

Title: Just Another Ordinary Day in the Life of Jesus  
Date: May 26, 2024  
Subject: Judgmentalism, love, forgiveness and attitude toward sin  
Scripture: John 7:53 – 8:11

Two men had a conversation on a Sunday afternoon. One had gone to church that morning. The other hadn't. "Did the preacher have a message?" "Yep." "What was it about?" "Sin." "Was he for it or against it?"

People have questions about sin: what is sin? What happens when I sin? Does God hold sin against me forever? How much sin can I do and get away with? Will terrible things happen to me if I do a bad sin? If I sin, does that mean I'm not going to heaven?

Our passage this morning is about sin. It isn't found in all Bibles. Others have notes about its authenticity or where it should be placed in the Bible. I checked a number of sources. They all agree the event is an authentic incident from Christ's life. His words and actions are consistent with what's revealed about him in other places. The principles are consistent with the rest of Scripture. The question is: where should it be placed in the Gospels?

Some feel it should be someplace in Luke's Gospel. A few who feel it fits with John have it after John gives his testimony about what he has written and before the last verse which states: "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (John 21:25).

Most keep it in John 7 & 8. They see no problem linking it to the meeting of the Sanhedrin that took place just before this. Everybody went to their own house after the meeting was done. Jesus, who wasn't part of the meeting, went to the Mount of Olives, a frequent location for him to rest and pray.

There are three characters in the drama. The first is teachers of law and Pharisees who are judgmental. Next is Jesus – love and compassion. The third is the woman - forgiveness and attitude toward sin.

Read John 7:53 - 8:11.

#### I. teachers of law and Pharisees – judgmentalism

The teachers of the law and Pharisees were viewed as "the most likely to make it to heaven." They knew the commands and the interpretations of the commands and the traditions added to the commands. They were the elite and held in high regard by people.

They were also the core of the opposition to Jesus. Their festering hatred is prevalent in this section. They used a variety of methods attempting to discredit Jesus. Our text tells us in V. 6, they were setting a trap, orchestrated to gain some misstatement or action on which they could accuse him.

Some way, somehow, someone had "happened" to catch a woman in the act of adultery. Something obvious jumps into our minds: What happened to the man? Either the woman had been trapped and the guy was allowed to escape or those who did the "catching" made excuses: "the guy was just too quick. We couldn't

catch him.” Maybe it was selective justice. It didn't matter to the religious leaders what happened to the guy as they wanted to humiliate the woman. They also ignored the provision for women to be tried in another spot.

They determined there had to be a public show. The woman was hauled in front of Jesus. Remember he's teaching...in the temple, the holy place. A crowd is present. The religious leaders pronounced the sin the woman had done, what the Mosaic Law said and then wanted to know what Jesus had to say. By the way, the guys who were experts on the Scriptures, deliberately altered what it said. Stoning was the punishment only if the woman was a betrothed virgin (Deuteronomy 22:23, 24) and both parties were to be stoned (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22).

The teachers and Pharisees hoped the dilemma for Jesus would seriously damage his credibility and reputation. If he said the law should be strictly applied thus condemning the woman and declaring she should be stoned, the people might immediately do so. This would create conflict with Rome who alone had the power to issue a death sentence. In this case it would have been more than the required punishment as they lessened the penalty for adultery to be more in line with their lax view. He'd be challenging their authority and could be accused of leading an insurrection. At the very least Jesus would seem heartless and cruel to the crowd

On the other hand, if Jesus opted for mercy - she shouldn't be punished - the leaders would say he was too lenient in applying the law and God's commands. He was condoning evil. The opposition felt they had Jesus in a vice and were turning up the pressure. They didn't see a way for him to wiggle out of this one.

What would Jesus do and say to try to get out of this predicament? Jesus didn't say anything. He bent down and wrote on the ground. This annoyed the Pharisees and their pals. They bombarded him with questions: “If you're the Christ, you know everything, right? What do you have to say?”

They finally succeeded in getting Jesus to talk. “If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Not what they anticipated. No stinging pronouncement about the woman. No ringing endorsement of the law. No call for mercy.

