

John 8:2-11

Caught In The Very Act

Introduction

A little break in the action from First Corinthians, although there will be a common thread in teaching here in the next few weeks.

When given an opportunity, it is always a good thing to go to the 'red letters' and hear from the Master Himself. Whether He is preaching the Sermon on the Mount, trying to explain the Kingdom of God in parables, befuddling the Scribes and Pharisees, performing miracles, showing compassion to the 'have nots' or having face to face engagements with various types of people, there is always something intriguing in what Jesus does and how He does it.

I was watching a series by RC Sproul, who went home a couple years ago, on what he called Face To Face With Jesus, where he taught on the different people Jesus came into direct contact with: Nathanael, a man in whom Jesus said there was no guile; the rich young ruler, who was unwilling to give up his possessions for the Kingdom of God; the woman at the well who had thirst should could not satisfy; Nicodemus and the 'born again' conversation, and many others.

One his teachings I found most interesting was his version of the woman caught in adultery.

Let's open our Bibles to John 8:2-11 and see what our Master says and does with these people He comes face to face with . . .

John 8:2-11 - Caught In The Very Act

(V2) - He Taught Them

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.

- This is typical of Jesus at this point in his ministry . . .
 - Going to the temple to teach . . .
- All the people came to Him . . .
 - He is drawing a crowd now with his ministry . . .
- He sat down and taught them . . .
 - He takes the position of the teacher . . .

(V3-5) - Caught In The Act

3 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?"

- The scribes and Pharisees . . .
 - These guys again . . .
 - Jesus is on their most wanted list . . .
- They brought to Him a woman caught in adultery, they had set her in the midst
 - Setting the scene . . .
 - Here we have the religious leaders bringing to Jesus a woman caught in adultery . . .
 - You have a real sense of commotion, attention getting and gathering . . .
 - Brought seems more like dragging . . .
 - Setting her in the midst, a crowd is gathering . . .
 - Jesus is there, the scribes and Pharisees are there, the woman is there, it is becoming a spectacle . . .
 - This is exactly what the Pharisees want, a spectacle . . .

- Who is this woman?
 - Is she young, is she old?
 - Is she pretty, is she homely?
 - She is someone's daughter, is she someone's wife?
 - Is she disheveled being caught in adultery, as they would say, 'In the very act . . .'
 - Did she have any opportunity to properly cloth herself?
 - She has become the center of unwanted attention

- "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act . . ."
- First, they call him 'Teacher', this is the beginning of the set up . . .
- Then the accusation, caught in adultery, in the very act . . .

- Sexual Immorality
 - Sometimes we are so familiar with a story, there is a tendency to gloss over some of the specifics in getting to the moral of the story . . .
 - The specific in this case is the sin the woman was caught doing . . .
 - The sin of adultery . . .
 - Adultery would be put in the general sin category of sexual immorality . . .
 - Long is the list of the sins covered by sexual immorality . . .
 - Pornography is rampant and easy, one click away; prostitution is still world's oldest occupation; the LGBT movement has become a political force; fornication, sex outside of marriage is a norm; and the slippery slope of acceptance of sexual immorality in almost every form is well greased, including the sexual indoctrination and exploitation of children.
 - Steve did an excellent small study on sexual immorality at the men's breakfast . . .
 - One point he made is that the sin of sexual immorality, in whatever form it takes, is a sin where the primary instrument of sin is the body itself . . .

I Corinthians 6:15-20 – "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a

man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

- God's Design

- To properly understand the sin of sexual immorality, we really need to have a proper understanding of the beauty of God's design for human sexuality . . .
- When it comes to sex, I vote yes!
- And so does God . . .
 - Scripture gives us some wonderful descriptions and pictures of human sexuality . . .
 - The Song of Solomon . . .
 - It is His design with multiple purposes . . .
- Reasons for human sexuality include; opposite sex attraction, huba huba; intimacy as an expression of love; pleasure and the primary purpose, procreation, go forth and multiply . . .
 - All four having their place in the male/female relationship . . .
 - With the ultimate consummation to be found in marriage . . .
- Sexuality in marriage . . .
 - God has given us marriage for the ultimate expression of our sexuality . . .
- Coming together as one in marriage is also how God describes His relationship with the Believer . . .

Ephesians 5:31-32 – "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church."

- We are the bride of Christ . . .

