

“Jesus Saves the Adulterous Woman”

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Opening Prayer

Good Morning, and God’s blessings on you wherever you may be at today. Here we are in week two of our self-imposed quarantine, and God willing hopefully all of you are doing great. Rhianna and I look forward greatly to getting back together with you in regular church whenever we are able! This morning our scripture readings are continuing in our Lenten theme. Believe it or not we are still in that time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, that forty day period where we focus specifically upon the person of Jesus. We have been going back and forth between Jesus’s miracles and teachings that are found in the Gospel of John. We obviously won’t hit all of them, but if you have been reading along with us (and I hope that you have!) then you will notice how everything flows. Our readings for today take us a bit further into the Gospel compared to where we were before. This will actually come after what we will look at this Wednesday (Jesus walking on water and the subsequent teachings) but we can see here in today’s reading from John 8 that Jesus’s major teaching is that we are forgiven by Him... but we are also to go and sin no more.

In John 7:40-53 we get the lead up to our main piece. Here we see that the Pharisees were really fed up with Jesus and His teachings. Many of the people thought that He was the Messiah, but others thought that because He was from Galilee (note that He was born in Bethlehem but raised in Nazareth... I.E. Galilee) that He couldn’t possibly be the Messiah. This Galilee thing will come up again later on, but to make it succinct people thought that nothing good came from the Northern part of the country, Galilee. It was backwater, it was small time, Jerusalem wasn’t located there, etc. In reality there were some pretty darn important prophets that are thought to have come from there. Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, and Hosea are all thought to have been from the North. Amos, although he was from the southern kingdom, was assigned to go and preach in the North. So while the Jewish leaders of Jesus’s day did not think highly of the region of Galilee, it wasn’t because there was no good history... it was because the people of the North were separated by Samaria. The people from the Northern part of Israel were separated from the Southern part by a place called Samaria, a land that was noted as being part Jew and part Gentile. (Gentile means non-Jew.) Samaritans will be brought up several times throughout the Gospels, but the short of it is that proper Jews considered them unclean because they did not follow all the Jewish customs and had some spotty Jewish heritage. Since the North and South were separated, they were recounted as having distinct accents that gave away their heritage. (Not much different than South vs. North here in the US today.) Without question the people from Galilee were Jews, even by the leaders of the day they were thought about that way, but there were always questions about just how Jewish they really were. Jesus and His disciples therefore were looked at a little sideways. (Maybe a modern example would

be having a prominent minister or businessman come from the deep south. They certainly can and do, but many people expect them not to.)

Beyond being from the “wrong place” (or at least raised in the “wrong place”), Jesus also was despised by the Pharisees and by many people because He operated on the Sabbath. In John 5 Jesus dares to heal a man on the prescribed day of rest, which was in direct violation of the laws the Pharisees had put into place. This is a constant complaint against Jesus, and His working on the Sabbath led into the thing that the Jewish leaders hated most about Him. Most egregiously in the eyes of the Pharisees and people who did not believe in Jesus was His claim to be the Son of God. Jesus’s claims of being equal with the Lord, of being the Lord in human flesh, were without question the number one thing that pushed people to either believe or not believe. With these three things: Jesus’s heritage, His work on the Sabbath, and His claim to be God’s equal, this is how we end up with the conversations in John 7:40-53.

“Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, ‘This certainly is the Prophet.’ Others were saying, ‘This is the Christ!’ Still others were saying, ‘Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?’” Even though there was great separation and division, nobody was willing to arrest Jesus because He spoke with such great authority. The Pharisees though, were not pleased. Verse 48-49 read “No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed.” Tellingly, the Pharisees discount belief in Christ simply as ignorance and sinfulness. The religious leaders and the crowds that followed Jesus were on two opposite ends of the spectrum. While there was still discussion, one of our friends from the Gospel of John, Nicodemus, makes a defense for Jesus. (You can see his faith growing here.) “Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, ‘Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?’” Nicodemus corrects the other Pharisees, and points out the flaw in how they are operating towards Jesus... they have no evidence of wrongdoing. While we know Jesus is sinless, the Pharisees who hate Jesus in the Gospel of John will switch tactics from here on out. They will try to get Jesus into trouble, either with the people or with the government. This is important to know, because in John 8:1-11 (our main reading) that is exactly what they are going to try to do.

John 8:1-2 read “But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.” Here we find Jesus back near Jerusalem, and this is where the Pharisees are really going to put Jesus to the test. Verses 3-5 read “The scribes (religious leaders) and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, ‘Teacher this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?’” (Note that the law they mention comes from Leviticus 20:10.) This is a devious trick by the religious leaders to get Jesus killed. They put Him the seat of the judge (check out A.M. Hunter’s commentary on this) and

want Him to make the decision. According to Roman law at the time only the Roman rulers could sentence one to death, so if Jesus enacts the Law of Moses here they would turn Him into the Romans and get Jesus killed. If Jesus does not enact the Law of Moses then Jesus Himself would likely be stoned or at least ostracized by the Jews. Caught in the middle is this adulterous woman who is nothing more than a pawn. We don't know anything about her except her adultery. (Some think she is actually Mary Magdalene.) She is humiliated, caught in her own sin, and knows very well that she may face righteous judgement. At this point Jesus does something no one expected Him to do.

Verses 6-7 read "They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. 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 the stone at her.'" The writing part here is Jesus playing the part of judge, as a Roman judge would write down the accusations and the sentence deemed good. The important part for us is Jesus's response. "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw the stone at her." This isn't something Jesus made up, it is a quote from the book of Deuteronomy, from the Law of Moses, chapter seventeen verse seven. It reads "The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst." Jesus essentially put the focus, rightfully, back on the accusers. Of course if the accusers stone the woman then they will be put to death by the Romans, and if they pronounce her fine then they go against the Law of Moses. This leaves them with only one option... to withdraw their accusation. This is exactly what they do, and they leave the area. When it is only Jesus and the woman left, then Jesus tells her "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." Jesus in one fell swoop shows her mercy (He does not give her the punishment she deserves) but also shows justice in following the Law by commanding her to live in that lifestyle no longer. Here Jesus does more than just outsmart the Pharisees, He also shares with us a great teaching. Beloved, our situation today is very similar to that of the adulterous woman's.

In our modern day we hear many times over that our sin does not matter, or we hear on the other side that God does not show mercy. The truth is that our sins, like the adulterous woman's, do in fact matter. We know them: lust, pride, anger, hatred, lying, stealing, etc. The wages of our sins are death. The Lord is just in putting the screws to us for our wrongdoings, which we know are wrong. We should take that seriously. Similarly, we should also recognize that there is mercy. By Jesus's sacrifice upon the cross we are healed if we accept His mercy and follow Him. Brass tacks, this means that we are to follow Christ but be transformed. Go and sin no more is a major command. For all of us today we should know that Christ has protected us from our accusers (the great accuser is Satan), but that we too are called to go and sin no more. So as we leave our time together this morning I would encourage you to take a hard look at your life, recognize those things that you do that Jesus has saved you from, and take seriously His call to act sinfully no more. Let us pray. **Closing Prayer**