

Gospel of John series
John 7:53-8:11

Series verse: John 20:31 "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

We have been studying the book of John, and we are going to be in John 8 today. One of the purposes of this gospel is to demonstrate that Jesus is the Son of God.

Our series verse is John 20:31 "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

In some of your bibles, John 8:1-11 is separated from the rest of the text. The footnotes might say something like "the earliest manuscripts do not have these verses."

The earliest complete manuscripts of the New Testament date back to the 4th century. This passage isn't in those manuscripts, so scholars believe that this story is a true account of something Jesus said and did and was widely circulated as an oral tradition, so much so that it was important enough to add into later manuscripts of the Bible.

This wasn't written by John, but it has some themes in common with John 7.

In John 7 Jesus said "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By that he meant you will receive God's Holy Spirit living inside of you.

His claim is come to me, be with me, and something is going to change within you.

Some people hear this message and they wonder if He is the Messiah, and some people do not receive what He says.

Scripture: John 7:53-8:11

⁵³ *Then they all went home, ¹but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

Jesus would ascend into heaven from the Mount of Olives. And in Zechariah 14, it is prophesied that when He returns, He will stand on the Mount of Olives.

²*At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.*

Jesus is coming to the temple to teach. The activity that Jesus did the most while He was here on this Earth is teach.

More than He performed miracles, or healed people, He taught. If He did this the most, then the most important thing we need from Jesus is His teaching.

If He heals your body, or delivers you from a situation, but your mind has not been changed, you'll go back to your same problems.

In this scripture, Jesus comes early and teaches. We too can wake up early and set aside time to go through scripture and be taught by Jesus.

³The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery.

Now the Pharisees are religious, legalistic leaders who emphasized a very strict, public adherence to the religious law. That means they tried to look pure and seem holy.

They value appearance over justice or mercy or grace.

Even though they are described as teachers of the law, they're not the ones that are here early teaching.

They brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

She was caught in the act. This isn't after the fact, this isn't someone told us this happened, they said she was caught and they dragged her here and made her stand before the group.

Where is the man? If this is an accusation of adultery, why didn't they bring him?

This is all part of their elaborate set up to trap Jesus in front of a crowd, and they're going to ask him an impossible question.

They say:

In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say, Jesus?"

⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

Why is this a trap? We are going to answer that.

What is a trap question? Have you ever been asked a question where it doesn't matter how you answer it, there's just no right answer?

Here is the dilemma.

If Jesus says, yes, she was caught in adultery and the law says you have to stone her, then he's loses his reputation as a gentle, kind, and gracious friend to sinners.

Not only this, but the Jewish people could not legally enforce capital punishment. They were under Roman rule and were not allowed to do so.

If Jesus says “yes”, not only is his reputation damaged, but he can be accused of treason against the Roman Empire.

If Jesus says “no” he would then be accused of breaking the law of Moses and lose his credibility as a teacher.

They want to make it so that Jesus can’t answer either way.

But let’s real look at their claim. They said that the law of Moses commands us to stone her.

The Law of Moses is found in the Old Testament and encompasses 600 plus commandments that governed Israel’s religious, moral and civil life. Within the 600 are the famous 10 commandments – you shall not commit murder, you shall not steal, you shall not commit adultery.

These commandments were meant to separate Israel from its surrounding neighbors. And if you break certain commandments, such as commit adultery, there was capital punishment.

So far, it sounds like the Pharisees are right, until you look into the book of Deuteronomy.

When we get into Deuteronomy 22 and read what it says about adultery, it says “you shall take **both** of them – the young woman and the man.”

But we already established there is no man.

Furthermore, the law also states that there needs to be at least two witnesses who will testify of their wrongdoing.

We have a group of people who say she was caught in the act, but they’re missing the man and they haven’t identified the witnesses.

They are condemning her with a law they do not follow themselves.

Did they really care about the law, or did they care about proving their superiority? Even if it came at the expense of her shame.

1. **Self-righteousness will blind you**

It will blind you to compassion, and blind you to your own sin.

Imagine for just a second this scene.

This woman was dragged away, alone, maybe half-dressed, by a group of men, who place her before a crowd staring at her. Ready to condemn her. How do you think she felt?

But they didn't seem to care. They were willing to exploit her, as long as they could trap Jesus and prove him inferior.

We need to be careful that our human tendency toward self-righteousness doesn't blind us from having compassion for people who are also made in the image of God.

In this story thus far, there's an accused woman. There's self-righteous Pharisees. There's an impossible question.

