

## On the Way to Easter

John 8. 2-11

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- As we approach Easter, we're looking at number of stories in the Gospels that are considered some of the most shocking, but revealing when it comes to understanding God's character as seen through the person and life of Jesus.
- We're looking at these three stories together:
  - Jesus helps a humiliated woman in John chapter eight.
  - Jesus tells a story about a reckless son, and his benevolent father in Luke chapter fifteen.
  - Jesus washes his friends feet in John chapter thirteen.
- As we look at these stories we'll ask two primary questions:
  - What does this story tell us about ourselves?
  - What does this story tell us about God?
- We're going to consider Christ's death and resurrection through these stories. They will become vehicles in which we'll explore the truth of the Gospel.

*2 Early in the morning He (Jesus) came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.*

- When the author says, "*all the people were coming to him*" he's probably not being hyperbolic. Jesus' popularity had skyrocketed. Picture Jesus, surrounded by hundreds maybe thousands of people in a large courtyard in a huge Temple. This is a very public scene.

*3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him.*

- Enter more of the cast,
  - The scribes (who were the most educated men in Israel concerning the Jewish

religion)

- Pharisees (who were the most zealous in adhering to the religion).
- So, we've got the guys who know the most about the Law, and what their Holy Book says, the scholars, and the guys who cared most about practicing the Law correctly. The technical experts, and the practical zealots.
- Jesus poses a threat to them. *They* understand that he's not just claiming to be a great teacher, or even a miracle worker. He's claiming to be and acting like God among them. And, he's popular, really popular.
- This sets Jesus and the religious authority in Jerusalem on a collision course, the destination being the cross.
- So they're constantly trying to find ways to hurt Jesus credibility, or get rid of him all together.
- Enter our third character, a woman.
- It wasn't easy to accuse someone of adultery, and their religious law didn't permit wild and speculative accusations. You needed multiple witnesses and there was a way of going about the process correctly so no one would be falsely accused.
- When they say, "*in the very act*" they mean it.
- There are a couple of problems with their claims, however.
- First of all, their Law stated that both the man *and* the woman should be tried and punished. Where's the man?
- We're told they're trying to trap Jesus. How is this a trap?
- If Jesus says, "*we shouldn't stone adulterers*" they'll twist those words and manipulate the public by saying Jesus' contradicts the Law, so how can he speak for, or be sent from God.
- If he says, "*you're right, lets kill her*" he's not only going to look cruel and unfeeling in the sight of the people, but could be accused of disturbing the peace.
- The Romans ruled with an iron fist, and didn't allow their subjects to enact what they would consider vigilante justice, preform honor killings, or enact capital punishment however they liked. This would have meant constant chaos in Jerusalem.
- Had Jesus said, "*Stone her*" they could claim he was commissioning the people to rebel

against Roman rule, and would brand him a rebellious figure before the Roman authorities.

- Opposing Jesus translates into mistreatment of fellow human beings. Anytime Jesus is opposed, this happens. Living, breathing, feeling people will always ultimately bear the brunt of our rebellion to God. Our sin hurts others.
- Imagine how this woman felt. She's been torn from her actions likely the night before, treated with little to no regard. She's exposed, and ashamed.
- It's probably safe to say this made Jesus sad and angry. What does he do?
- The author tells us Jesus engages in a first century version of finger painting.

*But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.*

- We're not told why or what Jesus writes in the ground, and so any thoughts on are speculative.
- Maybe he was writing some Scripture from their Holy book.

*7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."*

- In pressing Jesus for a verdict they're demanding the honorable judge of the universe to try a corrupt case.
- Eventually he gives them an answer, and in a moment of pure brilliance he turns the entire spectacle on its head.
- His response turns the accuser's accusations on them.
- In essence Jesus is saying, *"No one has the right to condemn another. You are so blind and self-righteousness you end up pushing small people down, to make yourself feel big. But people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. The very heart of condemnation within you, condemns itself."*

*8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.*

- From oldest to youngest they eventually all leave Jesus. Their hearts have left God's heart, so they physically leave him, too. They don't break down in repentance and realize their depravity. They're so blinded by it they just leave.
- They leave this *woman* with Jesus. And this, ironically, and beautifully is the best place to leave her. Dangerous and unfeeling hands carried her to Jesus, but she's in good and kind hands now.

**10** *Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?"*

**11** *She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."*

- Whenever Jesus asked people questions, he did so to help them learn.
- His question leads her to realize and verbalize that no human had the right to condemn her for her actions.
- But Jesus isn't just another human. If he's God among us, he's the only one with true authority deal out life or death.
- What does God in the flesh do with his authority? Does he cringe at her? Does he crush her? Is he ashamed of her?
- In a New Testament example we hear Joseph's words in Genesis, "*What you meant for evil, God has meant for good.*" (Genesis 50: 20)
- Jesus doesn't overlook her mistakes. Their obvious to her, to him, and to everyone crowding around her. He doesn't rub her nose in it.
- Instead, he simply commissions her into a new life. A life where she quits her movement down an obviously destructive path.
- In a powerful juxtaposition, the religious leaders leave in their bondage to sin, but Jesus commissions this woman to go in freedom.
- Her private and private shame becomes her public redemption.

### **What does this passage tell us about ourselves?**

- In no uncertain terms, this story reminds us us that everyone's an adulterer.
- A friend of mine said it really well a couple weeks ago: apart from the Trinity,

there's something wrong with everything.

- This story reminds us that we're all in the same boat. No one's worse than the other. We deceive ourselves when we think otherwise.
- Jesus points to that reality with a few simple words.
- We're all together in this, and we have a problem.

### **What does this story tell us about God?**

- If Jesus was God amongst us, if he was who he said he was, and did what we think he did, then his words to this woman are ridiculously uplifting.
- If God is Holy, pure, righteous, and Jesus is this God, how does he deal with the person before him?
- He lets her off the hook, and puts himself on it. As we seen in the cross, he absorbs her debt, and sets her free.
- This story reminds us of what later the Apostle Paul writes later in Romans (8:1), there is not condemnation, no pronouncement of death to anyone found in the hands of Christ.
- The gospel is about the man on the cross and empty tomb (Easter), and this story, the life of Christ, tells us that there is a God, his name is Jesus, and his hands are safe ones.

### **Discussion Questions**

- What stood out to you in this story?
- How have you seen opposition to Jesus translate into the mistreatment of people?
- Have you ever seen God take some that was "meant for evil" and turn it to good? How does the Easter story connect to this?
- What challenges you about this story? What inspires you and gives you hope?