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Series: The Gospel of John
Message: mercy Meets Truth

Transcribed Message
October 26, 2025
John 7:53-8:11

We return this morning to our exposition of the Gospel of John. We broke off from last week, and Lowell did an incredible job of just encouraging us in Psalm 73. So, we come back to our exposition of the Gospel of John this morning, a section that if you look in the 8th chapter in, I am sure, all our Bibles, there is a note. There is a bracket or a footnote telling you something is kind of unique and special about this section in John's Gospel. When we looked at that two weeks ago, our conclusion at the end of that was that God has given to us a trustworthy Word.

And while it is true that the majority probably of New Testament scholars do not think this section that we're looking at this morning was in John's original Gospel, they also believe that it is almost certainly an authentic story from the life of Christ. I think there's benefit for us to look at it. In fact, just this last week, I came across an article entitled, "What Do Miniature Codices Tell Us About Early Christianity?" What do miniature codices tell us about early Christianity? Miniature codices are not pets that they had in the 1^s century. They're little books, miniature codices. We have some from the 2nd century, we have more from the 3rd and 4th century. They were very small little books, 4 to 5 inches in size, and they would literally at times wear them around their neck. But they would be portions of the Word of God and some other things as well. And I share that with you to just reemphasize what we looked at two weeks ago, that yes, there was an oral tradition, that the life and ministry of our Lord was passed down through stories and through conversations, and so there was this oral tradition, likely one of them that we're looking at this morning.

But there was also a textual tradition. There was the writing and the reading of the Word of God. In fact, it was kind of fascinating in this article where the author was speaking about the fact that even in the early centuries, while they did not have the Bible in their own

language to the extent that we do, there was still encouragement that they would read the Bible and they would consider the wonderfulness of God's Word. So that's what we're going to do this morning. We're going to turn to John chapter 8 because one of the stories that is loved so very much is, I believe, this story in John 8.

Here's our big idea this morning. We all come to Jesus in the very same way, don't we? We all come in the same way. We all come with a sense of our own guilt, of our own condemnation, our own brokenness, our need that we just sang about. We are all exposed before a holy and righteous God, and the wonder of the gospel is that God takes people like us and He clothes us with the righteousness of Christ.

A quick review. I'll take us back to where we were a couple weeks ago when we considered this textual problem in greater detail, but I just want to step through a number of things with you. We're going to acknowledge again the issues that are a part of this passage, but we are going to speak to it and we're not going to ignore it. Again, it may not have been in John's original gospel, but again, I just emphasize that it almost certainly was a part of the life and ministry of our Lord, perhaps added a few centuries later in this part of John's gospel.

We're not going to base, secondly, we're not going to base any, I probably should have added the word new, but we're not going to base any doctrine, point of doctrine on this story because of the textual issues that we talked about. Or maybe I could even say we're not going to base any point of doctrine on this story alone. I think both of those things are a part of that. One of the questions that as a reader of the Bible, when you come to a passage like this where there is an acknowledged issue with regard to some of the questions of its authenticity with being in the original documents, is you ask the question, is there anything in this story that is out of step with the rest of Scripture? And as you ask that question of this story, you say, no, there isn't. There isn't anything in this story that causes you to pause and go, wow, I've never heard anything like that before. You ask this question, is there, within this story, points of agreement with the rest of Scripture? And you say, yes, there is. This is an accurate picture and an accurate accounting of how Jesus interacted and dealt with people. And then I think you simply ask the question, does this

portray the life and ministry of our Lord? And again, the answer is yes. So, you look at it in that way, and you conclude that we can benefit by looking at this story together. We'll see that thirdly that there is in fact, I think, something of a logical flow to the story being added here.

Now we mentioned a couple weeks ago that in some of John's gospel accounts, it's put in other places. It seems to me that you could stop reading at verse 52, they replied, are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee. And you could go over to chapter 8 and verse 12 and read, again Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. And you could do that and not read verses 1 through 11 and you wouldn't go, there's something missing here. This doesn't make sense. So, there is a sense in which it does flow without this passage, but there's also a sense in which it fits very nicely. And we'll see some of that as we go along.

