

Lent 2023

CHANGED

THE TRANSFORMING TOUCH OF CHRIST



Week #2: An Adulterous Woman

Read John 8:1-11

In John 8, a woman who was supposedly caught in adultery was dragged before Jesus and the other religious leaders. The Pharisees reminded Jesus that, “the Law of Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”. If Jesus sides with the woman he’ll be accused of not obeying the scriptures. On the other hand, if he sides with the teachers of the law the crowd is going to wonder “where is this gracious kingdom of God that has been preached?”.

If you can imagine where everyone is positioned in this scene. I imagine Jesus walking up and putting himself in between the Pharisees and the woman. John 8:6 says that Jesus knelt down and wrote on the ground. The Greek word used for “write” here is *kategraphen* which means *to write against*. While John doesn’t say it outrightly I wonder if he wrote out the sins of the religious leaders on the ground for them all to see? John 8:9 tells us that one by one they all saw what Jesus wrote, dropped their stones, and walked away. What could cause them to do this? I believe in that moment God was reminding them that they themselves hadn’t upheld the law perfectly even though they liked to make everyone around them think they did.

Back to envisioning the scene. I imagine Jesus being in between the Pharisees and the adulterous woman. Better said, I see Jesus standing in between those that represented the Law and the sinner. I see the cross. I see Jesus living out the Gospel. Jesus came to live out the Law and fulfill it sinlessly when we couldn’t. Jesus came to give us grace and salvation when we were deserving of death. Jesus came to remind us that a “religious spirit” has no place in the kingdom of God. What Jesus said to the woman is said to us, “Neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin”. Spend time repenting today and celebrate the fact that God forgives you!

1. If you imagine this scene being played out in your head, where do you position Jesus, the woman and the Pharisees? Let’s say Jesus did put himself in between the “Law keepers” and the “sinner”, what thoughts and feelings are brought up to your mind and heart?
2. In what areas of your life do you need to repent of a “religious spirit” and drop the stones you had aimed at others?
3. The Bible teaches us in Luke 12:2 and 1 Corinthians 4:5 that all of our unconfessed sins and secret motives will be brought into the light much like this woman’s. Sin tempts us to hide and hope that the sin is not found out. But reread the passage, how does Jesus deal with the woman? How does this make you think God will deal with you?

Week #3: A Bleeding Woman

Read Mark 5:25-34

The woman with the issue of blood was

- A radical risk-taker – she went against the rules of her time to reach for her healing and blessing.
- Imperfect but unwavering in her faith – she had some beliefs that were not quite true but she trusted in Jesus' power.
- Persevering – the crowd she had to go through was no ordinary crowd, but she pushed through anyway even though she could have been crushed.
- Fearful but faith-filled – After she touched Jesus and he turned around, Scripture says “she came trembling”. She was not the most courageous but she did it scared anyway.

Trusting God is simple yet it is so difficult a lot of the time. But hey, if life isn't easy, then what would our faith journey be? That's why we have to stay on our knees. As you consider the story of the bleeding woman, pray for:

- Courage to take godly steps of faith
- Strength to push through difficult situations to access a miracle
- Knowledge of things that might be standing between you and your faith in God like erroneous, superstitious beliefs
- Strength to give God your complete attention just as He gives his complete attention
- Daily peace and assurance of your personal salvation in Jesus.

1. What need do you currently have that you can bring to Jesus?
2. Is there a situation in your life or the life of your loved ones, that seems hopeless without Jesus?
3. Spend time praying and asking God to give you the courage to trust Him, to go to Him, to let Him meet your needs.

Week #4: A Group of Children

Read Mark 10:13-16

This passage starts out by telling us that the parents brought their children to Jesus. What an important lesson this first verse is for parents today. The act of bringing our children to Jesus consistently will have a great impact on the lives of our children. Christian parents are called to create a holy habit of bringing their children to Jesus so that he can touch and bless their hearts. Children are precious to Jesus and he wants all the children to come to him. Jesus then teaches his disciples that they need to become like children in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven. So, we as Christ followers, are also called to become like children- we are called to have child-like faith. Children have many great qualities that we are also to possess. We are to depend and rely on the work of our Savior Jesus Christ, not our own works. People in the time of Jesus were convinced that the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven was through good works. Jesus is teaching us that salvation is not earned. Salvation is a gift that was freely given to us. Jesus is inviting us to become like children and have a real relationship with him. This passage challenges me to spend more time with Jesus through consistent prayer, and the daily reading of His Word. I am also encouraged by this reminder that salvation is not earned, that I cannot earn my way to heaven by doing good works. Good works and good fruit will flow from our hearts as we continue to grow our loving relationship with Jesus.

