



Sunday, February 7, 2021

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Gospel of John Series, Sermon #29 “Covered In Forgiveness”

John 7:45 – 8:11 (King James Version)

Good morning. We continue today in the Gospel of John. He sorts through millions of memories and experiences from walking with Jesus for three years in His earthly ministry. Fifty years had passed since his relationship on an earthly sense ended at the cross and the empty tomb. In that time, God formulated the account of Jesus’ life for John to write down. In John 20, he gives us the reason he wrote this: as a witnessing tool to lead the world to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The message of the Gospel is still the mission and ministry of our church today.

Before I begin today’s message, let me summarize the concluding words of Chapter 7. Jesus is attending one of the great high holy days of the Jews, The Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem. During that week-long celebration, the city was teeming with people—residents, religious leaders, visitors from around the world. Jesus boldly stands up in the temple, and He gives the message that He is the Son of God and wants to offer living water to every person who would come to Him. He proclaims and offers grace and salvation to the thirsty and give them life eternal. After hearing this, many people saw Him as the Prophet or Messenger of God. Others there received Him as the Christ, the Savior, and were saved by grace through faith in Him. Doubters were also in the crowd—they questioned Him or didn’t quite understand the message or the Messenger. Lastly, there were people who didn’t believe Him and rejected Him completely. The response to Jesus Christ at the temple at this Feast was quite varied. We live in a world that’s still the same—the reception of Him is different in our culture today. We stand to say “This **is** the Christ; this **is** the Son of God and you need Him as your Savior. It’s our ministry and mission.

In Chapter 7:45-53, there’s one group who adamantly hates Jesus, the Savior—the religious leaders, the priests and Pharisees. They wanted Him arrested and killed. Why? Because He had pointed them out as hypocrites and fakes. He exposed them because their lifestyle was away from the living God, even though they taught the word of God from their head and not their heart. They had no connection with Him. Yet, one of those leaders, Nicodemus, rises up and says to them, “You’re not being fair to Jesus. You’re judging Him to hell before you understand His ministry is from heaven. You need to listen to Him and hear the message.” I’m sure you remember Jesus met Nicodemus in John, Chapter 3. His fellow leaders would not listen to him, and their hearts continued to be hard against Jesus and His message of being the Savior. So, everyone leaves and goes their separate ways.

As we open Chapter 8, this is one of the most memorable scenes of all of Jesus’ life and ministry. He deals with a woman brought to Him caught in the very act of adultery. It’s a huge defining moment in His ministry. No matter the depth of our sin or how far removed from the grace of God, Jesus has a ministry and outreach to **all** people. Dragging this woman in front of Jesus is a trap of the Pharisees; they want to catch Him in blasphemy in teaching the word of God. If He deals with the seriousness of this sin outside the word of God, these religious leaders will have Him arrested as a criminal and a blasphemer—one step

closer to His death. If He deals with this woman so that He forgives her, they'll say you're stepping outside the word of God. He's in a "catch-22" situation, so they think.

"¹Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. ²And early in the morning he came again into the temple and all the people came unto him; and he sat down and taught them. ³And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, ⁴They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. ⁵Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? ⁶This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. ⁷So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them **He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ⁸And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰When Jesus had lifted up himself and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, **Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?** ¹¹She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.**"**

This chapter opens early in the morning; Jesus began His day at the Mount of Olives. I believe we all know He started His day in communion and prayer with God the Father. He returns to the temple for the Feast. People were still milling about in Jerusalem and on the temple grounds. Verse 2 says Jesus sits to teach them publicly—sitting was the accepted position in which the teacher related to the students. In the middle of teaching God's word, a major interruption occurs. A woman is forcibly escorted into Jesus' presence and stands in shame among all the people who had gathered around Him. She had just been caught in the very act of adultery; it's very likely she was sparsely covered as she was jerked away to be brought to Jesus. Her nakedness emphasizes her awful sin. There's something "fishy" about this scene—where's the man?! It takes two! Why is she alone?! It's like a set-up, and she was used as a pawn. But it was all about Jesus and how He was going to handle this situation. The woman stands there alone, in tears, utterly humiliated. The scribes and Pharisees speak to Jesus. Read verses 4-6. In the law of God written in Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22 it says Israel is to remove the evil from their midst through death.

These religious leaders think they have Jesus pinned in a corner—whatever He says is going to be wrong. If Jesus says "Yes, the law says stone her and kill her right now," He'll also lose His reputation as "a friend of sinners and publicans" (see Luke 7:34). If He says spare and free the woman, the religious leaders will say "You've stepped outside of the truth of the Word of God; you're a blasphemer and criminal and we'll have you arrested." In their minds, Jesus has been backed into a corner and has nowhere to go.

So picture this scene—I believe Jesus gives us the mind as we read His holy word, we can envision situations like this one. The woman is there alone and shamed; the crowd is all wide-eyed and waiting to hear what Jesus is going to say. They might see an execution in the next few minutes. The scribes and Pharisees are standing there with their arms crossed defiantly thinking, "We've got Him now!" All eyes are on Jesus as He stoops down and writes in the dirt with His finger—it's as if time stood still. The woman trembled in fear; one word from Him could bring her death. We don't have a clue as to what He wrote in

