

## Daily Devotional, March 22, 2021 Your Mercy is Great!

***“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.” John 8:7 (NIV)***

This story from scripture is a particular favorite of mine. I find it be one of the most powerful in terms of how Jesus turns away the scribes and the Pharisees with a single pointed reminder. In the same breath that he pours mercy out on a woman who was by law, guilty. She knew it. Her accusers knew it. And Jesus knew it. Jesus forgave her sins and instructed her to sin no more. All this by holding up a mirror to her many accusers.

The moment of truth comes in the question: “which part do we play in this story?”

The scribes and Pharisees are the “bad guys”. But, where is the man who must have been caught with the woman? He was just as guilty and was nowhere to be seen. Did they put him up to entrapping this woman purely to ensnare Jesus in their trap? We don't know. Their knowledge of the law made them feel as if they had perpetrated the perfect plan. They had boxed Jesus into a corner, and in doing so, they would suppress this itinerate Rabbi and dishearten his followers.

While this woman might possibly be viewed as the damsel in distress, according to Jewish law, she is guilty. By their law she is absolutely deserving of stoning and is surrounded by a crowd that has already passed judgement on her in their minds and is ready to carry out her death sentence. There is no escape. She may be confused by why this Rabbi has decided to intervene. She may or may not even be aware of who He is.

It's a pretty easy call for us isn't it? I think that we can all see ourselves as the woman—the sinner who is shown mercy flowing from Jesus like the current of a river that has just broken through a dam. The penalty which rightfully should have been imposed is commuted by the very Lamb who was sent to pay the price for our sin.

But how could it be that easy? If we read beyond this passage, we see that each one of these accusers, from the oldest to the youngest, drops the stones they had planned to use and they each walk away without contesting Jesus. They had each gazed into the mirror of guilt held up before them and had seen their own image. They were unworthy to pass judgement. Not only were their reasons terribly questionable to us, but none of these men were without sin and were every bit as guilty as this woman was. Was not this entire crowd every bit as answerable for stoning?

***He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.***

Psalm 103:10-14 tells us that we are all so very frail. We can very easily deceive ourselves by telling ourselves that we know what is happening, or that we have grown so much spiritually, that we can fool ourselves through our own self-righteousness. Did Jesus come right out and condemn the Pharisees? He let their hearts show them their failings. We can be just as needy and just as proud. The same passage holds up the immeasurable mercy of God that is available to *all* of us. The same mercy is given to the woman, and to the scribes, to the Pharisees—and yes—even to us! We are *all* players in this scene.

***Gracious God, I praise and thank You for Your loving-kindness and great mercy which is new every morning and remains steadfast and true each and every day. You reached down to me and lifted me out of my bondage to sin and showered me with Your undeserved grace and favor. Thank You that I am now one of Your redeemed children, in Jesus' name I pray, Amen.***