

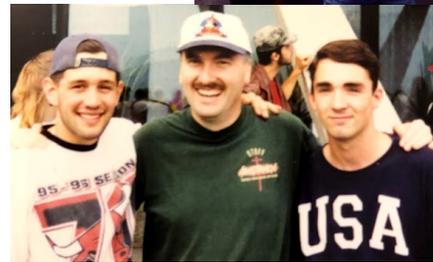
We are in a study in the gospel according to John. He begins the story of Jesus with this pronouncement:

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Today we will see a story of Jesus of what that looks like to be full of grace and truth. It's the story of the adulterous woman. We will look at it from 3 different perspectives.

Pray

Have you ever been caught doing something wrong? How many of you have gotten a speeding ticket? I've only gotten one in my life, but it was a big one. I was 16 living in Georgia. I had a friend visiting from Chicago and it was a Saturday morning and we were going to go golfing. Just across the border in South Carolina there was a course in the middle of nowhere that only cost \$12 for 18 holes. It was just about a 20-minute drive through the back-wood swamps, so we were cruising with the music turned up, beautiful Saturday morning with my friend. The speed limit went from 65 to 55 to 45 nearing town but there wasn't anybody on the roads, so I was just cruising. Then I saw the lights behind me, I'd been caught. My friend said, don't worry about it, it won't be that much he said. But, I was going 72 in a 45 mile/hr. zone, 27 miles over the speed limit. I was very polite using the Southern 'yes sir' and handed over my license and registration, the whole time my friend and I rationalizing how he shouldn't have really pulled me over, I wasn't really at fault, there wasn't anyone on the road, I've never done anything bad before, it was an innocent mistake and the signs weren't labeled very well.



Have you ever done that? Gotten caught but you immediately jump to how it's not really your fault? Am I the only one?

The officer handed over the ticket for \$270! My friend saw it and yelled out "you've got to be kidding me!" He was from Chicago. I quickly told him to be quiet. We went on from there and played our \$12 round of golf that ended up costing me \$282! It took me a month of bagging groceries to pay it off.

I mean you guys know me. What do you think the policeman should have done? Should I have really gotten a ticket or should he have let me go? ... Or maybe closer to home what should they do with you, if you get pulled over for not coming to a complete stop or taking a left when you are not supposed to, or texting and driving? Or if you get caught cheating on a test or sneaking cookies or disobeying your parents at night when you should be in bed?

That's the question surrounding our story today. Jesus, what do you do with a lady who had been caught in act of sin? Something much worse than speeding.

If you have your Bibles please turn to John 8, well actually John 7:53. Before we read the story, I'd like to comment on something that you'll find written into most Bibles either in a footnote below the text or double bracketed with a comment above it. Do you see it in your Bibles?

It's probably says something like this [The earliest manuscripts do not include 7:53-8:11].

Without chasing the rabbit trail of what they call textual criticism, the science of studying ancient manuscripts, I just want to say a few things about our text today.

1. This story isn't found in any of the most ancient texts. Scholars are unanimous on this.
2. Scholars also agree that the story was most certainly true but passed along orally until it was written down later. Some argue that the scandalous nature of forgiving a woman caught in adultery would have given permission for other young women who read this story. It would be like the police man letting me off the hook and then publishing a newspaper article about how to get out of a ticket. That would not encourage good behavior.

The third point is that...

3. This story does not add or detract from any other truth we find in the Bible, it supports and helps to clarify.

So, is it inspired or not, we are not really sure. Here is how I'm approaching it. This story has been faithfully preserved both orally and in written form for our benefit today so there are things we can learn from it.

If that brings up more questions for you and you'd like to talk about, I'd be happy to talk with you later but one of my goals this morning is not to bore everyone.

My grandpa, a pastor himself, used to say that **the ears can only hear what the seat can endure**. How are those seats doing?

Let's jump into our story.

Last week Barry talked about the feast of Booths where Jewish people would live in tents outside their houses for a week in remembrance of the tents they lived in during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. That feast ends and we pick up the story in John 7:53.

8⁵³ [[They went each to his own house,¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such

women. So, what do you say?”⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.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.¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”]]

And that’s the last we hear about this woman, wouldn’t you like to know what happened to her? What kind of life impact did this event cause? And while we are at it, what did Jesus write on the ground? Where was the man this woman was caught with? Why did all the people leave and not condemn her? There are lots of questions the story doesn’t answer for us, but it does invite us in to wonder, to imagine and to place ourselves in the story to learn to live as Jesus did.

