

John 7:40-8:11

5-10-09

“Trapping the Trappers & Freeing the Trapped!”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. **Mother’s Day:** *Sweater, n.: garment worn by child when its mother is feeling chilly.*
1. **Milton Berle** used to say, “If **evolution** really works, how come mothers only have **two** hands?”
- B. I thought long & hard about whether to stay in our text of John this morning on **Mothers Day**. **Why?** Well, because it is on *the woman caught in adultery*.
1. This little story captures magnificently **both** the **gracious, forgiving spirit of Jesus** & His firm call to **the transformation life**.
 2. I believe in our text is the most **precious & sensitive statements & show of love** spoken/displayed to any **woman** in the bible. So I thought, I should!!!
 3. Ask, **Why did Jesus treat her so gently?**

II. **WHO IS HE? (7:40-52)**

- A. Pretty straight forward text.
- B. (51) Nicodemus defending Christ’s legal privileges.
1. In Jn.3 Nicodemus experienced ***the darkness of confusion***; (Warren Wiersbe)
In Jn.8(here) ***the dawn of conviction***;
In Jn.19 we’ll see him in ***the daylight of confession*** (openly identifying himself w/Christ)

III. **TRAPPING THE TRAPPERS! (7:53-8:9a)**

- A. **Problems with this?** - Both of them deserved to die (Lev.20:10)
1. **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.**
 2. **Judaism’s 3 gravest crimes: *idolatry, murder, & adultery*...**Were all punishable by death.
 3. The *Mishnah*, the Jewish codified law, states that the penalty for adultery is strangulation, & even the method of strangulation is laid down. “**The man is to be enclosed in dung up to his knees, & a soft towel set w/in a rough towel is to be placed around his neck (in order that no mark may be made, for the punishment is God’s punishment).** Then one man draws in one direction & another in the other

direction, until he be dead.” The *Mishnah* reiterates that death by **stoning** is the penalty for a girl who is betrothed & who then commits adultery.¹

4. So, where is **dung boy** if they were caught in the very act?
- B. (5) **The horns of a dilemma**: If He says, “**no don’t stone her**”, as the law required, He could be charged with being a lawbreaker. If He says, “**yes stone her**”, the wrath of the Roman Government would come upon Him.
1. **Do you kill the woman or kill the Law?**
- C. (6) The self-proclaimed *guardians of righteousness* must have set up this sinful rendezvous to spring the trap.
1. **How did they catch her any ways?** Voyeurism (peeping tom’s/peeping Pharisees)? They never lusted after her? How long did they watch? Going in & grabbing her naked, not 1 sinful thought?
 2. **They’re using her, just like all the rest of the men!** - To them she had no name, no personality, no heart, no feelings, no soul. She was simply an expendable pawn in their strategy to corner Jesus into checkmate.²
 3. **Jesus silence must have been deafening; the drama, intense!**
- D. There’s always so much more to these stories! - Was she **victimized** as a little girl over & over growing up? Was she a woman **abused** by her husband? Was she **searching** for love in all the wrong places? Was she sexually broken? Was she a **prostitute** who would sell love for a price, but had none to give? Would she forever **confuse** love with sex?...**These can be so very painful.**
- E. **Jesus stooped down & wrote on the ground w/His finger** -
1. How healthy to stop & collect thoughts before you speak.
 2. **Only thing Jesus ever wrote!**
- F. (7) **He who is w/o sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first** -
1. Deut.17:7 says, **The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.**
 - a) So Jesus merely forces these legalists to go strictly by the law.
 - b) **He makes only 1 qualification...that they take a look at the log in their own eyes before they try to take the speck out of somebody else’s.** (Mt.7:1-5)

¹ William Barclay; The Gospel of John; Vol.2 pg.2

² Chuck Swindoll; John 8; pg.26.

- G. (8) Did He write on the ground to remind them of **Ex.31:18**? And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, **written with the finger of God.**
1. Or to remind them of **Jer.17:13**? “Those who depart from Me Shall be **written in the earth**, Because they have forsaken the Lord, The fountain of living waters.”
- H. (9a) One by one the rocks thud to the ground. The vigilantes retreat home, heads hung in *shame*, or at least in *defeat*.
- I. Even when others try to force Jesus into **meanness**, He would **not** allow it!
1. If there was ever a perfect opportunity to bring down **the wrath of God** on a sinful woman, it was **right then**.
 2. Of course **she** should be stoned. **And you** should be stoned. **And I** should be stoned next!
 - a) But then she hears **a voice of hope**, which should be one of the **markers** of a **NT community!** McManus; Unstoppable Force; pg.162
- J. If those who are the **religious elite** are closest to God, **why is it that they are so rarely closest to love?**
1. If **God is love**, those who **know God best** would **love people most!**³
- K. **What if it was a different sin?** What if she was a lesbian or a woman who had an abortion, or a drunk driver, or a prostitute? That might put the *pharisaical shoe* on the other foot.
1. Would you be a little more **reluctant** to drop your stones? A little more ready to condemn? A lot less glad to hear Jesus say, “*Neither do I condemn you.*”
- L. I say we stop calling this, “*The woman caught in Adultery*” **but instead**, “*The men caught in self-righteous hypocrisy!*”
1. These men are fortunate it isn't called, “*The Revenge of Jesus!*”
 2. Jesus had already said in 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**.**