In fact, I think one of the interesting things is when you get to the end of chapter 8 and verse 59, we read that they took up stones intending to kill Jesus. Well, isn't it kind of interesting that here this story, Jesus has a woman come to Him, and they want to stone her. So, there is, I think, an argument that could be made on either side of that.

And then finally, we know the church loves this story. I had someone come up to me two weeks ago after we dealt with this and they said, this is one of my favorite stories in the Bible. And I said, that's perfectly okay, that's great. I love it too. It is a story that the church loves, but here's the interesting thing. The culture loves this story too. Now isn't that fascinating? The church loves this story, but our culture loves this story. And for two totally different reasons, right? The church loves this story because it speaks to the grace and the mercy and the truth and the interaction of Jesus in such a difficult time in this woman's life. And it really, truly is a revelation of John 1:14, isn't it? And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. And that's what this story is.

It's a beautiful picture of Jesus relating to a woman in an incredibly difficult time. Why does the culture love this story? The culture loves this story because they think it teaches what they want it to teach. And what our culture wants this story to teach is that

sexual sin is no big deal. I mean, just read the story. Jesus just lets her off. That's the way the world, the culture comes to this story. They see it in a totally different light and, of course, they misrepresent the story because they misrepresent the life and ministry of our Lord. But, you know, we live in a culture in which all forms of entertainment, all forms of music, all forms of, you know, sitcoms and movies, in general, have a storyline very often in which matters of unfaithfulness, adultery, fornication, sexual sin is just made light of, isn't it? In fact, it's oftentimes the point of humor. And so, I think it's just kind of fascinating that we have in this account a story that the church loves, and we have a story that the world loves because they take a very different perspective than we do.

So, let's look at a most evil conspiracy. And to me, it begins with a morning just like any other morning. You know, when you think of the life of Christ, it begins with a morning just like all the others. I just want you to see this in three different ways. First of all, it begins by Jesus going to the Mount of Olives and most likely going there to pray. When verse 53 says, they went each to his own house. So, all the people that had been gathered there went to their homes, verse 1, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now, if you're familiar enough with the Gospels and you're familiar with the life of Christ, you know that that is a very common thing that the Gospel writers record for us. That Jesus would be teaching during the day, especially as his ministry develops in Judea. He would minister in the temple area during the day and then in the evening, the Gospel writers would often say he would go to the Mount of Olives. And right close by the Mount of Olives, of course, is Bethany where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived. And we know he went there often.

But listen to what Luke says regarding this matter. In Luke 21 and verse 37: "And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the Mount called Olivet. And early in the morning, all the people came to him in the temple to hear him." And then Luke also says in the 23rd chapter that while he was often on the Mount of Olives, he was often there praying. And so, I think John probably is giving us some indication here that that's exactly the pattern. So, it starts off, this chapter, this story starts off almost like any other day in the life of our Lord.

The second thing I see is he goes to the temple area to teach. So early in the morning, verse 2, early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and he taught them. Now notice he came early in the morning. Early in the morning. I was wondering if in following the example of Jesus, we should move our start time back to earlier in the morning. Could I get a 7.30 a.m. amen? Could I get an 8.30? Jesus started off his day early in the morning. And I think it's kind of interesting, isn't it? Because here we read that he starts off early in the morning going back to the place, remember, where he's gone now day after day, having come to the Feast of Tabernacles in the middle of the week. Back in chapter 7, 45 and 46, remember the temple guards were sent to arrest him. And there he was, right in front of everybody. And they come back to the Sanhedrin, and they have no Jesus. And their answer is, we just couldn't arrest this man. He's just unique. He's different. He's unlike anybody we'd ever heard. He's not arrestable. And so here he is again. He's in the same place, doing the same thing.

What a contrast, though, between this statement in verse 2, and remember, look back at chapter 7 and verse 37. On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out. Remember, we noted that, how different that was. On that day, he stood up and he literally cried out, which is, remember that word that speaks of shouting. It was a loud declaration. Well here, it's much more the common practice that the rabbi is in the temple area. It says he's sitting and he's teaching, and all these people are gathering around him. And you can just imagine if you were back in that setting, word began to spread in the temple area. Jesus is back. He's over in this area and all these people are coming to hear him.

