

The Compassion of Christ for Criminals

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[0 : 00] Well, we will be in the book of John this morning. I am very much wanting to focus in this season in particular on the compassion of Jesus.

That's where my heart's been. All week, that's what's ministered to my soul. And so I preach out of what's going on with me.

And I just thought, this is what I need to do. This is where I need to be. And this is what I need to remind us of. And I think right now, the way I'm thinking, it will culminate in our Christmas Eve service.

And I'll tell you more about that as you come. I hope you can be here and bring your family and your friends. We'll pack them in here, won't we? We'll find a place for them. If we have to take a sledgehammer and blow that wall out, whatever we have to do.

Well, this one, all right. We'll go that way. Y'all need to go around there and look after the service and see what all's going on. And Doug, don't get away.

[1 : 20] I want to chat with you afterwards and find out. I'm totally curious. This is awesome. It's just such a blessing. I just continually remind it of God's goodness. No, don't do that.

Okay. Never mind, Doug. I'll see you somewhere down the road. Yeah, it'll get done when it's done, right? We're working on it. We're working on it. Well, we'll actually be in John chapter 8 today.

And this is the title of the message, The Compassion of Christ for Criminals. The Compassion of Christ for Criminals. I'll begin reading in verse 1 to a familiar story, I'm sure.

Some of the people who've been here heard me years ago speak on this passage. I think more than four years ago or something. And then many of you, since you've come, you will have heard this at other places as well.

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning, He came again into the temple. And all the people were coming to Him. And He sat down and began to teach them.

[2 : 28] The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery. And having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery in the very act.

Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What then do you say? They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him.

But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.

Again, He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, until Jesus was left alone, and the woman where she was in the center of the court.

And then straightening up, Jesus said to her, Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you? And she said, No one, Lord.

[3 : 46] And Jesus said, I do not condemn you either. Go. From now on, sin no more.

There have been a number of high profile trials happening in the news. Have you noticed that lately? From pardoning criminals who've been sentenced so that they can escape justice?

No matter what political persuasion you are, those are the facts. To trials about people trying to do the right thing.

Did he do the right thing? Was it excessive? I mean, there have just been all kinds of things going on. Here's something that we can all agree on and have in common as Christians. We are all, each of us, criminals.

In the sight of God, we have all at one time been seen by God the Father as a criminal deserving of death.

[4 : 56] The death penalty. And for us to sit in this room this morning and sing these songs and pray these prayers and take the table of Jesus together is nothing short of a miracle.

It is the miracle of God's grace in Christ for salvation. Where guilty criminals are set free in their hearts to worship God and to know God and to be forgiven by God forever.

And that's worth singing about. That's worth living your life in gratitude about. Every single day you get up with the gospel. Every day. And every single day you're called on to live that gospel out.

The good news that Jesus has forgiven you forever. We have in front of us this incredible, miraculous story.

And there, I confess, are elements of this story that completely escape me as I'm sure there are in all the stories of the Bible. But there are some things that we can know about what's happened here that can encourage our hearts.

[6 : 02] I want to read for you again how this particular section ends in verse 11. The woman replied to Jesus when He asked, where are your accusers?

She says, they're gone, Lord. And He said, I do not condemn you either. Go from now on and sin no more.

I do not condemn you either. Now the question that I want to ask since that is the punchline of this true account is this.

How did we get to that declaration? How does the story take us to that place? Because that, let it settle on your hearts.

That is an astounding declaration from the great judge of the universe. He knew she was guilty before the religious leaders ever brought her before Him.

[7 : 07] He saw what she did in secret before they knew about it. And so all they were doing was bringing a guilty sinner before the judge of the universe who had already known her guilt.

Now let's make this a little more personal for us. Think of this. If you were on trial for your life knowing that a guilty verdict would mean the death penalty for you, how would you like to have Jesus Christ as your lawyer?

Yes, please. Alright, now let me go one more and let's see if the answer stays the same. How about as your judge? Right.

Because this is what we know. He's going to judge you impartially. There's not going to be any pardons or shenanigans that are weird or based in political choices or favoritism.

