

53. An intimate moment with the Savior

November 13, 2016

Depending on whom you ask, the concept of an “intimate moment” can be vastly different. If you ask that question to a man, he is thinking about sex. But if you ask the same question to a woman, she is thinking about a romantic time with her man whom she loves. What if you ask the same question to a born-again believer who is absolutely in love with one’s Savior Jesus, that person would say, “It’s the time when I have a deep communion with Him in prayers and reading His Word regardless of the physical and emotional situation I am in.”

This morning we are going to encounter one of the most familiar and beloved stories of Jesus – “Jesus and an adulterous woman” in John chapter 8. We’ve heard it so many times from churches and other places that we can pretty much recite the story without any problem. You may even come up with some of the important points from this incident.

But this incident is more than a sinner encountering the Savior face to face. Yes, that is the basic elements of the reason that Jesus came to the earth – to save the wretches like us through His grace and mercy, but still satisfying the holiness of God the Father. But it also provides us that undeniable intimate moment with the Savior we must notice.

You will notice that this sermon will be more like drawing a word picture of that intimate moment between the Savior and the sinner than theological teachings like some other sermons.

A. THE QUIET MORNING

John 7:53 And everyone went to his own house.

John 8:1-2 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 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.

Some of your Bibles say, “The most ancient Greek manuscripts do not include John 7:53-8:11,” before chapter 8 starts. What it means is that this story does not appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts. But many Bible scholars believe that it is an authentic story of Jesus’ life and without this portion, the transition from John 7:52 to 8:12 would be too abrupt.

It was the day after the Feast of Tabernacle that lasted seven days. The festive mood finally started to settle down, but there was still plenty of evidence of the Feast in the temple as well as on the streets.

Early in this particular morning, like any other early morning, the city was still damp with dew as purple shadows were falling among the temple columns. Echoing through the temple was the very clear voice of Jesus, who, in a typical rabbinic fashion, sat down to teach whoever chose to hear Him. But this serenity was about to be rudely interrupted by a demonic plot.

B. THE INSIDIOUS SET-UP BY THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

John 8:3-6a Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses,

in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"
6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.

During the time of the Feast of the Tabernacle, instead of rejoicing and worshiping the gracious God who provided everything their ancestors needed in the wilderness, these Jewish religious leaders planned everything down to the last detail methodically. They were so insidious that they were willing to entrap and stone a woman to death in order to discredit Jesus and ultimately kill Him.

These scribes and Pharisees dragged a disheveled woman, hastily clothed, barefooted, and humiliated like a squirming and whimpering dog on a leash. She was taken abruptly from the bedroom, where she was a man's sexual object, and insensitively dragged to the temple, where she now became a political expendable pawn used to bait the trap set for Jesus. These Jewish rulers really thought that they had Him cornered – "Checkmate" they declared in their hearts.

When we treat people as things, we dehumanize them and destroy something precious inside of them. Whether we use people for our own pleasure or to prove our point, even a religious point, we are treating those people as things to be used instead of human beings to be loved. And this greatly dishonors the One in whose image they were made.

The leader who led this vicious self-righteous mob against the Lord Jesus who was teaching in the women's court of the temple, pointed his finger to the woman at his feet with a smug on his face and popped a question that was the totally horns of a dilemma for anyone to answer, of course, except God.

The seventh Commandment of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not commit adultery." In Leviticus 20 and Deuteronomy 22, the Mosaic Law clearly told the Jewish people to stone both adulterer and adulteress. If Jesus said, "Don't stone her," then He would go against the Law that was given to them by God through Moses.

But if Jesus said, "Execute her according to the Law of Moses," then He would be against the Roman authority, because the Roman governor of Israel stripped the Jews of having the right to take anybody's life in capital punishment.

An airtight case? Hardly. If they were able to get the woman who was in the very act of adultery, but where is this male adulterer, Joe Blow? Whatever happened to him? Why did they not bring him here with her? Obviously, it was a set up.

C. HE WHO IS WITHOUT SIN AMONG YOU

John 8:6b-9 But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. 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." 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 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.

There have been several different commentaries as to what he wrote. Some scholars say He may have started to make a list of the sins of those who stood in front of him by fulfilling Jeremiah 17:13:

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."

All of them are nothing more than speculations. None of Jesus' disciples said anything about His writings on the ground. So, we don't know. I've been teaching you guys about this kind of thing: "When the Bible is silent, we need to be silent." Don't go there with your wild imagination, agree?