Now here's the third way. It's like any other day because you have the scribes and the Pharisees trying to entrap him. So, verse 3: "The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and placing her in the midst, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So, what do you say?'"

Now the first thing we note is these are familiar foes, aren't they? These are familiar foes to us. We've seen this interaction between the religious leaders and Jesus, but here's

an interesting side note. When the writer of this story describes these leaders, he calls them scribes and he calls them Pharisees. One of the reasons New Testament scholars don't think this section was in John's original gospel is because John never refers to scribes and Pharisees. He does it in other ways. He never talks about scribes, so that's kind of a side note as to why they think this may have been written by somebody else.

Scribes were the theologians of that time. Scribes were the ones who studied the law, and they came up with rules for people to follow. And then the Pharisees were the ones who would receive from the scribes the interpretation of the law and the rules and the Pharisees would make sure that you were keeping the law and keeping the rules. Now I don't know, what would you rather be? The guy who gets to think up the rules or the one who gets to make sure everybody follows them? And maybe you'd like to be both, right? That would be the ultimate. But here you are, that's what the scribes and Pharisees did. They studied the law. They studied the oral traditions of the Jewish people, and they came up with the rules that people were to live their life by and then they made sure that people were in fact keeping those rules.

Now here is what's not familiar. If all of that is familiar, then this is what's not familiar and that is an indescribable evil. This is an indescribable evil. This is utterly disgraceful. What we're reading and what is being described for us here falls into a category like we haven't seen before. So, let's just unfold this story a little bit. Remember it's the Feast of Tabernacles. The feast is officially over. But the Feast of Tabernacles as we've said now for a number of weeks was like the high point of the Jewish festival season. It was a time of great joy, and it was a time of celebration. It was just a very festive occasion. So, there was a lot of joy and happiness expressed. And that's the setting that we find ourselves in here.

The religious leaders are really at the point of the spear of this story as we might think that they would be. But the thing that's so jarring when you step back and think about what we're reading here is here we are in this most festive occasion, this time of celebration, time of remembering the faithfulness of God to His people. And here are the religious leaders described as the scribes and Pharisees. They're the point of the spear of

what is utterly an indescribable and utterly disgraceful activity. How dishonoring to God that the religious leaders of the day would be the ones that are initiating this because as Jesus sits and is teaching, suddenly there's this commotion.

Suddenly there's this parade of people making their way through the crowd, no doubt calling out for people to move so that they could usher this shamed woman into the presence of the Lord and before all these other people as well. So, it's just a despicable and terrible thing that's happening here. A setting that had been previously, no doubt, very welcoming, very comfortable, very engaging as Jesus is teaching this crowd, suddenly becomes very uncomfortable and filled with all this additional commotion.

I want you to see four things. Four reasons why I describe this in the way that I do are these. The text says that they caught her. Now, when you read that, what's the first thing that you want to know? They caught her. What about him? Why didn't they catch him? Why didn't they bring him? Where is the him? You don't have adultery without a him and a her. And so here the question is begging to be answered, what happened? Did he escape? Was he faster than the scribes and Pharisees? Was it possible that he, in fact, had been let go? Is this simply a picture of the chauvinism of these men in their day?

But then notice if she's been caught, then there have to be witnesses. There have to be witnesses. She's been caught in the act. The law was very clear. It was not a common thing for a charge to be brought against a couple like this just because of what the law required, the stringency of the law. And in fact, when we read and study the first century, there are very few times when this case that is being described here was carried out. So, it was rare. But there had to be witnesses to what was happening. In fact, there had to be two witnesses. They can't just see this couple walking down the street holding hands in a way that wasn't appropriate. They can't see them just coming out of a place that draws questions as to what are they doing there? No, that's not what the law required. The story speaks to the fact that they caught her. They caught her and him in adultery.

There were literally witnesses to the activity that is described here, which causes us then thirdly to think this is almost certainly a setup. This is something that may very well describe why the guy isn't there. Because he was a part of the setup to bring about this

charge against this young lady. And by the way, it's probably almost certainly a young lady, because if they're asking Jesus to see to it that this woman is stoned to death, the law only required that one be stoned to death, not if you were married, but if you were engaged to be married, which was under Jewish law very much like being married in terms of the formal declaration that you've made. So, it's likely that she's a very young lady.