There's not going to be any of that nonsense. He's going to judge you according to your heart.

Because He sees your heart for what it is. Even beyond what you can know.

[8 : 25] Now let's throw another major obstacle into the mix of your ability to defend yourself successfully and escape death. you are truly guilty.

You were caught in the act of your sin. And you truly do deserve the death penalty for your crimes. That's quite an obstacle, isn't it?

I'm guilty and I know it. I'm guilty and everybody else knows it, but most importantly, the great judge of the universe knows it. And so there's no escape.

Your crimes must be punished. And God shows no partiality, no favoritism, and He cannot allow your crimes to go unpunished or He's not God.

And His law is a mockery. So we're in a dilemma. How could you possibly hope for anything in the way of rescue or salvation from that which is an open and shut case against you?

[9 : 43] How could Jesus Christ possibly get you out of this when the evidence against you is so compelling, so overwhelming? And knowing your guilt, how about this question?

why would Jesus even want to see you acquitted when the crimes that you've committed are those against His very person and against His Father?

This is personal for Christ. This isn't generic. The crimes you've committed are against Him. It's His law.

Our passage this morning is the picture of an impromptu trial. Impromptu only in the sense of being on the surface.

I'll get to the rest of that in a moment. It's complete with all the drama and characters you'd expect or that you see in the trials that are going on in such high profile ways in the news right now.

[10:47] The case is a slam dunk as to the guilt of the accused. There's just absolutely no question whatsoever. We don't need a jury to debate this.

It's very very evident. This woman was caught it says in the very act so that there were actually eyewitnesses who saw this woman involved in the crime and they're willing to testify against her. But strangely Jesus not only did not condemn her He saved her life. He saved her life. Now it pleased the Lord to preserve this scene in Scripture for all eternity.

This is a terrible crime. And yet here it is in the Bible. At the time this took place one woman alone in her guilt and sin was within minutes of a gruesome death by stoning.

Her life and this moment in time could have ended right there and been known only to the people who were witnessing what was happening at the time.

[12:05] So that we never would have known this woman existed. We never would have known her crime. We never would have known anything about what happened in her life and in her death.

history. And it could have just how many of those accounts have gone past history and we know nothing about them. But we know about this one. Why?

Why? Why is this in the Bible? Why did God preserve this moment for us in the life of Jesus? With this one insignificant human being?

Why? people die every day sometimes unjustly. Why this one? God preserved it for us this morning.

And the reason is this. He preserved this account for us because this woman is each one of us.

[13:10] standing in the guilt of our sins at the bar of God's righteous judgment. We are this woman and she is us. And just like it does for us, the outcome of her encounter with Jesus connects her life with the cross of Jesus.

That's what's in the background. I can't read this story without seeing the cross in the background of all these events. I see the because I have a vivid mind for this stuff.

I really do. I get into the drama of it and I'm there. I can smell the dust and see the stuff going on.

Here this is all happening and as I watch this drama unfold I see the cross in the background so that every time I see Jesus move or I see this woman move I see the shadow of the cross behind them.

That's what's going on here. We are connected to this woman in terms of our connection to the cross. Where her own and our guilt or innocence was decided by God for all eternity.

The cross was the definitive answer as to your guilt or your innocence. sins. Like every trial we have the standard fare.

[14:39] We have the accusers. We have the accused. And finally we have the advocate. But for the moment I want to look back on a few verses that deal with the previous context.

And what I'm going to point out to you concerns what Jesus is focused on in his ministry. So let's look at these verses real quickly. We'll go to John chapter 4 verse 34.

Now keep in mind as Jesus deals with this woman this is his mandate and what he's focused on in his heart as he talks to her and as he encounters these religious leaders who are using her for their own purposes.

Jesus replied to them my food is to do the will of him the father who sent me and to accomplish his the father's work.

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. The disciples are trying to get him to eat physical food and Jesus is saying I've got a very different focus right now guys and that focus is on the spiritual reality of why the father sent me here.

[15:54] He sent me to the earth to do his will and to accomplish his work. And so here's what we can know about John chapter 8 and this woman caught in adultery as we ask and answer the question why preserve this account for us?