What does Jesus do?

It says:

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.

What does that mean?

He's ignoring them. He's not looking up at this spectacle they created, he's not even staring at the accused woman like everyone else, he's not adding to her shame, he's looking down, writing.

*When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." *Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

Here's the truth about Jesus: you can't trap Him.

2. Every heart is exposed before Jesus

The Pharisees came here to expose this woman and to expose Jesus, but Jesus exposed them.

He knew exactly what was in their heart.

Hebrews 4:13 say "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account"

Jesus calls them out on their hypocrisy, on their motives, and on their self-righteousness.

He also didn't let them walk all over her. He said something.

We also need to take our cue from Jesus. Sometimes there is a need to listen, and sometimes you gotta say something. We have to stand up for what's right.

And if you don't know what to say, ask for wisdom. James 1:5 says that if anyone lacks wisdom, you should ask God, and he will give it to you.

You were given power to be a witness and testify about the living God.

In this text, Jesus used his wisdom to answer what seemed like an impossible question from the Pharisees. And in doing so, he revealed their heart motive.

The text says that: *At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time.*

Another translation says that they walked away, being convicted of their own conscience.

We can recognize now that there are two groups of people here in the passage.

One who has committed an outward, overt, clear sin, and another group who has sinned in their heart. There is public sin, and there is private sin.

When Jesus says the one who has no sin can throw the first stone, he is saying there is no difference in value between those groups of people. One is not better than the other.

Let's also look closely at what He did.

It says in the passage that Jesus bent down to the ground twice to write on the floor.

They were there to look down on the woman. But when Jesus came and bent down in front of the crowd, they would have to look down on him and not her.

There is only one person in this passage who was without sin. There was only one person who was qualified to pick up a stone, and he didn't.

Sometimes we expect condemnation from Jesus, when He actually wants to show us mercy.

There has only ever been one perfect, sinless person who has walked this earth. Yet, he did not shame us, but He humbled himself and bore our sin and shame on the cross.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The text says that Jesus wrote on the ground with his finger. Not just once, but two times.

No one knows what Jesus wrote. It's not recorded. We cannot know what he wrote, we don't know why he wrote, but we can recognize patterns.

Is there anywhere else in Scripture where God went down twice and wrote something using his finger?

In the book of Exodus, it says that God came down on Mount Sinai and inscribed the 10 Commandments onto two stone tablets with His finger.

When Moses comes down from the mountain and he sees the Israelites worshipping an idol, breaking the commandments God just wrote, he throws the tablets down and they break.

God comes down again and re-writes the same laws onto new tablets with His finger.

The Pharisees were trying to back Jesus into a corner by saying here is the law, what are you going to do about it?

They were trying to condemn him using the word, but He is the word. And you can't twist what He wrote.

⁹At 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.

Why older first? The longer you live, the more opportunity you had to sin.

⁹Until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

The crowd is gone, the Pharisees are gone, the accusations are gone and now it is just her and Jesus.

At some point in your life, it will just be you and Jesus. And we all have to decide how will we respond to Him.

¹⁰Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

¹¹"No one, sir," she said. (In other translations, she says "No one, Lord").

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

What a beautiful ending for a woman who must have felt like she was on the brink of death.

She expected judgement, and she received mercy. He doesn't let her leave condemned, and he doesn't let her leave unchanged. He says go now, and leave your life of sin.

In this passage, everyone is exposed, but not everyone stays with Jesus.

The Pharisees are convicted, but they walk away the same.

The Scripture only captures the woman speaking once, but the moment she does speak, she calls Jesus Lord.

Though they knew the scripture; the Pharisees could not recognize God at work. But she who now knew Jesus's mercy was able to recognize Him as Lord.

She had an encounter with Jesus that set her on the path to transformation.

Maybe you can see yourself in the life of the Pharisee, whose holy appearance hid secret sin. It's easy to perform in church and maintain appearances, but be struggling on the inside.

Or maybe you can see yourself in the life of the woman, and you have shame, or maybe a habitual sin and you're not sure if Jesus is going to condemn you.

But the question isn't whether Jesus will condemn you but will you stay with Jesus and allow Him to transform you?

He takes you as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you where you are.

If you remain with him, **Jesus will transform you.**

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

Do you need to stop hiding or running from Jesus? Do you need to let go of self-righteousness and embrace humility? Do you need to just spend alone time with Jesus?

Even if you don't have all the answers, if you come to Jesus and stay with him, He will transform you.