So, for the next few minutes, I’d like us to look at the story again from 3 different perspectives.

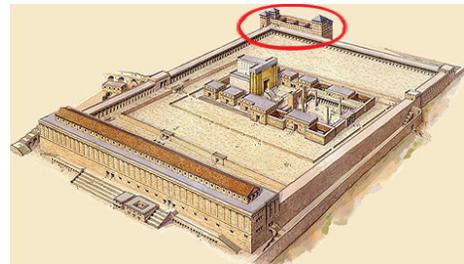
1. Scribes and Pharisees -
2. The Woman -
3. Jesus - Full of Grace and Truth

➤ First, let’s look at it from the perspective of the scribes and pharisees.

What are they to do with this man called Jesus? He has called God his own father and said that he is the light of the world, the bread from heaven, the living water that can satisfy all your thirsts. The grumbling had begun a long time ago, what were they going to do with this man? He was leading people away and they were losing power and control.

Then someone comes up with a cynical plot to entrap Jesus, they’ve had enough. Let’s present him with a decision in public where he will have to choose between Moses and Rome. Either way he answers, he’ll be doomed.

During the feast days the crowds would be huge in Jerusalem and the Roman occupiers got nervous that there will be some uprising, so they always placed extra guards on the walls of the temple mount. They even built the fortress of Antonia directly connected to the temple on the northern walls. If there was any uprisings or insurrection the Romans could run on the top of the temple mount walls to see everything and come down hard. They also outlawed the Jews from being able to enforce the death penalty.



So, they bring her to Jesus and say, we caught her in adultery, we know the law, she is to be stoned but we can't do it without Rome coming down on us so what do you say?

Then with smirks on their faces they step back, it's perfect! With the guards looking on and the Jewish crowd watching, if he says stone her, the Romans will come down hard and grab Jesus for leading an insurrection and kill him or put him away for a long time. If he says let her go, he has just disregarded Moses' law. Either way they think they've got him.

Let's stop here and consider a warning we can learn from the religious leaders of Israel.

- Beware of manipulating the truth to serve your own purpose. Beware of selective truth, which often comes out in selective outrage. In this way, the truth is used as a tool to help you towards your goal. This ends up hurting relationships and others in the process.

This happens with Christians or religious people all the time. They will get outraged at something while totally ignoring something else.

If the pharisees in our story caught this lady in the act of adultery, that means she wasn't alone! So, if they were so concerned about the law and justice where is the guy? Where is the outrage of what he has done? No, they selected what truth they would focus on to serve their own purposes and didn't care about sacrificing this girl to do it.

Listen to what the law says and notice what is mysteriously missing from our story.

Lev. 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.

Deut. 22:²³ "If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones

Where is the man? Where is the outrage? Or maybe, he was a friend of theirs, maybe he was a pharisee, maybe he just took off running, leaving her alone? They said, the law says that we are to stone this woman, but they leave out any part about stoning the man. Selective truth, selective outrage. In fact, we are told that they don't care about the truth or justice at all but are just manipulating it to get what they want. **Don't be like the pharisees!**

- Let's now see this from the woman's perspective.

Perhaps it was late at night, but they had to know that what they were doing was wrong, but it felt so right. She might have even heard him promise her protection, his love and devotion and so in a moment of passion they embraced.

Then without warning the doors bust open and she is ripped from the bed and shoved into a dark room where she is probably naked, ashamed and all alone.

Hours go by until she is once again grabbed and brought to the middle of the temple, thrown in front of all these religious people. It's tense and there is some arguing. She is probably scared and wondering if they will kill her, the men standing around her even have the stones in their hands ready to throw. The adrenaline pumps, she can hear her own heart beating. Where is the man who promised to protect her, love her? She's been lied to once again, used and abused. Broken, but she also knows what she's done is wrong.

Let's pause here and consider the person in need of grace in the face of this woman.

You've actually seen her, in the face of your coworkers and friends, cashier at Fred Meyer, your waitress, the guy pumping your gas. You've even probably seen her in your own bathroom mirror at times.

