**The Woman Caught in the Act: Christ Speaks to the Problem of a Judgmental Spirit - John 8:1-11**

In this conversation we find two things revealed:

**1) The dangers of a judgmental spirit, and**

**2) The forgiving heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**I. A Woman Caught 1-3**

**“But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn He appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around Him, and He sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group” (John 8:1-3).**

**II. A Trap Laid 4-6a**

**“And said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do You say?’ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him” (John 8:4-6a).**

**According to Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22, both parties to adultery were to be put to death.**

By presenting this woman to Jesus, the Jewish leaders hoped to impale the Lord on the horns of a dilemma.

**III. A Challenge Made 6b-9**

**“But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. When they kept on questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, ‘If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there” (John 8:7-9).**

It is the words He ***spoke*** that matter: **“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”**

In John 7:24 Jesus told his hearers they should not judge according to appearance but ***with “righteous judgment.”***

Motives do matter. In essence He is saying, **“Before you pick up that stone, take a good look in the mirror. Make sure you are morally qualified to put this woman to death. Make sure there is no malice, no deceit, no trickery, no dishonesty, and make sure you are not guilty of the same crime yourself.”**

This is simply another version of Matthew 7:1-2, where we learn that whatever standard we use to judge others, the same standard will be applied to us.

In Jesus’ mind, the issue wasn’t the woman, it was her hypocritical accusers. They wanted to talk about the Law as it relates to outward behavior; He wanted to talk to them about the Law as it related to their hearts.

**Malcolm Muggeridge once wrote: It is precisely when you consider the best in man that you see there is in each of us a hard core of pride or self-centeredness which corrupts our best achievements and blights our best experiences. It comes out in all sorts of ways—in the jealousy which spoils our friendships, in the vanity we feel when we have done something pretty good, in the easy conversion of love into lust, in the meanness which makes us depreciate the efforts of other people, in the distortion of our own judgment by our own self-interest, in our fondness for flattery and our resentment of blame, in our self-assertive profession of fine ideals which we never begin to practice.**

**IV. A Pardon Given 10-11**

**“Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin’” (John 8:10-11).**

Here is how our Lord treated this sinful woman:

**1) He faced her—He straightened up.**

**2) He questioned her— “Woman, where are they?”**

**3) He forgave her— “Neither do I condemn you.”**

**4) He challenged her— “Go now and leave your life of sin.”**

**He treated her with dignity and compassion.**

**He treated her sin with total honesty.**

**He imparted grace and hope.**

**He forgave her sin and sent her out to start a brand-new life.**

**“You have committed adultery. But there is more to your life than your sin. You can be much more than you have been. You can turn from this sin once and for all. You can have a new life.”**

**All of us are like this woman. We are truly guilty in the eyes of a holy God. All have sinned, all are caught by God’s justice, all deserve death. We are helpless and unable to change our condition. We are doomed and damned unless someone steps in to help us. We can’t buy our way out of trouble and we can’t deny our own condition. We are condemned by our conscience, condemned by our true moral guilt, and often condemned by others.**

**If people knew us better than they do, they would condemn us even more than they do. They don’t know the half of it.**

**Just when we are about to be condemned, Jesus steps in to rescue us.**

**Jesus didn’t condemn this woman because He knew that not many days hence He would be condemned for her when He died on the cross. This is what Paul means when he says in Galatians 3:13 that Christ has become a curse for us. He took our pain, our shame, and our guilt, and the heavy load of our sins was laid fully on Him. This woman was not condemned by Christ, but He was condemned on the cross for her sake.**

The order of Christ’s words is very important. He didn’t say, **“Sin no more and then I won’t condemn you.”** That’s what religious people like to say: **“Clean up your act and then we will accept you.”** Jesus says, **“I will forgive you and give you the power to clean up your act.”**

Religion says, **“Change or I will condemn you.”** It uses fear and intimidation to make people measure up.

Grace says, **“I have forgiven you. Now let me also change your life.”** **We don’t change in order to be accepted; we change because we have already been accepted. Nothing motivates a new life like grace received into the heart. Grace does what rules can never do.**

Lest anyone think that adultery doesn’t matter, Jesus never plays it down. He doesn’t say, **“It’s no big deal” or “I’m going to let it slide” or “It’s not your fault.”** He forgives her sin and then sends her forth to live a brand-new life. Even though she is guilty (caught in the act), by God’s grace she leaves with a clean slate, a new life, and a new power within.

Why did Jesus let her go**? 1) He never denied her guilt, only the means the Pharisees used to bring her to justice, and 2) He never excused her sin, only the hypocrisy of her accusers. He did not condemn her because she stood condemned already. He didn’t condemn her because He came to be condemned on Her behalf.**

**John 3:17 “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”**

**Add to that Romans 8:1, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**

Let everyone who hears this sermon give thought to the grace and mercy of God. If you are a Christian, think of what Jesus has done for you. Consider your own sins, think on your transgressions. You will never see yourself rightly until you know that you are the chief of sinners. Remember His mercy and then turn away from a judgmental spirit toward sinners. Let this be your watchword: **“There but for the grace of God go I.”** Cling to the blood of Jesus as your only hope and your only claim to heaven.

And to all who feel the heavy weight of sin, run to the cross where Jesus died for you. Come to Christ and He will not turn you away. It is the goodness of God that spares you and leads you to repentance. You are alive by God’s grace. Let that grace lead you to Jesus for everlasting life.

Child of God, the Savior speaks to you the same words He spoke so long ago**: “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”** Amen.