

The Art of Inclusivity – Seeing people like Jesus sees them.

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BIG IDEA – What does God see in us, in all of us?

scripture focus - “Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the **Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery**. They put her in front of the crowd. “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “**All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!**” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” **John 8:1-11 NLT**

ME

At the end of a day filled with very bad decisions, the first couple had already sensed something was off - seriously off - something had changed. They had immediately experienced several cascading, life changing moments. Like falling dominoes that can't be stopped. **One, they both individually decided to eat the fruit God told Adam not to eat.**

Two, that day something definitely died. There are many ways one can die and physical death maybe the least painful!

Three, they got everything they didn't want. The breach, the schism, the chasm had already been created. Now, everything and everyone would be different **and hard** until God closed the gap.

This is why inclusivity is a struggle. **We now know evil, and most don't want to be seen as we really are - naked.** they each found themselves full of what the fruit was intended to fulfill - knowledge – both good and evil. Good, “tobe” beautiful, pleasant, agreeable, good. And evil, “rah” adversarial, bad, evil.

God had already provided good and wanted good, beautiful, and pleasant for the couple! In fact, right after warning Adam (Gen 2:16) about the tree whose fruit makes one knowledgeable, God said there was something missing, something **not** good (Gen 2:18). Adam was alone. So, God made someone good for Adam - that's was Woman. As if God told Moses to add an interesting commentary, Chapter 2 ends with, “Now the man and his wife were both **naked, but they felt no shame.**” (Gen 2:25). The couple had a knowledge of good already because they knew God!

Yet, there was a strange pull, a curiosity to find and have the knowledge of evil. **The couple ate and found out what having that knowledge would feel like!** The Bible says, “**At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.**”

Genesis 3:7 NLT. **Why do I want to find out what evil tastes like, feels like?**

Question: Where did their shame come from? Did their shame come from God? If we said, “No, it's because they were disobedient.” Then why were they ashamed to be seen by each other? What made them **hide** their nakedness from each other? It wasn't shame that came from God! **It certainly wasn't the knowledge of good that produced this feeling of shame** towards being **seen** between each

other. I mean the knowledge of good would produce what God had already given them – beauty, pleasant, agreeable feelings.

Shame came from this new sense of knowledge of what is evil. It wasn't nakedness, it was the feeling of total and complete exposure of what they were now capable of – **they were exposed to evil, and it infected both of them. They saw themselves as a mirror of evil and decided they should start immediately hiding it from each other.**

God comes along on his regular check in with the couple, in the cool of the evening. Hmm, but they can't be "found." Because they had to also hide themselves from God. Remember this is before they connected the dots that their decision to explore eating the fruit, they were told not to eat had consequences. They hid because they didn't like being exposed before God. The knowledge of evil meant they immediately understood there was a break, a breach between each other and between their creator. **Isn't it interesting that their knowledge of good did not drive them out in the open to admit they'd messed up and take responsibility for it!**

God asked the couple a series of questions that He already knew they answer to. I learned to do this as a dad.

Where are you? (Gen 3:9) – God called out to the man first.

Answer: I heard you walking in the garden, **so I hid.** I was **afraid because I was naked.** (Gen 3:10).

Who told you that you were naked? No answer.

Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat? (Gen 3:11).

Again, their knowledge of good could have persuaded Adam to be honest, but it didn't. **First it was shame, and they hid. Now it was self-justification, and they blamed.**

Answer: The man replied, "It was **the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.**" (Gen 3:12).

Now, Adam felt God's gift was a little defective because this once amazing "good" woman is now an "evil" fruit pusher. **And that's why husbands are suspicious of our wives making us eat fruit to this day!**

Question to the woman: **"What have you done?"** Her knowledge of good could have persuaded her to say, "I disobeyed and ate it."
Answer: "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it." (Gen 3:13)

WE

Why go back to the beginning? What does Genesis and the first couple have anything to do with Inclusivity?

Because our choice to sin still gives us the knowledge of good and evil but we are bent on exploring and exploiting everything we can to avoid the same sins of our great, great ancestors – we still want to hide because we are ashamed when we see ourselves through the lens of evil decisions and we still try to justify ourselves and blame someone else.