Then he stooped down again and wrote some more on the ground. What do you think he wrote? The 10 commandments? Specific sins of the crowd? All we have are the guesses of our sanctified imagination.

Whatever it was, combined with what Jesus said, it impacted the people. Like the scene out of a movie, one by one, beginning with the older ones, they left the presence of Jesus. They left as guilty sinners condemned by their own sin. They were guilty of judging the woman and Jesus. They had judged the woman as a depraved, irredeemable sinner whose only value was a weapon to attack their enemy. Their misguided zeal consigned her to hell. They judged Jesus as also being a sinner or worse - one who is demon possessed.

In the late 1960s a Hindu holy man named Rao flirted with fame. The mystic was so confident in his spiritual power that he announced he would walk on water before a live audience. 600 of Bombay's elite turned out to witness the spectacle held in a large garden that had a deep pool. At the appointed time, the white bearded yogi appeared in flowing robes and stepped confidently to the edge of the pool. Rao paused to pray silently. A reverent hush fell on the crowd. The holy man opened his eyes, looked heavenward, boldly stepped forward

and...disappeared beneath the water. Sputtering and red-faced, he struggled to pull himself out of the water. Trembling with rage, he shook his finger at the silent and embarrassed crowd. "One of you is an unbeliever!"

He couldn't be the one at fault. He couldn't be the problem. The same was true of the Pharisees. It's easier to look at someone else and the evil they do because it's so much more . . . just more.

Earlier Jesus had taught in the Sermon on the Mount: *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there's a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye"* (Matthew 7:1-5).

The religious leaders acted as judge, jury and executioner. No human being has the right to declare somebody as worthy of eternal death and separation from God. We don't have that capacity. Most judging comes from the desire to show themselves to be more righteous than others. It's a desire to put others down.

Jesus' taught that if we really want to help somebody with their sin, we have to deal with our own sin first. It's all about me. What have I done to offend God? What am I still doing that offends God? Get that right. Then we can gently seek to aid someone else.

*"Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.' So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another"* (Romans 14:9-13a).

## II. Jesus – love and compassion

Jesus got to the temple early in the morning when it was opening. He made himself available to people. He demonstrated courage in speaking in the face of opposition.

We don't know how long he taught before the Pharisees tried to set their trap. Jesus didn't fall into it. Instead of being cruel, dismissive and uncaring, Jesus demonstrated love to the woman and also the crowd. If they would have admitted their sins, Jesus had a lot more to say to them. But the crowd chose to leave under the weight of their sin. They had done a good job of keeping up appearances so people wouldn't notice any obvious sins. The inside was a different matter. The true nature of their lives were exposed as Jesus wrote on the ground - pride, jealousy, envy, lust, seeking praise from people, materialism.

Only Jesus and the woman were left. Jesus wasn't going anywhere. He came to teach and there was someone who needed to be taught. The woman wasn't going anywhere. She had never met a person like Jesus.

The main problem for the woman wasn't her one sin of violating the sanctity of marriage. She knew there was more. She was a sinner trapped by her sin, a life of sin stemming from her sin nature. She wouldn't be classified as a follower of Christ, a Christian, when she was hauled before him.

She needed to be freed. To put it another way, she was lost. She needed to be delivered. She needed forgiveness, complete and full forgiveness for all of her sin. This is what Jesus offered. He gave his forgiveness.

Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn the world but to save the world (John 3: 17). He didn't descend on the planet to seek and destroy like a Navy SEAL team hunting down the enemy. He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came with love, compassion, grace, mercy, kindness.

III. the woman - forgiveness and attitude toward sin.

The woman probably felt trapped. She wanted to go, but she couldn't. She stood there and waited. Her mind spinning, yet filled with an incredible sense of relief that nothing horrible had happened to her. What was going to happen next? Who was this man with the incredible power that by a few words overcame a vicious mob and caused them to slink away? What would this man say to her or do now that the crowd was gone?

v. 10. "Woman, where are they?" Where are those people who dragged you here and leveled their accusation against you...all those people who wanted you dead...who wanted me to want you to die?

"Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir."

"Then neither do I condemn you." Jesus didn't tell her she didn't have to pay attention to that command because it was old-fashioned. He didn't excuse her action. He said he didn't condemn her.

The book of Romans speaks to condemnation, rather the absence of it for those who place their trust in Christ Jesus as their Savior: *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us"* (Romans 8:1, 33, 34).

Ray Stedman writes of this good news: *"This is a reminder of the work that God has done. We love God when we trust in the full effect of his work on our behalf. Paul is looking back over the letter, and sees two great works that God has done. The first is justification. Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? Who can? It is God who justifies. Justification means that nothing and no one anywhere can accuse us successfully before God.*

*"The devil is the accuser of the brethren. He will try to accuse us constantly. This verse tells us that we must not listen to his voice. We must not listen to these thoughts that condemn us, that put us down, that make us feel that there is no hope for us. These thoughts will come — they cannot be stopped — but we do not have to listen to them. We know God is not listening to these accusations. Who can condemn us when God justifies us? Therefore we refuse to be condemned...*

*"Then Paul raises the question, "Who is he that condemns? Who is going to do this?" The only one who has the right is Jesus — and Jesus died for us. And more than that, he was raised to life for us, he is now at the right hand of God in power for us, and he is also interceding for us. So there is no chance that he is going to condemn us. This is a reference to the power that we have, by which we take hold afresh of the life of Jesus. Not only is our guilt set aside, but we have power imparted to us — his life in us, his risen life made available to us now. So we can rise up and say No! to the temptations that surround us and the habits that drag us down; we can be a victor over them. That is not a mere dogma; we are in touch with a living person. That is the glory of Christianity. The unique distinction of Christians is that we have Jesus"* (raystedman.org/daily-devotions/romans-1to8/who-condemns-you-now).

There's one more thing Jesus said to the woman. The Savior and Lord's last words: "Go now and leave your life of sin." Make a clean break. Don't go back.

Followers of Christ are called to leave our pre-Christian lives that were ruled by sin. Sometimes we don't. Sometimes we do what we know we shouldn't do. We dabble in things that don't please the Lord. We tolerate things abhorrent to him. We make excuses for our sinful thoughts, actions and words. Much like the Pharisees, we're content to deal with surface issues and ignore the matters and attitudes of the heart. We're nonchalant. We value sin more highly than what God wants. It isn't so much a matter of knowing what we should and shouldn't do but that we don't want to do what we should. Why is that the case? We enjoy sin too much. It gives us temporary pleasure. We think it's not really bothering anyone and it's not causing any harm.

Why doesn't God want his children to continue to live in slavery to sin? He takes it seriously. Sin separates people from God. Our sin led Jesus to die on the cross. He knows what's good for us. He's laid out commands and instructions for our protection from harm so we wouldn't hurt ourselves or our relationship with him or our relationship with other people. He wants us to be free and reap the benefits of being in a right relationship with him. (Romans 6:22)

We heard in the Scripture reading we're to count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ, we aren't to let sin reign in us so that we obey its desires, we're not to offer the parts of our being to sin as instruments of wickedness but rather offer ourselves to God and offer the parts of our body to him as instruments of righteousness. The reason is expressed "for sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

Later the book of Romans challenges us *"to wake up from our slumber because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; The day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature"* (Romans 13:11-14).

Don't think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Don't think of how it might be done...if the opportunity presented itself. Don't dabble in a little bit of it. Don't make excuses for it. Just stop.

Instead clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ. Think about him. Who do we love more – the sin or Jesus?

We may want to do an action to show our desire to leave the life of sin or a particular sin. Write down the sin with which you struggle. Take a nail and shove it through the paper as if the nail was attaching it to the cross of Christ. A visual reminder that Jesus has taken our sins upon himself and we're to leave them at the cross. Then dispose of the paper – in the garbage, burn it. Our sins remain with Christ.

What happens the next time we sin? run to the cross as fast as we can and leave the sin there.

Unfortunately, there's a section break with a heading after the story of the woman. Check out the next words in v. 12: "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus promises to be with us to guide and help.