

A Sinful Woman

John 8:1 – 8:11 'But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

What just happened here? Jesus was teaching and the Pharisees see an opportunity not only to trap him but to publicly humiliate this woman. This wasn't the first case of adultery they had seen. They could have handled it themselves. If they really wanted Christ's opinion on the matter they could have approached him privately, or, they could have at least left the woman at home while they came to get his answer. But instead, they dragged this woman out to be publicly humiliated and perhaps stoned to death while they got to show how wise and righteous they were.

Matthew 18:15-17 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

Sometimes it can be hard when we know someone has done something wrong. Especially if they have hurt us in their actions. What is our first impulse when that happens? Is it to quietly confront the person and try to work the problem out? Or is it to go around telling everyone who will listen what that person did and why they are a bad person? I wonder if sometimes we don't want an easy remedy when we see sin. If I see my brother sinning it is difficult and uncomfortable to confront him quietly and talk to him about it. Besides, if he stops sinning then I have no ammunition to use against him anymore. But, if I see my brother sinning and point it out for all to see then I get to look righteous compared to my brother who is obviously struggling with sin. Even better, everyone gets to know so they can share in my feelings of righteousness and say to themselves "I may have my problems but at least I don't have **those** problems".

We are given instructions on how to handle sin in others' lives with Love. It really has to do with our intent, doesn't it? Our intent should be to win our brother or sister over from sin. It should not be about embarrassing him in public or reprimanding him in private. We need to remember that one day our brother or sister will need to come to us over a sin we have committed against another. How do we want to be approached when that day comes?

Of course, we prefer to think that will never happen to us because we don't really sin "that much". We

like to weigh and measure sin but somehow our scale seems a bit rigged. Our sins are never as heavy or fierce as someone else's sin is on our scale. And since it's just a "little sin" we keep it to ourselves and hide it. We expect everyone else is doing the same and so it becomes a kind of etiquette. "Sure, I've sinned but at least I had the decency to keep it quiet." And of course, if you keep it quiet and on your scale your sin is very small it's almost like you don't sin at all, isn't it? We can almost make ourselves believe that we don't really sin and it's really more a problem for all those "other" people out there. We almost search for sin in others, sometimes, in order to keep ourselves convinced that we're doing OK, don't we?

Matthew 7:1-2 'Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.'

When the Pharisees bring the woman before Christ they had already judged her and wanted death for her sin. Christ doesn't deny her sin, but instead pointed out that there was sin in each and every one of them. Somehow he was able to let each person in that crowd, the Pharisee's included, see their own sin for what it was. And when those people began to see their own sin, what measure did they want to use against the woman, knowing that it would be used on them? They chose forgiveness, didn't they? The same forgiveness each of us wants for our sins. We need to remember when we're confronted with someone who is sinning that we too sin, and if we don't want to be judged for our sins then we need to not judge them for theirs.

Romans 6:1-4 'What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.'

When Jesus was alone with the woman he dealt with her as he does with all of us. He did not condemn her, but he did tell her to leave her life of sin. You see, we are forgiven for our sin but that does not give us free reign to sin without end, basking in Christ's forgiveness. If we are truly his servants then we will follow the command he gave this woman and the command that should echo in our own ears "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Each of us is called to not sin. But when we do, and we will, we can know that by our Faith in Christ, because of his sacrifice, we are forgiven. But even more importantly, we must remember that by the Faith our sister in Christ has, she is also forgiven. And if God can forgive sins committed against Him then how can we not also forgive those sins if we have any hope of our own sins being forgiven?

The Pharisees showed us how we some times try to deal with sin in others. Jesus taught them, and us, to remember that we have no stone to throw. We have all sinned and we are likely to do it again. We do need to encourage one another not to sin as Jesus did, but we mustn't forget to Love and forgive the repentant brother or sister. One day, we will again, each of us, need that forgiveness from others.