God doesn't need to shame anyone! Take a good look at yourself, now look at others – we all have this virus of sin.

Where are you? – God looks for us.

Who told you to hide? – God knows what evil does to us.

What have you done? – God waits for us to admit without blame.

Instead of just admitting we are all sinners in need of grace, mercy, and forgiveness, we insidiously look around to see who might be worse and place judgment on them! We do so without really knowing anything about them. Pushing others down will not raise us up!

Inclusivity is the art of seeing people as Jesus does.

Here's a true story about how Jesus sees people.

GOD

As Don Adams as Get Smart would say, “the ol’ reverse trap trick.”

“Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the **Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery**. They put her in front of the crowd.

“Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger.

They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, **“All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!”**

Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” **John 8:1-11 NLT**

They were going to kill her, by publicly shaming her, casting judgement in an open area then invite everyone to participate in enacting community justice. This wasn’t the first time, nor the last time this would happen. The law said she must die for betraying her marital vows.

There was no way to win this, there was no way out. Are they seriously suggesting that it’s an **honor** to lead the rock throwing? **Alright everyone, let’s pick up those rocks and get ready to rumble-judge!** Crowds can get worked up to do stupid things, things that an individual may never do, but given the anonymity of the group, hiding from the courage to do it by themselves, riots are a collection of insanity!

Judge her and let a jury of her community **rain down justice** ending her existence. She sinned; she dies. Ah, but the **Roman culture at the time thought this was absurd, cruel, unnecessary and could give rise to riots**. Or, look the other way, hasn't she endured enough shame by being dragged out in front of a crowd and having to live her life in disgrace. Ah, but the Jewish culture knew this wasn't right either. God had instructed them on how to deal with adultery.

By the way, aren't we missing someone from the story? Where's the dude? (Leviticus 20:10 If a man commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, both the man and the woman who have committed adultery must be put to death. And "If a man is discovered committing adultery, both he and the woman must die. In this way, you will purge Israel of such evil." Deuteronomy 22:22)

So, in fact this wasn't real justice. It was just **staged justice** for the purpose of embarrassing Jesus and drumming up fake charges just to get him to stop making the religious folks look bad.

But Jesus always had a third way. In fact, history proves, that Jesus still gives us a third option. Jesus third option was to tell the crowd to go ahead and stone the woman bringing about the lopsided justice they seemed to demand. Oh, but he added a difficult caveat, a real moral dilemma, **"the first one to throw has to be perfect themselves."**

Oh, snap! That really means **there was only one person there capable of throwing out the first pitch of judgment** on the woman! **Jesus himself. Jesus could have, should have judged her by executing her on the spot?**

Why didn't he?

I know that sounds a little ridiculous, thinking Jesus would throw a rock at this woman. **But think about it if Jesus wouldn't do it, why would I even think about doing it?**

But let's face reality here. **Why didn't Jesus just allow them to deliver on the Old Testament law of God?**

Well, you're right - the man was missing, but I'm sure they would stone him later.... Right? Of course not.

Because God values mercy as much as He does justice. In the religious leaders and the hearts of the crowd there was something sorely missing – **compassion.**

Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Mathew 5:7 and "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Luke 6:36. James warns us about justice and judgment without having mercy means it comes back on us! "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because **judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**" James 2:12-13 NIV

This is yet another story to describe the word and idea of Inclusivity!

US

The Pharisee Trap is the same "no win," "rock and a hard place" **dilemma as it is today!**

Do we behave religiously, upholding God's Law, "the soul that sins must die," Ezekiel 18:4

Or do we side with culture, where "sin is a just figment of someone else's idea of moral truth."

When we look at the world through **religious eyes and see people like the Pharisees saw them, we are forced to judge them.**

And contrarily, when we see people as culture sees them, we are forced to dismiss every behavior as a "right or freedom to live out their own truth."

We are **trapped** between these two awful positions.

First, **Jesus didn't see a theological position he saw a person.**

Second, his questions to the woman are telling of this **"third way" this Jesus way.**

Where are your accusers? **But were they all gone?**

The second question, "Didn't even **one of them condemn you?**" This let her know where his own heart was, **"even one of them."** "Them" being the key word.

Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

Hmmm, Jesus didn't condemn nor judge her because He loved her and gave mercy to allow her to freely make her own choice for her future. But he clearly didn't want her to continue in her behavior.

There is a difference between a church saying, "We welcome all persons" and "We welcome all behavior," writes Father Thomas Williams. "Jesus welcomes prostitutes but will never be a fan of prostitution. He is merciful with adulterers, but unyielding on adultery."

We've wrongly associated mercy with permission or alignment of beliefs. When God saw me in my sin He offered a way out, He offered mercy. **He never sided with my lying, stealing behaviors. God never once said, "oh, keep doing that it's good and helpful to you."**

ME

I choose the Jesus way of seeing people and believing that mercy given is an opportunity let God in. We all start out hiding our sin, being afraid that someone seeing our own evil choices means that they can't love us or that God won't love us. It helps me remember that in my sin, past and present, God gives mercy and calls me out of hiding. He asks me to be honest with my choices and take responsibility for my behaviors, not blaming others. **Inclusivity reminds**

me that we are not only equal in our sin, but we are also equal in an opportunity to let God change our lives, saving us from ourselves.

NOTES

Scriptures

“Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the **Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery**. They put her in front of the crowd. “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “**All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!**” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” **John 8:1-11 NLT**

“But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden— except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.” **Genesis 2:16-17 NLT**

“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” **Genesis 2:18 NLT**

“Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.” **Genesis 2:25 NLT**

“At that moment their eyes were opened, and **they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness**. So they sewed fig leaves together to **cover themselves**.

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the **man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the**

trees. Then the Lord God called to the man, **“Where are you?”** He replied, **“I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”** **“Who told you that you were naked?”** the Lord God asked. **“Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?”** The man replied, **“It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”** Then the Lord God asked the woman, **“What have you done?”** **“The serpent deceived me,”** she replied. **“That’s why I ate it.”** Genesis 3:7-13 NLT

Questions

- Q: Eve saw the fruit as alluring. How do you see evil?
- Q: What is the curiosity about to know evil, feel evil?
- Q: About the couple’s nakedness, do you want people to see/know your sins?
- Q: What if I planned to put all your sins up on the screen at church, would you show up?
- Q: In your opinion, what’s the difference between guilt and shame?
- Q: Be honest, do you lean more towards mercy or justice? Explain.

COMMENTARY REFERENCES

Internet Links

[The Female Aspect of Adam](#)

Did Adam originally include both male and female? Jewish scholars believed so.

[What does the Bible mean by “male and female He created them” \(Genesis 1:27\)?](#)

[What can we learn from the woman caught in adultery?](#)

[Stop Passing Judgment.](#) By Rick Warren

For use later...

[Inclusive Christianity](#)

- FATHER THOMAS D. WILLIAMS, LC.

There is a difference between a church saying, “We welcome all persons” and “We welcome all behavior.” After all, two things distinguish Christian belief: a body of doctrine and a moral code. Following Jesus entails both. Jesus welcomed prostitutes, but he never welcomed prostitution. He was soft on adulterers, but unyielding on adultery. After forgiving the adulterous woman, in fact, he adds: “Go and sin no more.” And the tax collector Zacchaeus, on encountering Jesus, promises to pay back all those he has cheated — fourfold. Jesus never welcomed cheating, but he did welcome reformed cheaters. This is not just a matter of semantic hair-splitting. Jesus came to call sinners but to condemn sin, much as a doctor heals sick people but eradicates sickness.

There is a problem with identifying people with their choices. Thieves are welcome in the church not as thieves, but as human persons. When Jesus tells the chief priests and elders that “the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matthew 21:31), he is not winking at thievery and prostitution. He is responding, rather, to their willingness to acknowledge their errors and to change.

The Church is absolutely inclusive toward persons (all are invited to enter) but not toward ideas or behavior. If our “inclusiveness” means that we are no longer able or willing to distinguish between good and bad behavior and to make universal moral judgments like “wife beating is bad,” then we have effectively abandoned morality.