It's likely also I think that the guy is part of the plan, which then leads me fourthly to simply say this is an absolute gross abuse of the law of God. What a sham for these religious leaders. What empty religion did they expose from their own heart to so abuse the law of God in such a way to engineer, to set up, to bring about an act like this in the life of this young lady simply for the purpose of what? Well, simply for the purpose of catching Jesus somehow in some breaking of the law.

So that's what we see in verse six, right? This they said to test him. It's the same playbook that we've seen over and over again. Their hatred for Jesus is literally on full display. Their hatred for Jesus is such that they will do literally anything to entrap Him in such a way that they can bring a charge against Him. And remember back in verse five when we saw now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So, what do you say? The you is emphatic. It's like you, Jesus, you. What do you say about this? They're really zeroing in on what He has to say about this. They're trying to pit Him against the law. So, if Jesus comes out and says, well, you know, all things considered, I think we should let her go. Well, then they're going to obviously say, so you're against Moses. You're against the law. We thought you were a keeper of the law. We thought you were an upholder of the law. So, they're trying to ensnare Him in that way. If He says, yeah, I agree, the law says that you should stone her, then clearly it goes against much of His reputation for one who welcomed sinners, for one who invited them to come into His presence and to receive the forgiveness that He offers. So, they're trying to catch Him on the horns of a dilemma and even pit Him against the law of Rome, which didn't even allow for the Jewish people to enact capital punishment.

But here's the thing, it's always a risky thing to try to trap Jesus, isn't it? It's always a risky thing. I mean, you read the Gospels and they think time after time they've got Him.

You know, hey, Jesus, here's a coin. Who do we give this to? Is this to Caesar or is this, you know, to God? Every time they think they have Him, He shows incredible wisdom and skill. And I think that's what we see again here. You do it to your own peril if you think you're going to trap Jesus. So why is that? Because Jesus is a man like no other man.

Look at this in verses 6 through 11. And before we even get into the details of this, just note this for our own personal application. Just consider and reflect how Jesus responded to people who were incredibly antagonistic towards Him, who literally had one goal in life, and that was to agitate against Him, to find some way to cause Him to stumble, to find some way in which He might commit an offense. I mean, I suppose at different points in our life we all have somebody or some circumstance that's kind of like that, don't we? Maybe it's in the past, maybe it's coming, where we have somebody in our life that seems always to be antagonistic towards us, always to be agitating against us. And what do we learn here from our Lord? Man, what a picture of the grace of God in reacting to people like that in our life.

I want you to see five things. First of all, we want to know what Jesus wrote, don't we? Verse 6: This they said to test Him, that they might have some charge to bring against Him. So, here's the woman. She's been brought in with His great commotion. The charge has been brought. They want to know what Jesus is going to do. Do we stone her? Do we let her go? Verse 6, they said this to test Him. Jesus bent down and He wrote with His finger on the ground. We want to know what Jesus wrote, don't we?

It's amazing how much has been written about something that we might not ever know. I don't know, would you be bold enough to go up to Jesus in heaven and say, hey, Jesus, could you tell me what you wrote with your finger in the dirt there? I think there's probably a lot of other things that would be on our list before that one, right? But here, some people say, He was just trying to give Himself some extra time. He was trying to think of what to say. So, because He didn't know what He wanted to say right away, He just bent down and started writing in the dirt. I don't really think that's the one, is it? I mean, this is the Son of God. He's not like you and me. When one of our kids comes to us and asks us a question we either don't know the answer to or don't want to answer and we just say, well,

that's a good question for your mom. If you've taught in a classroom, you know what it's like to get asked a question and you're just not quite sure what the answer is. So, you say something like, well, that's a good question, and then you repeat the question all the while your mind is trying to think of an answer, right? Well, that's not what's happening here'

But here are some possibilities. For instance, how about this? What if Jesus was writing Exodus 23 and verse 1, you shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. That'd be a great one. Maybe just write the reference, right? Exodus 23. What about Exodus 31, where the law of God, we're told, was written how? The law of God, Moses says, was written with the finger of God. You think Jesus in stooping down and writing in the dirt is just causing them pause to think about the fact that, yeah, God gave us this law that we're abusing, and He gave us the law with His finger, Moses says in Exodus 31:18. How about this one? How about Daniel chapter 5? Remember when the hand appeared during the banquet of Belshazzar, and a hand appeared and a finger wrote on the wall, "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin". It translated as, you have been weighed in the scales and found wanting. I think that would have been a great one. At the end of the day, we don't know. All of this happens, Jesus bends down and He begins to write in the dirt.