Broken, all alone, feeling like no one cares, used and abused, like they have messed up so bad that nothing anyone can do to save them now. It might come out in rage or anger or blaming or apathy but the longing for grace is in all of us.

You don't have to look very far to find people in need of grace.

Centennial kid in Jarom's office.

When we actually see the heart of people being full of grace isn't so hard in fact you want to just tell him, it's ok. Forget about it, you're ok, it will get better. But that is not true, he is still going to fail his classes and according to the law in the Bible that lady caught in adultery deserved death.

- So, let's look at one more person in the story from the perspective of Jesus full of Grace and Truth.

He goes back to the temple and sits down, and people begin to come and so he teaches them. Then from the corner of his eye he sees this group of men coming in a rage, coldly pushing this girl in front of them until they get to the feet of Jesus and push her in front of him. Jesus sees her tears and fear in her eyes and then the leaders with stones in their hands, ask what should we do with her? Then shouts of judgement and anger.

Jesus stoops down and writes something on the ground. Jesus knows the Law, He wrote it with a finger on a rock. He even knows how the Pharisees go to painstaking measures to keep the law. He knew that they regarded the day after a feast as a sabbath day and the rabbi's defined writing as work. **They determined that "writing" was making some kind of permanent mark like putting ink on paper and therefore work. But, writing with one's finger in the dust they concluded was permissible because it 'leaves no lasting mark' the wind would soon blow it away and therefore was acceptable according to the practice of the Jewish leaders.**

In stooping and writing on the ground with his finger he was saying, I know the law and I keep it perfectly. So, he wrote something, it doesn't say what he wrote but we can guess that it was something like "stone her" or "death" because of what he said next.

Jesus then takes the anonymity of a crowd and puts names and faces on everyone. "let him who is without sin throw the first stone". Don't be selective with your outrage towards this woman and neglect your sin.

Then he bends down and writes in the ground once more. I would love to know what he wrote. Perhaps he wrote sins each of the men had committed. Jealousy, anger, lust, greed. Or perhaps he wrote "Forgiven"

Whatever he wrote, the Jews were looking around and wondering what they should do. Naturally they look to the oldest, wisest man. He drops his stone and walks away. Then they look to the next oldest, what do we do? And he does the same thing, one by one the stones drop, and they walk away until it is just Jesus and the woman.

He asks this woman, where are they? They've all gone, no one condemned you, so neither do I. Go and sin no more. The man she gave herself to had abandoned her, left her all alone, the religious leaders didn't offer comfort but judgement, but Jesus stood up for her when no one else would. A scandalous lover who gives his very life to save another.

Here's the last lesson we can learn from the life of Jesus full of Grace and Truth.

- Jesus doesn't do away with the law but takes upon himself the penalty of our sin

These men with stones in their hands were raging in their own self righteousness and it was coming out at this sinful broken woman and rightly so, she was in the wrong. But Jesus steps in front and knows that he is making himself an even bigger target. They are going to come back even more determined to kill him. He steps in to take the wrath of the people on himself and away from her.

After that scene, Jesus continues teaching in the temple. It doesn't even appear that he moves locations. He talks about how he is the light of the world and points out their sin and blindness and how they are trying to kill him. Then we get to the end of the chapter.

After a day full of tense conversation and opposition the Jewish people finally have enough, they are outraged. So, it says in verse 8:59

“So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.”

The very stones they dropped when they were wanting to throw at the adulterous woman Jesus steps in front. A substitutionary love.

Jesus was full of grace and truth and that means that:

The law is not discounted by grace, but the penalty of breaking the law, sin, is placed upon Jesus.

Someone must pay for the penalty of your sins. That's where Jesus, full of grace and truth steps in and says I will pay for it. I'm not taking away the law but I'm receiving the penalty of it on your behalf. This becomes a foreshadowing of the cross.

You see we are all broken and sinful and far from the holiness of God, we are all in need of grace. The Bible says that the penalty for that is our death, but Jesus stepped in and paid the price for each of you on the cross.

That police man that pulled me over that Saturday morning was simply upholding the law. A law was broken, I was guilty and a penalty had to be paid. Jesus doesn't rip up the ticket and say oh forget about it, no problem. Though he is innocent, he pays the price himself and he offers that to you this morning as well. Would you receive that this morning and then go and live like Jesus full of grace and truth to a hurting world all around you.