

Dropping The Rock

John 8:1-11

Open your Bible if you would to John Ch. 8, where we will be looking at the first 11 verses of this message I have titled, “Dropping The Rock.”

Let’s pick up v. 1—

John 8:1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

John 8:2 ¶ Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

John 8:3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,

Let’s pray—

So the Feast of Tabernacles has just concluded, and everyone had gone home, but Jesus goes out and spends the night in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives

And the next morning He comes right back to the temple and begins to teach the people.

- So right in the midst of Jesus teaching the people in the Temple, some Scribes and Pharisees interrupt His teaching.
- Now a Scribe was basically a lawyer, who was the expert in interpreting the Law within the Scriptures— Scribes were usually Pharisee’s, but not always.
- The Pharisees were very well known for their strict adherence to their oral tradition and the Mosaic Law.
- And we can see throughout the Gospel of John both Scribes and Pharisees were usually hostile toward Jesus, **except for Nicodemus, who eventually came to believe in Jesus** (Acts 15:5).
- The problem was that the Pharisees were intimidated by Jesus’ popularity and it caused them to fear losing their influence with the people.
- They also feared that the people might choose to follow Jesus as a political leader and revolt against Rome.

- They knew if this happened they would lose their freedom and the power they were allowed under the Roman government

So the Scribes and Pharisees bring in this woman right to Jesus and place her in His midst—

v.4—

John 8:4 they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.

And they begin to demand a ruling from Jesus, and attempt to lead Him in His ruling by telling Him,

John 8:5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?”

- Now this is an interesting situation. In multiple ways—
- First of all, these guys only brought in the woman—not the man
- They had just stated that the woman had been caught in the very act
- This would indicate that there was a man with her, and that there was another person who had caught them, so there was an eyewitness

Now Leviticus 20:10 clearly says—

Leviticus 20:10 ¶ “The man who commits adultery with *another* man’s wife, *he* who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.

So why didn’t they bring to Jesus, the man caught in adultery?

- **After all—They knew Jesus would have been familiar with the Law which forbids adultery and is punishable by death**
- These men definitely knew what the penalty was, **and they certainly didn’t need Jesus’ approval to take her before the Sanhedrin court to be tried and convicted.**
- **So why were they bringing this woman to Jesus right there in the Temple in front of all the people?**

We can see the answer in v. 6—

John 8:6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.

So they brought her before Jesus in an attempt to lure Him to make a decision one way or the other—It was a trap, and they were attempting to destroy Jesus!

- They figured that if Jesus—in His mercy—opposed to stoning the woman, He would actually be guilty of opposing the Mosaic Law.
- But, if He told them to stone her, then He would undoubtedly lose His great reputation for having compassion and mercy upon sinners
- Not to mention He would be actually breaking Roman law, because at this time, the Romans had taken away the Jews right to execute anyone for religious offenses
- They probably figured either way they had Jesus right where they wanted him.

Now I also find this interesting because this situation actually brought about the greater issue of how divine justice and mercy are to be harmonized.

- It actually points to the whole reason for John's Gospel

You see—

- Romans 7:12 clearly states, *"the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."*
- And in Rom. 3:20; 8:3; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; and James 2:10, we are told, *that the Law knows nothing of forgiveness*
- Ezekiel 18:4 states, *"The soul who sins shall die."*
- And Romans 2:12 confirms this truth, saying, *"as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law."*

So the Law is pretty much no Grace — It's black and white
But God provides The Book of John, which tells the world "How a Holy God can judge righteously, and yet forgive sinners."

The answer is thru Jesus

It's through Jesus Christ's sacrificial death that God's demands of justice are fully met (Isa. 53:5; Rom. 8:3).

We can see this prophesied clearly in The Old Testament—

Isaiah 53:5 But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

And in The New Testament we see this truth as well—In Rom. 3:24-25

Romans 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Romans 3:25 whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

And in Romans 8:3 we're told this in—

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

In Jesus Christ, we can see that mercy and divine justice harmonize perfectly. Because of His sacrificial death upon the cross of Calvary the penalty of sin has been paid for all who place their faith and trust in Him for their salvation. This means God can “be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

Q: But what about those who died while waiting for the Messiah, those who died prior to Jesus coming to the earth and dying upon the cross—how does this apply to them, or does it?

Speaking of these very people, Heb. 11:13 says—

Hebrews 11:13 ¶ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

You see,

Jesus was and is the only way to be reconciled unto God—He said—

John 14:6 ... “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

So here are these Scribes and Pharisees publically exposing this woman in the courtyard of the Temple of God.

- She has to be absolutely FREAKING OUT—thinking she is about to be stoned to death on the outskirts of town by these religious zealots.
- The Pharisees and the Scribes are probably very giddy—thinking they have finally got Jesus right where they want Him.

