

JESUS' WORD-GO AND SIN NO MORE

John 7:40-8:11 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

The knot that ties John 7:40-53 with John 8:1-11 is that both of these accounts illustrate the ministry of the Word of God. Both scenes illustrate the words of the powerless officers sent to arrest Jesus. They didn't do it and couldn't do it. All they could say to the chief priest and Pharisees was, "Never man spoke like this man." Both these accounts speak of the power of Jesus' Word. After Jesus spoke on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, we see the revelation of this one central truth about God's Word. The Word of God always powerfully divides people. Jesus came as the Prince of peace, but our world is not full of peace. Jesus brought peace to earth in His incarnation, meaning He brought in Himself the opportunity for everyone to have His peace. After calling everyone to come to Him and drink, to come and believe, so out of our hearts will flow rivers of living water, the multitude was divided. Some said, "This really is the prophet Moses prophesied would come—Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Others said, "This is the Christ/Messiah." Some others said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So, there was a division among the people over Jesus. Some wanted to arrest Jesus, but no one laid hands on Him."

The arresting officers gave only one reason to the Pharisees for not arresting Jesus. "No one ever spoke like this man!" The Pharisees angrily fired back asking them, "Have you also been deceived? Have any of the authorities (your superiors) been deceived? Have any of us as Pharisees been deceived? But this crowd who don't know the Law are deceived/accursed." Talk about a divided crowd! But even among the Pharisees, we see the first step in Jesus' secret disciple showing his colors. Some criticize Nicodemus for not saying more, but I applaud him. This is when the ruler of the Jews, John 3, the man who came to Jesus at night; this is when he started putting up a fuss with his fellow Pharisees. Nicodemus was forthright enough to challenge these Pharisees ready to crucify Jesus. He asked them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" This question from their leader got their goat and they asked him, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee?"

The Pharisees ignored the scriptural rule Nicodemus caught them on—wanting to kill Jesus on the evidence of one witness. Deuteronomy 17:4-7. Nicodemus never answered his fellow-Pharisees, but he remained silent. Nicodemus would separate himself six months later from his fellow Pharisees after Jesus was crucified. Now we read in John 7:53 that "they went each to his own house." Yet Jesus went where? "Jesus went (John 8:1) to the Mount of Olives." Why there? He had no home there, but in the shelter of the shade of those ancient olive trees, there Jesus often got alone with His Father; there He laid his head to rest on a stone. Jesus took His disciples there, but it appears Jesus went alone to this place of refuge at this time. I ask you each one today, "Where is your place for time alone with God? Where is your chair? Where do you go—for a walk, a drive, where is the room for

you and God where you shut the door? Do you have a Mount of Olives location? I suggest that each of us need to find not only a time but a place to get alone with God day by day to listen to God and to talk to Him. But what do we talk about with Jesus? He already knows everything we would say. Don't believe the old cliché, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." It's not true. It is words that hurt the most. Words destroy and cut through our soft tender flesh to the bone. Words can try to shatter our hearts for years. A place of refuge is what David needed in all the psalms he wrote—often from the damp dark inside of a cave with only a small torch or light to see to write out his prayers into psalms that we sing today. And what did David give to God in prayer? Read the psalms and you'll find even in your own little world like mine, we need a place of refuge.

A place of refuge should be our place for confession of sin to God, to be soon followed up by a confession of sin to whomever we may have sinned against. I could preach a whole message on the need for a place of refuge for us to get alone with God, to know the feeling of being in a safe place where we can pour out our very souls to God. Again, I ask you, "Where is your room, your closet, your place to get alone with the Lord?" Can you imagine as Jesus saw the arresting officers were powerless to arrest Him? Can you imagine how much Jesus felt the anguish of knowing how many in that crowd He invited to drink from His Living Water, how many of them were seeking to kill Him? Jesus had a lot to talk about with His Father, and so do we have a lot to talk about with Him as well. Jesus needed refuge away from all the accusations, and so do we. "Where's our place alone with God?"

