is that we sincerely, repent of our sin, find forgiveness In Him, & then *"Go, & sin, no more!"* And so, through Jesus any sin can be forgiven! In fact any kind of undeserving sinner can have a 2nd chance! Because Jesus fulfills the law about Sacrifices by becoming a sacrifice who can remove the sin of anyone, who believe in Him.

So keep in mind that the New Testament shows us how the Old Testament applies to believers today! And it shows us which commands are "fulfilled" & "changed," & which ones just remain the same. And so the question is, *"How do we know, which Old Testament commands still apply to Christians?"* And the answer is, "The New Testament will tell us which Old Testament commands still apply."

Simply put, our principle for interpreting the Bible, is this: *"The New Testament fulfills & interprets the Old Testament."* So the Old Testament should always be studied in the light of the New Testament.

But now, back to the story In John 8, again. For here is an unfortunate woman who is being humiliated before a crowd for the Pharisees gain. And was she a sinner? Oh yes, she was, & a big one!

But to tell the truth, all of us are serious sinners before God! Because we all, have done things that God considers very serious sins! For we all have sinned & sinned, again & again! And this means, that each one of us are on God's "Repeat Offender" list! For, as the Scripture says in Romans 3:23, *"All have sinned & fall short of the glory of God."* (ESV) Or, as the Message Paraphrase puts it in the same verse, *"We all have compiled, this long & sorry record as sinners, & have proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives that God wills for us!"* (Rom. 3:23, MSG)

Yes, this woman was an undeserving sinner, just as all of us are! But still was it right for these men to judge her & condemn her? No. Because the Bible tells us that there's a time to judge, & a time not to judge. And even if it's the right time to judge we still have to do it with the right attitude. For God is the one true Judge, just as it says in James 4:12, *"There is only one Lawgiver & Judge, He who is able to save & to destroy."* (ESV)

So it all comes down to this: In God's eyes, each of us are in debt to Him! In fact, it's like we each have a million dollars of "sin-debt" that we never can pay back to God! And just because someone else has more debt than we have, does that lessen our debt any? No. For the truth is that all of us spiritually, have a huge debt before God that we cannot pay! And yet there is Someone who did pay our sin debt!

Because Jesus went willingly to the cross to pay our debt completely so that we can be forever forgiven! For when we receive Jesus, & believe in what He did for us on the cross, then our sin-debt is removed, no matter how big it is! And then Jesus simply says to us, *"You've got a new start! Now, go & sin no more!"*

END OF SERMON