IV. **FREEING THE TRAPPED! (8:9B-11)**

- A. (9b) **What a contrast** she & Jesus make: the guilty & the guiltless; **adulteress & advocate**; sinner & Savior.

³ McManus; Entry #13 Soul Cravings

- B. First, let's make clear...*Adultery is a very grievous sin!*
1. It has **destroyed homes**; it is in God's **top 10** commandments; it was in fact so serious it was a **capitol offense**.
 2. This **does not** a wink at sin - He addresses it. She is not a victim but a willing participant. There was a pattern of sin, "**Go & sin no more**" (or, "**Go now & leave your life of sin**")
- C. (10) Her heart must have been pounding; deep breathes; flush.
- D. **He said to her, Woman** - *not* *whore*, *not* *home-wrecker*. **But with respect & love**, He uses the same word He'll later use for His *own mother*.
1. Surely a sermon must be gathering momentum. But no sermon comes!
- E. **Has no one condemned you?** **No one, Lord** - Yet, Jesus was the One who could have picked up a stone!
- F. (11) When everyone had left, Jesus addressed the woman's 2 greatest needs: **Forgiveness** & a challenge to **Holiness**.
- G. Jesus, *full of grace & truth*...forgives the sinner *w/o* condoning the sin.
1. **Neither do I condemn you** - **wait, wait, wait!** How does Jesus get out of **not stoning her**, as the Law clearly said??? - Isn't the wages of sin **death!**
 - a) Paul explains **how** in 2 Cor.5:21...*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
 - b) **Or**, God would treat **Christ** like He lived **her** life; & would treat **her** like she lived **His** life! (known as Christ's **substitution death!**)
 - c) Jesus **doesn't blow off** her sin...He **goes to the cross** for it!
 2. **Go & sin no more** - or, "**Go now & leave your life of sin**".
 - a) You are a woman. Go leave your life of sin. Live like a woman. Live like a *dignified, forgiven, cleansed* woman. Go live that life.
- H. So I guess we can say...
- What these guys meant for **Evil** Christ meant for **Good**; &
 What these guys meant for **Death** Christ meant for **Life**; &
 What these guys meant for **Wrath** Christ meant for **Mercy/Grace!**
1. And we received the same!
- I. **You have been caught in** _____.
1. Can you read the writing in the sand?

- J. Are your eyes free from logs so that you can see to take the specks out of the eyes of others? - Are you spiritual enough to restore the one caught in a trespass? (Gal.6:1)
- K. If this story reveals 1 thing it's the truth that, "the safest place for a sinful person to go, is to God."
1. He will neither condemn us nor leave us in our brokenness.
 2. **She realized: God** wanted her. **God** was her place to belong. **Love** gives us a fresh start. **Love** gives us a reason to live.
- L. Thank you Lord for catching us in our sin. We **deserve the full weight of the Law**; yet we are blessed with the **full strength of Grace**.
1. Jesus has taken the rock in his own hand, & cast it upon Himself!
- M. **End: Reading this Prayer!** (by Ken Gire; *Intimate Moments with the Savior*, pg.59)
- N. I confess w/shame that here are times I have stood in the midst, **condemned**.
And there are times I have stood in the crowd, **condemning**.
There are times my heart has been filled w/**adultery**.
And there are times my hands have been filled w/**stones**.

Forgive me for a heart that is so prone to wander, so quick to forget my vows to you.
Forgive me, too, for my eagerness in bringing You the sins of others.
And my reluctance in bringing You my own.
Forgive me for the times I have stood smugly Pharisaic & measured out judgment to others. Others I am not qualified to judge. Others, who You, though qualified, refuse to.

Help me to be more like You Jesus - full of grace & truth.
Help me to live not by law but by grace, by the spirit of compassion you showed to that woman so many mornings ago.

Give me, I pray, the pierced conscience of the older ones in regard to the stumblings of others so my hands may be first to drop their stones, & my feet, first to leave the circle of the self-righteous.

Thank you for those sweet words of forgiveness "**Neither do I condemn you.**" Words that flow so freely from your lips. Words that I have heard so often when I have stumbled.
And in the strength of those unmerited words, help me to go my way & **sin no more**...