This brings us to the main part of our text today, John 8: 2-11 as we read, "Early in the morning He came again to the temple. All the people came again to Him, and He sat down and taught them." It was a beautiful scene on the temple mount until the Pharisees got wind of where Jesus was. Then seeing the officers couldn't or wouldn't arrest Jesus, they set up a foolproof test to entrap Him. What we read is called a set-up. Who did they pay to set this up? What really happened? We don't know. But we read in verse 4, "The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery, but one Greek word added in verse 4 is an emphasis we must not miss. "The Greek word is a once only used word in Scripture—**epautophoroi**. They told Jesus, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery, in the very act. **Epautophoroi** means caught in the very act, caught in the crime itself, in the actual sin called adultery. That is significant. Why? These men were out to get Jesus. They would do anything shrewd; deceptive; and they would stop at nothing. This took some doing. But here they were all standing before Jesus with not two persons, but only one person, an adulterous woman.

Immediately we all cry out—if you found them both in the very act, why did you only bring the woman? Where is the man? The law of God—the word of God in Mosaic law was clear in Leviticus 20:10. "If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Then the law of Moses read in Deuteronomy 22:21-22 referring to a man finding out his bride to marry him is not a virgin. The text reads, "Then they shall bring out

the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house. So, you shall purge the evil from your midst. If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So, you shall purge the evil from Israel." The law of God, as hard as it seemed was not meant to be cruel, but to be a deterrent from evil. The idea of either giving up one's virginity before marriage or committing adultery as a man or woman was a capital offense. The Pharisees were not abiding by the law-- If both were caught in the very act—Both must be stoned.

For the central part of this message today, let's look at how the scribes and Pharisees used the Word of God differently from how Jesus used the Word of God. In other words, false teachers use the Word with sinful intent, whereas true teachers, as Jesus, use the Word of God with pure intent. I call us today to see clearly with me these scribes and Pharisees for who they really were. As false teachers today, the scribes and the Pharisees knew the Bible, the Old Testament like the back of their hands; they had the Word of God inscribed as it were on the inside of their eyelids. How can we learn to discern the difference in true teachers of the Word and false teachers of the Word? Let's examine three differences today.

IS THE MOTIVE IN OUR MINISTRY DECEPTIVE OR TRUE? (I.) We read in verses 2-4, Early in the morning, Jesus came again to the temple. All the people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them. 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?" All false teachers today use the Word of God with deceptive motives. True teachers of the Word, like Jesus have motives in line with the Book, the Bible—with the motives written all over the Word of God. Notice which ministers at the temple that day came to use the Word for the purpose of teaching for which the Word of God was written. We read again in v. 2 that "Jesus sat down in the temple and taught them." Notice in verse 6, "This they said to test Him, that they might have some charge to bring against Him." Do you see their deceptive trap?

Now be certain the scribes and Pharisees should have known that the motive of the Word of God that God gave Moses by His divine intention was good laws to create boundaries for His people—to help them know right from wrong—good from evil, and that some evils were capital evils so as to warn them never to cross the line of giving away their virginity or giving away the sacred bond and covenant of two people, one man and one woman bound together in marital union. Even in the New Testament, God sets boundaries for us under grace—the motives are not punitive, but to restore. We read in Galatians 6:1-2, "Brothers, 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 also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Now what is the deceptive trap of the scribes and Pharisees? They wanted Jesus to discount Moses. If Jesus would say "Stone her,"

they would be merciful and say to the multitudes, “See Jesus is too harsh.” If Jesus would not condemn her, they would say to the crowd, “Jesus discards the law of Moses. Jesus openly tolerates capital sins. I ask you, “Have you gone to others and under the guise of concern, reported their sins?” The answer to this practice in churches is found in Matthew 18:15-18. First, don’t tell it to the pastor or gossip it to others, but as it says, “Go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.”

The scribes were pushing Jesus publicly to act. Notice, Jesus first act was to bend down and write with his finger on the ground as His black board. What was Jesus writing on the ground? Was He writing the man’s name who committed the sin? Was the man paid by the scribes and Pharisees? Did Jesus write many other awful sins against the 10 Commandments like lying, stealing, murder, and idolatry? No one knows what Jesus wrote, but it was good—Never man spoke or wrote like this Man, the Son of Man, the Son of God. As Jesus wrote on the ground, v. 7, the scribes and the Pharisees persisted. “And as they continued to ask Him, He stood up and in essence said, “Obey the law, Go ahead and stone her,” but let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” And then Jesus once more bent down and wrote on the ground. Jesus was after the salvation of every scribe and Pharisee, after their conviction and confession of sin. He was after hope, salvation, and a future for this woman despite her egregious sin. The scribes and Pharisees were just using this woman as their decoy, as hunters out duck hunting. They were willing to humiliate this precious but sinful woman so they could get a better chance to entrap, arrest, and crucify Jesus. Secondly,

IS THE METHOD IN OUR MINISTRY HUMILIATION OR HEALING?

