



Neither Do I Condemn You

Message Notes, June 5, 2016

John 8:1-11

This message is a tough one to summarize with notes. It's one of those deep Jesus expressions that we must simply sit with, and like Max Lucado suggests – “ponder [these words], drink from them, stand under them and let them wash over your soul.” These words proclaim the power of grace!

Many Bibles preface this passage with, “The earliest manuscripts do not have these verses.” There are various speculations about this.

William Barclay (Biblical commentator) states that the early Jewish Christian leaders were afraid to include this story because it was too soft on sin and might encourage sexual immorality.

Whatever the reasons – we are glad that God would not let it be stricken from His Word. It is surely a real Jesus encounter, and one of the most powerful revelations of Grace and the heart of God.

Jesus' calm teaching in the temple is shattered by the commotion of religious zealots dragging an adulterous woman before Jesus to demand his verdict over her sin. There she is before the crowd, clothed maybe but utterly exposed, her sin and shame bared before all. She is socially marked for life – if she even escapes the sentence of death by stoning.

It's all an elaborate trap, very likely orchestrated by these “teachers of the Law” to undermine and discredit Jesus:

- Where are the two witnesses prescribed by the law?
- Where's the man? Why are they misquoting the sentencing law? (Deut. 22:22, Lev. 20:10)
- How do these pious religious leaders see this woman? Not as one uniquely made in the image of Yahweh, not as one broken and in need of healing, not as one who can repent and find redemption. She is but an object. A tactical means to an evil end. Her only value is to facilitate their purpose.

How do we see those who are lost, broken, caught up in sin? (e.g., avoidance? Judgment? loathing?)

Their scheme was to put Jesus in double jeopardy:

- Jewish law (requiring stoning) vs. Roman law (only Romans may execute)
- Softer Jews (opposed to this strict stoning provision) vs. legalistic Jews (the Law is law!)
- This even put Jesus in a bind within his own ministry – built on mercy and grace but also truth.

How does Jesus respond?

He kneels and writes in the dirt. Many speculate – maybe he is writing the sins of the crowd, maybe he is writing a pertinent scripture, maybe he is writing his pronouncement, maybe he is simply doodling, pondering and praying for the Father's guidance. Whatever he is writing:

- His calm quells their frantic plan
- His clarity overpowers their conniving scheme
- His Lordship rises above their feeble plotting



This kind act diverts the glaring crowd's attention away from the exposed woman.

He stands and speaks. If you want to enforce the Law, then you, yourselves, must live it! "If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone." One by one they leave (oldest ones first).
Jesus beats the trap!

What they meant for evil, Jesus has turned into a grand pronouncement of the Gospel – that there is no hope for redemption in keeping the Law; salvation can only come by grace!

He stands alone with the woman and speaks forgiveness. "Neither do I condemn you." These are the powerful words of the gospel that shatter the darkness of sin, Satan and death. These are the words of redemption, hope and eternal life.

He speaks words of healing and release. "Go now and leave your life of sin." Grace is not just for eternity; it is for now. You are now free from the grip of sin. You are now free to walk in purity. You are forgiven and free!

Reflection Questions

- How do you see those who are lost, broken, caught up in sin? How does this revelation/story of the heart of God convict/challenge your view of others?
- Are you still carrying shame from past failures? Do you struggle to fully embrace God's forgiveness? Do you refuse to forgive yourself?
- Can you trust these words of Jesus – "Neither do I condemn you" and let them wash over your soul?