1. What stands out to you from this passage? Why?
2. Jesus invites us to become like children. What are some child-like qualities that you would like to possess? How can you practice these qualities?
3. What are some practical things you can do to grow your personal relationship with Jesus?
4. Spend some time thanking God for your salvation. Ask the HOly Spirit to guide you as you seek to spend more time with Jesus.

Week #5: A Rich Man

Read Mark 10:17-23

At first glance, this encounter with Jesus can make him seem a little harsh. He asks this wealthy young man to give up EVERYTHING as his stipulation to follow him. Doesn't that seem like a little much? A big ask? And yet... Jesus is looking at his heart. Jesus knows that although this man may have a heart for God, he has a bigger heart for riches. Jesus knows that for this man to truly be a disciple, his priorities will need some re-ordering. Jesus doesn't ask this of the young man to be mean, harsh, or restricting. He desires that we all have abundant life (John 10:10b), and abundance in Christ means surrendering to him as Lord – and letting go of earthly idols. When Jesus looks at you, when he looks at your heart, what does he see? How would this conversation go if Jesus was having it with you?

1. Jesus knew that for the rich young man, the one thing that captivated his heart was his wealth. What is it that captivates your heart? What gets your time, attention, and priority?
2. Think of a time when you believed the lie that God was a God of restriction or limitation. Write down your thoughts.
3. Is there something that Jesus might be asking you to “give up” or let go of? Maybe it is a temporary release for the season of Lent, or perhaps it is supposed to be something more permanent. Ask God to show you what is taking first place in your life and for the courage to lay it down.
4. Write a prayer to God thanking him that he loves you and wants the best for you. Praise him for his abundance and goodness toward you. Picture Jesus looking at you and loving you. Respond to his heart toward you with a prayer.

Week #6: A Roman Centurion

Read Luke 7:1-10

A Centurion, a Roman soldier, seeks out Jesus and asks him to heal his servant. This Centurion has incredible faith. He understands that just as he has authority over men, and can say things and the men will do it, Jesus has authority over this world and even illness and when He speaks, it will happen. The centurion has so much faith that he even recognizes that Jesus does not have to be present to heal his servant. Verse 9 tells us that Jesus was amazed at the Centurion's faith.

1. What comes to mind or do you wrestle with, when you read this passage?
2. Think about a time when your faith has been tested. Write down a brief summary of your situation.
3. What did you do, or could you have done, to increase your faith?
4. Write down the names of one or two people in your life who have incredible faith. Ask them pray for you and with you, to increase your faith.

Week #7: A Criminal

Read Luke 23:39-43

We jump into this intense story quickly today. Jesus is hanging on a cross, taking our sin on Himself, dying in our place. It's a lot to take in. We might even find this passage a little difficult to sit in, to wrestle with. Our Savior is dying a horrible death, and yet we watch Him minister to the criminal next to Him. I'm struck by the way Jesus loves this man in his final hours of life. I'm struck by the way the criminal somehow recognizes that death is not the end for Jesus or his kingdom. I'm struck by the grace extended by Jesus to this criminal dying next to him. I'm reminded of the grace I receive every day and how much I need that grace. I encourage you to read this passage again. Be willing to sit in it. Pray and ask God to teach you, rebuke you and encourage you in this passage. Write down anything that stands out to you, it doesn't need to be well thought out or be perfect grammar, just write. See what God shows you in Luke 23 today.

1. You heard what struck Jody from this text, write down what stood out to you. Why?
2. Pray and ask God to show you any sin you need to confess today. Sometimes we don't even recognize that something we are doing is sinful until we ask the Lord to show us.
3. Who are you praying for or who can you begin to pray for, that they might come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior? Write their name(s) below and spend a few minutes right now praying for a softening of their heart(s).
4. Spend some time in prayer thanking Jesus for dying on the cross to pay the price for your sin. This is a celebration, don't let the enemy heap shame on you. You are forgiven, Jesus died for you and for me. We're washed clean because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Praise God!