- They didn't care about this woman & they definitely didn't care about true righteousness being done, because she was supposedly caught red-handed in the act—and yet they didn't bring the man in
- Some commentators believe there's a good chance the man could have been one of the Pharisees & Scribes own—that he was used to tempt her into this very sin, just to try to set up Jesus in this very encounter

If that were the case, then their sin and guilt would be greater

- So here they are—looking at Jesus, and everybody is waiting for His answer—The crowds, the Pharisees, the Scribes, and even His Disciples—
- And there is Jesus — stooped down on the ground **and He began to write in the earth**, as if He didn't even hear them,

So they begin to press for His answer—v. 7—

John 8:7 ¶ So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “**He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.**”

It's interesting because according to Jewish law, those who witnessed a capital offense were to be the ones who actually started the stoning process, by casting the first stone.

- So, Jesus is basically saying to them, *“Hey, you want to do this, then let's do it right according to the Law. So which one among you was the one who witnessed the offense, and where is the man who partook in this act with her?”*

I believe He's also revealing their heart to want to condemn and punish her for this sin, all the while ignoring their own sins.

- **I think we have to really guard ourselves when it comes to the sins of others**—the temptation that can come upon us
- **We can be tempted to feel as though we have the right to be judge, jury, and executioner when we look at others in their sin**
- **We can be tempted to keep from showing them the same grace, mercy, and forgiveness that we have received from Jesus for our own sins.**

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- **We are to confront sin, but we are to do it gently and humbly—with a heart to help that person back onto the right path.**
- **We are to do it with a heart to bring about reconciliation and restoration and to keep the enemy from causing division and disunity in the body of believers**

But Jesus knows these men don't care about grace, mercy, or even justice, so He takes His eyes off of them and just looks down

v. 8—

John 8:8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

The Bible doesn't record what Jesus wrote that day—Some believe Jesus was writing out the prophecy of Jeremiah 17:13, which says,

Jeremiah 17:13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You shall be ashamed. "Those who depart from Me Shall be written in the earth, Because they have forsaken the LORD, The fountain of living waters."

And this could be plausible because, after all, they were present the preceding day when Jesus spoke in the Temple, saying,

John 7:37 ... "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

These same men heard His offer, but in the hardness of their heart they had forsaken it, and Him—And their sin would have been much greater

So, perhaps Jesus was writing each of their names, along with their personal sins—Maybe even their sin of orchestrating this act of adultery

So first Jesus says, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

Then He begins to write something on the ground

John 8:9 Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

- **So these men begin to leave. It started with the oldest, and systematically worked its way right to the youngest.**

- The irony here is the very people who had come to condemn this woman, ended up leaving condemned themselves.
- They had come in an attempt to bring shame upon Jesus, and they ended up leaving ashamed.
- And unfortunately it doesn't look as though any of them repented either.

And so it is today — Not everyone who hears the truth of God's word will receive it, or repent of their sins.

v.10—

John 8:10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “*Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?*”

John 8:11 ¶ She said, “No one, Lord.” ¶ And Jesus said to her, “*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*”

So, since her accusers were now gone, there was no one left to condemn her, and so Jesus uses His divine right to forgive sin, and tells her, “*Neither do I condemn you....*”

- It was not Jesus' heart to condemn her—remember what He had told a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus? It is recorded in John 3:17?

John 3:17 *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

I think it is important for us to understand here that just because Jesus forgave her, Jesus wasn't implying that she had the right to go on sinning.

- He was simply showing her love, mercy, and grace
- In fact, He very clearly tells her, “*... go and sin no more.*”

Paul addresses this same issue in the Book of Romans—

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Romans 6:2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

Romans 6:3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Our Lord never treats sin lightly, but in His great mercy and grace, through faith in Jesus we can be forgiven and given a chance to start our life anew.

But, we must guard ourselves against ever feeling we somehow have arrived by any merit of our own—it is only by grace, through faith in Christ that we have been forgiven of our sin.

And I think it is vital for us to remember —

We have been called to be imitators of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:1), and therefore we should be extending grace (unmerited favor), and mercy (compassion) upon others, especially those who have offended or hurt us (Rom. 12:9-10, 14). We should forgive just as we have been forgiven!

Sermon Illustration

In the early days of his presidency, Calvin Coolidge awoke one morning in his hotel room to find a cat burglar going through his pockets. Coolidge spoke up, asking the burglar not to take his watch chain because it contained an engraved charm he wanted to keep. Coolidge then engaged the thief in quiet conversation and discovered he was a college student who had no money to pay his hotel bill or buy a ticket back to campus. Coolidge counted \$32 out of his wallet -- which he had also persuaded the dazed young man to give back! -- declared it to be a loan, and advised the young man to leave the way he had come so as to avoid the Secret Service! (And, Yes, the loan was paid back.)

We have been given much by our Lord—Grace, Love, Mercy, amen?

- **Jesus said, For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required (Luke 12:48)**

What God requires is that we would have His heart, and would be willing to love others in the way He has already loved us...

- **If Jesus truly is Lord of our lives, then we will be willing to show others this same unconditional love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness that we have received from Him**

**Jesus said, He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone
Let's drop the stones....amen?**

Let's Pray...