- Man's Corruption
 - Leave it to man to take something God has created, given as a gift, to distort it and make it evil . . .
 - The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life . . .
 - Replacing love with lust . . .
 - Which leads to the specific sin committed by the woman, adultery . . .

- Adultery
 - The victim . . .
 - Anyone who has been a victim of adultery, being cheated on in the worst possible way, knows that particular pain . . .
 - Adultery inflicts a wound that runs deeper than most in life . . .
 - It is a wrong done to someone that is not easily healed and one not easily forgiven . . .
 - The adulterer . . .
 - For this person, the path to this sin is the same as any other sin
 - Beginning in the heart and mind . . .
 - Maybe it started with little flirting . . .
 - Maybe emotional needs being met that have been neglected in the marriage . . .
 - One thing leads to another and you are there . . .
 - It really doesn't matter how you got there, you are there . . .
 - In the very act . . .
 - And then the cover up begins and one lie begets another . . .
 - It is a wicked web we weave to cover our sin . . .

- God takes a very serious view when it comes to adultery . . .
 - We find His explicit command in the Ten Commandments

Exodus 20:14 – “You shall not commit adultery.”

- Why such a strong approach to this particular sin?
 - Because it tears at the very fabric of one of the most beautiful institutions that God has created, marriage . . .
 - It is called Holy Matrimony for a reason, marriage is holy unto God

Matthew 19:4-6 – “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

- Adultery rips apart this holy bond . . .
 - Marriages are destroyed . . .
 - Families are broken and are torn apart . . .
 - Lives are shattered in its wake . . .
 - There is a penalty and a price to be paid . . .

- “Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned . . .”
 - In the Old Covenant the penalty for adultery is severe . . .
 - Death . . .

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.”

- Note is says, “the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death” . . .
 - Adultery is not a solo act, it takes two and both are guilty . . .
 - In this case it seems as if one of the participants is missing, the adulterer, the man . . .
 - There is no explanation for his absence and why he is given a pass at the expense of the woman . . .
 - A lot of conjecture on this one . . .
 - It not for us to know and it matters not . . .

- “But what do You say?”
 - Again, remember the scene . . .
 - The Scribes and Pharisees, a crowd of people, the woman in the midst, and Jesus . . .
 - Let this question hang in the air for a moment . . .
 - ‘What do you say?’

(V6) – Testing Jesus

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.

- They were testing him . . .
 - What are his options?
 - Condemnation and death?
 - Freedom and violation of God’s law?
 - Either way, they will have a reason to ridicule and accuse him . . .
 - We have got him now . . .
- But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.
 - This is the only Biblical account we have of Jesus writing . . .
 - And he basically ignores them . . .

(V7-8) - He Who Is Without Sin

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.

- They continue ask him, determined to get an answer from Him, ‘What do you say teacher?’
- Jesus stands and gives them a reply they could not be expecting . . .
 - "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."
- And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.
 - It isn’t what is said that makes us wonder, it is what isn’t said . . .
 - In this case what is being written . . .
 - What is Jesus writing?
 - Names, sins, names with sins . . .
 - We can only surmise because we do not know . . .

(V9) - One By One

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.

- Whatever He wrote and certainly what He said has seared their conscience . . .
 - He who is without sin . . .
 - What is it about the words of God, the very words of Jesus, that cut to our very core, exposing us for who we really are . . .
- They went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last . . .
 - The proud are no longer very proud . . .
 - Not too many words are being spoken as they begin to leave . . .
 - The silence of shame . . .
- The scene is different now . . .
 - The accusers are gone . . .
 - Jesus and the woman find themselves alone . . .

(V10-11) – Neither Do I Condemn You

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?"

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

- Jesus for the first time addresses the woman . . .
 - "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

- She now hears words that she couldn't have been expecting . . .
 - Up to this point she has been cowering in the midst . . .
 - She is expecting to feel the pain of pelting of rocks and stones on her body until she expires, until she takes her final breath . . .
 - Her life was going to be taken as God's prescribed penalty for her sin of adultery . . .

- She responds, "No one, Lord."

- And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."
 - Jesus has saved her from a certain death sentence . . .
 - She now has a Savior . . .
 - And He gives her one last command . . .
 - Go and sin no more . . .
 - Saved from death and saved from sin . . .
 - We don't really know if she really understands the depth of what has taken, what He has said here or even if she became a follower . . .
 - We would like to think she did . . .
 - The one she does know; she is alive because of Jesus . . .