the dirt. Some theologians think it was to show the religious leaders who He was. Read Exodus 31:18. “And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” The scribes and Pharisees knew this word by heart, and here’s this man claiming to be the Son of God writing in the dirt. Another scholar says Jesus was making a statement based on Jeremiah 17:13 “O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters.” Everyone who forsakes You will have their name written in the earth. Maybe the religious leaders were shocked—He could be writing my name in the dirt! If He is the Son of God, they knew Jeremiah very well as a prophecy. There was great symbolism in whatever Jesus was writing. In these moments, the leaders are pressing Him and pushing Him to make a decision. “Lord, what will you say; what will you do? Will the woman live or will she die?” The answer comes: “**He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.**” In the original Greek verses 7-8 say: “As they remain questioning Him, He stood erect and said to them, the one sinless of you first on her let him cast the stone. Those of you who have no sin, those who are living perfectly without sin, you be the first to cast that fist-sized stone against her.” Silence. Nobody speaks; nobody moves. It’s as if the crowd is frozen in that moment. Jesus stoops again and writes again in the dirt. The next sound is of rocks hitting the ground, released from angry hands—beginning with the eldest and wisest of the men who realize they had been put on the spot by Jesus the Christ. Then the rest of the crowd dropped their stones and quietly left the scene.

So now Jesus is alone with her. Think of this. As the perfect Lamb of God, as the Son of God who had no sin in His life as He relates to her, He is the only one who could have lifted up a stone. He is the only one who could punish her to death; the only one who could condemn her. He asks her where her accusers are; is anyone left to stone you? In verse 11, three words changed her life, future, and eternity: “No man, Lord.” This passage of Scripture humbles me because I, too, have stood before the Lord revealed and naked in my own sin and realize He alone is the only one who could forgive me of a life removed from God. Jesus forgives the woman and frees her. She doesn’t know it yet but in just a few days, her account would be “paid in full” because He took her place on the cross; He assumed her death. The moment she said “No man, Lord” indicates she accepted Him as Savior. She called Him by His proper name—“You are my Lord”—and she was saved that moment. He would die for her and take her sin upon Himself.

Don’t miss His last words to her: “...**go, and sin no more.**” True forgiveness changes who we are. We no longer seek to honor, glorify, or downplay our sin; we simply want to live to glorify the Savior who has forgiven us of the sin. You cannot be saved and not be changed. You cannot accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and not be changed in your life and lifestyle. Your life will reflect that the Holy Spirit of God and His holiness is living in you and me. We still have that battle with sin. I still deal with ole’ Mike Fitzgerald all the time. But our desire and looking forward is that “Lord, we want to live with you on a path that we will sin no more. We want to become more like You and less like ourselves day by day.” It was true for this woman, and it’s true for me and you. “Go, and sin no more if you know Me as your Savior.” Did Jesus break or change the Old Testament law the Pharisees referred to that someone would have to die so that sin could be removed from God’s people? Absolutely not! Leviticus and Deuteronomy say death is to come to the sinner. In this account, a death did occur: The woman died to her own sin. When she was forgiven, her sin was proclaimed dead! Her sin was “stoned to death” by the Son of God.

I'm going to have an altar call as I close. The altar is here in the sanctuary or the altar in your heart. It's coming before God in a moment of rededication and prayer. I'm establishing this altar call on a statement every single one of us in front and behind the pulpit need to say together as the people of God. "Lord Jesus, thank You that You don't condemn me but You save me. Scripture demands death; there's no remission of sin without the shedding of blood. But Lord, thank You that You were the one to die to take my place." Not one of us should be exempt from saying thank you today for what Jesus did for us. Our situation was just as bad as this woman's in today's Scripture. Maybe a different sin, but "all of us sin and fall short of the glory of God." He Himself died that we may have life. Can we say thank you today? Can we say "Lord Jesus, keep honing, directing, blessing, and instructing my life so that every day I live I will rise and go into the world to sin no more. Every day, Lord, I want to be more like You and less like the old me. Help me, Father, to fight this battle of sin with faith and trust that You will lead me through. Help me today to be more like You than I was yesterday. Help me tomorrow to be more like You than I was today." Can we say "Lord, give me your strength that I will go and sin no more." It's the same directive He gave to her. How many will approach the throne of grace and thank Him? "Help me to live a life that honors you and lifts you up. Help me not be static. Help me not be living in neutral. Every day, Lord, I want to be on the path of sanctification to be like You. On the cross, You forgave me and You will never condemn me."

If you're here today and have never come to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you must know the truth has not changed. Either through Christ we'll be forgiven of our sin and live with Him or if we reject Him and come to the end of our days on earth without receiving Him as Savior, we will die for our sin. The Bible clearly says we'll die in hell for all eternity if we do not receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That's the truth of the word; it can't be sugar-coated or explained away. A death has to happen for sin. If you reject Jesus as your Savior, the death will be yours. If you accept Him as your Savior, He took your death away by dying Himself in our place. The good news is He's waiting for you. He wants you. He's moved the mountain of punishment for you if you simply say "I want to call You Lord and receive You as my Savior. I want to lay down my life and my sin and everything I am before You and ask to be forgiven so I can serve and love You and sin no more." I thank God He's that kind of Lord that He gave Himself so we might be forgiven. I pray today we'll go as people who live changed lives and will strive to change the world with the love of Christ.

Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank You for these moments spent in Your house. We're here today as the people of God. I pray today You'll bless us in this message that has moved my heart. Lord, I look at this woman standing before Jesus in sin and it's revealed. My life and everyone else's are also revealed; there's nothing to hide. You know our hearts and our needs. Help us today to say thank You and trust in You. Bless us to look at You and follow You to "go, and sin no more." For that one who's lost and has never come to You, I pray that invitation will strike a nerve and enter the heart so he or she can say "Yes Lord, I receive You as my Savior. Come into my life; forgive my sin. Renew me to be a new creature that I will live for You and sin no more." Bless us, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.