(II.) Notice 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.” For the Pharisees, this woman was not a woman but a tool. Jesus saw this woman as one for whom He soon was to die. Imagine if the story they told was true, imagine this woman’s cruel humiliation. To the scribes, this woman was a sinner they saw as having sinned far greater than they had. It’s easy to look down on others and see what despicable creatures they are, missing the fact that we all are sinners. Jesus saw this woman as one for whom He soon was to die. Jesus turned the tables. These men came to Jesus focusing all eyes on one woman’s sin. Whatever Jesus wrote, He focused everyone’s attention on their own personal sins. Do we want a pound of flesh, forgetting the methods of the Master? James 5:19-20, is plain, “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders away from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” Parents, do our methods humiliate or heal? In our words to each other as husband or wife, do we have healing words or selfish, humiliating words to show them up. We have a choice in motives and methods. Thirdly,

IS THE MISSION IN OUR MINISTRY CONDEMNING OR OF GRACE?

(III.) We know Jesus did not come to abolish the law of Moses. Jesus said, in Matthew 5:17-18, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to

you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” Think of that as Jesus spoke now to the woman in John 8:10-11, “Jesus stood up and 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.” We need the law the scribes and Pharisees were using to condemn this woman. The mission of the law is to bring God’s light, to make our sin visible to us. Paul said in Romans 7:7, “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin.” The law in itself will not change us, but it will help us learn to cry out for mercy and grace, as the law helps us understand our depravity.

We all are sinners, who need a Savior, for we all are lawbreakers. The Ten Commandments won’t save us. Legalists say, “Obey the rules.” That’s good but that’s as far as it goes. Legalists are hypocrites, pointing fingers at other’s sins, yet not considering the sinful nature of all our own souls. These scribes and Pharisees were condemning this woman while harboring the murder of Jesus in their hearts. What would happen to us, the next time we start condemning another person for their sin, if Jesus stood there by us. What would He write on the ground? Never man spoke like this Man! Never man wrote like this Man! What a powerful moment for this woman when she realized she and Jesus were left alone. The oldest Pharisees left Jesus first that day. May God be praised for the honesty of old men! Was Nicodemus in the temple that day? Did that secret disciple leave first? I don’t know but soon they all walked away. I tell you today—if you see yourself before Jesus any different than this woman saw Jesus, you have a worse problem than she had. This woman made no excuses. She never named the man or blamed him. She never said, “I was traumatized when I was young, that’s why I did it.

What a message from the grace of God this woman was given. “Where are your condemners?” At that second, God’s grace got through to this sinful adulteress. What I am going to tell you will startle you, but I will say it anyway. In that moment, this woman confessed her sins, which were many, repented, believed, and received Jesus. This woman like the repentant thief on the cross knew she was a sinner. She made no excuses—“They trapped me, and it was my one bad day.” She owned who she was—an adulteress, a sinner. How did she own it. Listen to her reply to Jesus’ question, “Where are your condemners?” She didn’t call Jesus “Teacher/Rabbi” like the scribes and Pharisees. She said, and I want to cry as I tell you. Verse 11-“She said, No one, Lord!” She recognized not only who she was but who Jesus was. Paul said in I Cor. 12:3, “No one can say, “Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.” In this moment, her heart was changed. Have you come face to face with Jesus. He never came to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:17) These religious leaders came in pride to test Jesus, entrap Him and they called Him “Teacher!” They left in humiliation, condemned by their own sins. This woman came before Jesus in cruel humiliation, acknowledged Jesus as her Lord, received His grace, and went away forgiven. Jesus told her, “Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.” Hear Jesus’ Word of grace and receive it. He gives us His pardon. Receive His forgiveness today.