Final Thoughts

An incredible story with an incredible ending . . .

Sometimes we can be so familiar with a story we can lose sight of how amazing and incredible this story really is . . .

One of the most important things we can do when reading the Gospel stories, especially the personal engagements with Jesus, is to see ourselves in these people, to empathize with them, to walk in their shoes, to be them vicariously.

The first people we encounter is 'all the people came to Him' when he was teaching at the Temple. This a great place to be, following the Teacher and hearing the words of Jesus.

- 'All the people' will have choice to make . . .
- While they are hearing Jesus teach the Scribes and Pharisees bring the woman into their very midst . . .
- These are their official spiritual leaders and they a woman caught 'in the very act' of adultery . . .
- They came to hear Jesus but now are confronted with a completely different dynamic . . .
- They will see the woman, they will hear the accusation and they know the Law . . .
- Be careful with whom you side, even with spiritual leaders . . .
- Be careful of a mob mentality, it is easy to pile on . . .
- What seems like the right is often not the best or even from God . . .
- Be careful what side you take . . .

The next group of people we experience are the Scribes and Pharisees, the obvious adversaries in this story. They find the woman 'in the very act' of adultery and are using her as a tool in their efforts to confront and harass Jesus.

- They represent judgement based on legalism or their own form of self-righteousness.
- These are the types of people that will use the Word of God to judge and cast dispersion on others.
- Holding it over their head like the Law of God, actually using in an attempt to manipulate and control others.
- They are always right in their own eyes, trying make others be what they believe God wants them to be.
- These are the rock throwers . . .

Our grandkids, Austin and Ari, have a thing about rocks. Rocks in their backpacks, rocks in their pockets, rocks always ending up the laundry, clank, clank, clank . . .

- Here is Ari's bag of rocks . . .
- We all carry rocks, whether we admit or not . . .
- Maybe just one or two in our pockets . . .
- Some people carry around a whole bag of rocks . . .

- Each rock seems to have someone's name on it . . .
- Maybe their sin, maybe something we don't like about them . . .
- A rock looking for that someone we can judge, criticize or condemn . . .
- In our own eyes judging something about them that doesn't measure . . .
- They don't meet our self-righteous standard that we have established and never apply to ourselves . . .
- Maybe there a lingering root of bitterness . . .
- "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."
- Drop the rocks . . .

The woman caught in the very act of adultery . . .

- Her sin is our sin . . .
 - Her adultery is our adultery . . .

I John 1:8 – “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

Psalms 51:3-4 – “For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-- That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

- Her shame is our shame . . .
 - Imagine her shame . . .
 - Being caught in her sin . . .
 - Being dragged in the public court and being made a public spectacle . . .
 - There are two types of shame . . .
 - Shame for getting caught . . .
 - Rarely does our sin become exposed for all to see or a public spectacle . . .
 - Be glad, but know this . . .

Number 23:32 – “You have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.”

- Shame for our sin . . .
 - She probably doesn't get here until she is walking away from Jesus . . .
 - Overwhelmed with everything that is going on, maybe she had some time to reflect on this later . . .
 - Sin should produce Godly shame and humility . . .

II Corinthians 7:10 - For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Psalm 51:17 – “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise.”

- Her penalty is our penalty . . .
 - “The adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death . . .”

Romans 6:21-23 – “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- We are here in church today because of this very thing . . .
 - Sin and the penalty of sin which is death . . .
 - There is a lot of sin in this room; past, present and future . . .

And we finish with the Teacher, Jesus . . .

- His words to the accusers

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

- Their response was one of shame, their hypocrisy being exposed . . .
 - They all left one by one . . .
 - Because there is none among them without sin . . .

- But there is amongst all those people one without sin, Jesus . . .
 - He would have been perfectly justified in passing and executing the judgement of death upon this woman . . .
 - It is God's law . . .
 - He could have rightfully thrown the first stone . . .
 - He could have rightfully thrown the last stone of death . . .
 - And yet . . .

"Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

- He neither accused nor condemned . . .
- Nor did He justify her sin . . .

John 3:17-19 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

- He did not condemn her, nor does He condemn you . . .
 - He saved her from a certain death . . .
 - He saves us from a certain death too . . .

Romans 8:33-39 – “Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

- “Go and sin no more . . .”