Jesus' reply was not something they expected and it puts the dilemma back on them. In this particular offense, there would normally be no witnesses, since its nature would demand secrecy and privacy. Either this mob became the witness of the adultery by accident, which would be highly unusual; or they have purposely been present at the location where the adultery was happening to create the trap for Jesus, in which case they themselves were guilty of condoning the deed. It means that this would make them partners-in-crime.

Jesus answered their demand with one sentence, He didn't use a whole paragraph. He said, "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.*" There was no one in that place without sin with the exception of One – Jesus.

According to Jewish law, in any case of capital punishment the witnesses must begin the stoning. Whether Jesus, by His statement, implied that they were guilty of condoning of committing adultery with this woman, or he was speaking about their past personal guilt is uncertain. But in either case, each one of the accusers would either have to admit that he was guilty or else refrain from demanding the woman's death. All of them were disqualified and they knew it.

Convicted by their own consciences, the accusers quietly left the scene, and Jesus was left alone with the woman. I am sure that she was fully expecting those stones in the hands of the accusers started to rain down on her as soon as Jesus flips his thumb down. But the only noises she heard while she was on the ground sobbing in shame and hopelessness were the stones hitting the ground with thud sounds and the accusers' feet scurrying away from the Temple's Women's Court.

D. AN INTIMATE MOMENT WITH THE SAVIOR

John 8:10-11 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?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Jesus was meek with people; masterful with hypocrites; and merciful with sinners. No one who condemned her was around, she, probably, for the first time, had a full view of the merciful Teacher while she was still on the ground. These two verses are the best part of the story. I just love these.

What a contrast! The guilty and the Guiltless, lawbreaker and Law Giver, adulteress and Advocate, sinner and Savior. Undoubtedly, this has been the darkest moment of this woman's life, until the Light of the World bathed her sin in the radiance of His forgiving presence. The only One who was qualified to throw a stone had none in His hands.

First, Jesus called her "Woman." It is a term of respect, like "lady," or "ma'am" for us. You may remember Jesus called His mother, Mary, "Woman" at the marriage supper of Cana, as well as the time He was being crucified on the cross. By calling her 'woman', Jesus restored a little bit of dignity back in her life. He didn't call her, "You slut!" or "Adulteress."

So, does this mean that Jesus was getting soft on sin? Absolutely not. Let's go back to v11:

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

He wasn't condoning her lifestyle. He didn't say, "I don't condemn you." For Jesus to forgive this woman meant that He had to one day die for her sins. Forgiveness is free, but it cost the life of God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus did two things as you read:

1) He called sin sin, first of all. He didn't call it a 'hang-up' or a 'disease' or an 'alternate lifestyle' or a 'mistake'. He called it sin. It's offensive to God. Winking at sin is a cheap grace and it is NOT from the Lord. Our God hates sin that we commit, but He loves us. If we'd rather embrace our sins, it is the same as rejecting Him flat out.

Listen carefully, please, the Law was given to reveal sin.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

And we must be condemned by the Law before we can be cleansed by God's grace. Law and grace do not compete with each other; rather they complement each other. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the Law, and nobody was ever saved by grace alone who was not first indicted by the Law. There must be conviction before there can be conversion.

2) He also gave her a command. He said, "Go and sin no more." Not "Go and sin less." Some of you may wonder, "Do we not still have our sinful nature in our bodies? How can God expect us to sin no longer? It is impossible." Yes, it is impossible in a practical sense. But if I decide, "Today, I will sin less." We have a couple of situations:

- **What is the standard of "Less"?**

Do we count how many times we sin against God within a day? I don't even try, because I would lose my sin count before lunch time comes around. My body may not do anything against the Lord, but my mind can run beyond what I physically would do. One day's sin less might be different from another day's sin less as it would be different from one person to another.

- **If we aim low for our goal, we will hit low; but if we aim high, we will come close.**

I don't think I need to explain this.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) The practice of confronting wrong calls for humility, not pride.

Jesus exhorts us in the Sermon on the Mount to look closely at our own lives before we look critically at the lives of others.

Matthew 7:5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Paul echoes this in Galatians 6:1:

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

If you take the least glimmer of satisfaction in confronting someone else about their sin, that is an indication of pride. Nip it in the bud, otherwise it will overrun your life.

2) The privilege of condemning wrong is based on righteousness, not knowledge.

None of us are holy and righteous enough to condemn anyone. None of us are without sin to cast the first stone.

3) The principle of correcting wrong starts with forgiveness, not rebuke.

Notice the pattern in the way Jesus deals with the guilty woman: He forgave her, then confronted and corrected her. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed the Gospel of the second chance.

4) If God really sends you to confront someone for his or her sins, do it according to Jesus' way. After that remember this:

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Because we all are wicked and capable to do wrong things like others and even worse. Only God is holy and righteous.