We do know what Jesus said. Look at verse 7. And as they continued to ask Him, He stood up and said to them, let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her. They're relentless at the beginning of that verse, right? They continued to ask Him, now, I suggest to you, there are two verses in the Bible that the world knows better than any others and loves them both. And maybe you could add John 3:16 at least to just the reference. The world has seen John 3:16, and they may not know the verse. They probably don't know what the verse means, but they would say, I've seen that. But I think the two verses that the world loves out of the Bible are Matthew 7:1. Judge not that you be not judged. Everybody's heard that one. When you step into any kind of moral issue, somebody is quick to remind you, judge not that you be not judged. And then John 8:7, right? He who is without sin. Yeah, be careful. Be careful that you're not the first one casting the stone.

So, what does that mean? What does Jesus mean when he says, yeah, if you are without sin, then you go ahead and cast the first stone? This is what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that Jesus is requiring sinlessness as a prerequisite to making any kind of judgments. I mean, if that were the case, there would be no judgments made of any kind, anywhere, any place, right? There would be no courtroom justice. There would be no ecclesiastical justice. There simply would not be because we're all sinners. When you get your next call to serve on jury duty, just try writing down, I can't because I'm a sinner. That's not what Jesus is saying. Clearly, the whole rest of the New Testament and the scriptures speak against that.

It is, in fact, saying to us, I think, this. You can't disregard the very law that you profess to honor and abuse it in such a way that you're carrying out judgment against another. When Jesus says, let him who is without sin cast the first stone, he's calling out their hypocrisy. They're willing to abuse the law to capture a woman for breaking the law. And Jesus says you simply can't do that. It's the same thing that Matthew 7:1 means. Judge not that you be not judged. He's calling out self-righteous judgment there. He's not saying never make a judgment because when you read on in Matthew 7, there's all kinds of judgments that Jesus calls us to make. But he's saying don't do it in self-righteousness. It's the log and sliver principle, isn't it? Don't be looking to get a log out of somebody else's eye or a sliver out of somebody else's eye when you've got a log sticking out of yours.

It's what Paul said in Galatians. Listen to Galatians 6:1. Brothers and sisters, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Jesus is calling their deception out, their self-righteousness out, their hypocrisy out. And he's reminding us that we too easily demand justice in somebody else's life when we want mercy and grace in ours. And so here, we want to live by one standard. We want other people to live by a different standard.

I think thirdly, we really want to know what Jesus wrote, right? Verse 8, after they hear what Jesus says, yeah, if you are sinless, you go ahead and cast the first stone, verse

8, and once more he bent down and he wrote on the ground. I just think he's giving these men more time to hear and to consider what he's just said. We'd love to know again what it is that he wrote. Someone suggested at this point that he literally began to write their names and the sins that they hadn't dealt with in their life. One by one by one, what happens?

Well, look at point 4. We know the response of the men in verse 9. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Look at verse 9. What is it that stands out when you read verse 9? But when they heard it, they went away one by one. Isn't that fascinating? When they heard it. Jesus wrote it on the ground. But when they heard it? The truth of what was written begins to ring in their ears with such force that their conscience begins to overwhelm them with guilt and one by one, we read, they slink away, the older ones first and then the younger. Why the older ones first? Someone said maybe they had more sins. Maybe they had more sense. They realized the end was on them, right?

And then what do you have? You have the woman and Jesus standing alone. No doubt the crowd fascinated by this exchange is still there as well, but it's Jesus and the woman standing alone. Augustine says of this moment, it is mercy and misery left together. Mercy and misery left together.

Let's wrap up with point 5. We really need to be clear about what Jesus said to this woman in this moment and what it means because look at verse 10 and 11. Jesus stood up and he said to her, woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, no one, Lord. And Jesus said, neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on, sin no more.

Three things. Jesus is not saying everything is okay. Sin is no big deal. That's not what he's saying. That's what the world wants to draw out of this story. They want to hear Jesus' words and say, see, I told you so. This really isn't that big of a deal. But what they overlook is that Jesus consistently speaks about marriage as being sacred and a covenant relationship that is to last a lifetime between a man and a woman. It is that Jesus, like all the rest of the writers of Scripture, holds to a high standard of sexual ethical behavior. That is the consistent message of Jesus and others. After all, it's Jesus who will say in the

Sermon on the Mount that if a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery in his heart. And they had reduced the law to simply physical acts and that was it. Jesus says, no, it's much more than that. Clearly the standard that Jesus lifts is a high one. He doesn't condemn her, not because adultery didn't matter. He doesn't condemn her because he wasn't one of the witnesses to the very thing that the law required that he be. The woman was brought to him. He was not a witness to what happened.

I think secondly, Jesus is saying sin is a big deal. Sin is a big deal, but get this – the cross is bigger still. I believe that's what's happening here. He's looking ahead to the very reason that he has come into this world. He's looking ahead and he's saying, is there no one here to condemn you? Well neither do I. Because I'm getting ready to bear your condemnation on the cross of Calvary. I'm getting ready to deal with what you couldn't possibly deal with on your own. It is the fact that John 3:16, 17, and 18 have already been a part of Jesus' ministry. For God so loved the world that he gave his only 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. Whoever believes is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already because they have not believed in the name of the Son of God. The world is already under condemnation. That's why Jesus can say he didn't come into the world to condemn the world. No, the world was already under condemnation from Genesis 3. Jesus does not overlook her sin because he will, in fact, be condemned for her and for us.

And then finally, Jesus is saying, go and sin no more. Not because you fear being stoned to death. Not because you fear the ramifications of the law. But go and sin no more because you have met God and you have been rescued by his grace. Now, I write that point because I hope that's how this story ends because the writer doesn't tell us that precisely, does he? But I hope that's how this story ends. I hope one day we'll encounter this lady in glory, and we will share in the wonder of her story. We're not told that, but I think the fact that she stayed while all these men, her accusers, were slipping away while Jesus was sitting or kneeling and writing in the dirt, not looking up at what was happening. She could have just as easily slipped away at that moment, too. She didn't. I think she didn't because

she recognized that she was in the presence of a man that she had never been in the presence of before. I think she sensed in Jesus something that she had never sensed before. And I think she stayed because she was engaged with someone that was unique and special and different than anyone she had ever encountered.

And I ask you, how do you want to meet Jesus? Do you want to meet him as your savior? Do you want to meet him as your judge? Because we're going to meet him in one of those two ways. You and I are either going to meet Jesus one day, and he is our savior, and he is going to welcome us because we're covered literally in his righteousness. Or we're going to meet him as our judge. And there we'll be standing in our own righteousness, which is a righteousness that cannot save. So there the question is for us.

What do we take away? The story is the message of the gospel. The story is the message of the gospel. We're forgiven that we might be holy. Don't confuse the order. We're forgiven that we might be holy. A lot of people are trying to be holy. These scribes and Pharisees were trying to be holy, but all their self-effort simply ended in hypocrisy and self-righteousness. We are, in fact, forgiven that we might be holy, set apart by the grace and the goodness of God.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank you for this story. We thank you for the way our Lord engaged with people. We thank you for this amazing story of forgiveness and restoration. Lord, we pray for ourselves. We pray for anyone here this morning, anyone listening, anyone watching. Father, we ask that by your Spirit you will cause us to see that we are in the same condition that this woman was in, apart from Christ. That we are guilty, that we're lost, that we're separated from you by sin. But what Jesus did for us on the cross was to, once and for all, pay the penalty for what sin has done in our lives and in our world. We pray that by your Spirit you would open eyes to understand that glorious gospel. We thank you for all that you have done and will do, in Jesus' name, amen.