Here's one of the reasons because Jesus in his dealing with these men and this woman is accomplishing God's will and doing his work. That's why. Alright now let's look at chapter 6 verse 38.

I'm just walking you into the context because I realize I haven't done a verse by verse exposition all the way up to this point to chapter 8. Chapter 6 verse 38.

For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. What an astonishing statement. As a human being living on this planet I have not come with my own agenda I have been given the agenda for which I exist and my purpose is to do the will of my father and to accomplish all that he has set before me.

That's what I'm about. And then finally in chapter 7 verses 16 and 17 So Jesus answered them and said my teaching is not mine but his the father's who sent me.

[17:15] If anyone is willing to do his will he will know of the teaching whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself. Jesus is clearly saying what I'm teaching you and speaking to you now are the words that have been given me to say by my father I'm here to do his will and all that I say and do and to accomplish his purposes.

And so when I teach you the way that I do I'm accomplishing the purposes of my father in his good will. When I find a woman caught in the very act of adultery and I have religious leaders coming to throw her at my feet and demand that I pronounce sentence on her I am here to do and speak the will of my father and accomplish his purposes and you're about to see it happen.

That's what this is all about. Everything Jesus said and did was based on accomplishing the purposes of his father and bringing glory to almighty God.

God and now in contrast we have human envy we have self favoring we have pride we have hard heartedness and all of that's coming together here to convolute and pollute the truth in this case. Satan wants you to be drawn away from anything but you see that Jesus is accomplishing the purposes and will of almighty God that's why God sent him.

[18:45] That's why he came to be in a cradle. Or a manger. Consistent with his nature. Consistent with his mission. Jesus is teaching the truth.

And his work on behalf of the father involves calling people to believe and live the truth. Jesus is teaching at the temple in Jerusalem and he's right before moving through the matters that are going to find him being crucified.

As with many instances throughout the gospels, there's a very large crowd of people who have come in attendance to hear him teach because he taught as one with authority.

And so as the drama opens up, we can start with what we're going to call or reference the accusers. The accusers. Jesus has come from the Mount of Olives.

He's walked down and then up again into the temple area. And we're told that the people are coming to him in verse 2. He sits down and he begins to teach them.

[19:55] That's what rabbis do. They sit to teach. It's a position of authority. Verse 3, the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman. This woman has been caught in the very act of adultery and they set her in the center of that area.

How in the world they managed to weave their way through everybody? People saw these important men coming and parted the way. And they stick this woman right there in front of everybody to see.

They're all seated. And now she's standing there in the midst of them. And it says, Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery in the very act.

And now the law of Moses commands us to stone such women as these. What then do you say? This is a sickening reality. And you can see that I've put up here, this is all about guile. They're guile. They're devious. They're deceitful.

[20:57] And they're duplicitous. How do we know that? The very next verse. They were saying this, verse 6, testing him. This is a trap.

So that they might have grounds to do what? Accuse him. They want to discredit him. But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground.

If you look back with me at chapter 7, verse 30, you'll get a little bit of insight into what's going on here in the way of these men's hearts.

So they were seeking, these leaders were seeking to seize Jesus, and no man laid his hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

But many of the crowd believed in him, and they were saying, when the Christ comes, he will not perform more signs than these which this man has. Will he? The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize him.

[22:03] What do they want to seize him for? They want to arrest him. They want to try him. They want to deface Jesus Christ. They want to discredit him. Ultimately, they want him murdered. For some time now, we're told in other gospels, they've been seeking to take his life, and the opportunity hasn't presented itself.

So these men in every way are duplicitous men. They sent their special police force to arrest Jesus and drag Jesus before them to stand trial.

We pick it up in verse 45 where you see more of this happening. The officers then came to the chief priests. These are the guys that they sent out to seize him.

And they came before the chief priests and Pharisees. These are the big wigs, the religious leaders, looking down their long noses at everybody. And they said to them, why did you not bring him?

Because they don't have Jesus with them. And the officers answered, never has a man spoken the way this man speaks. The Pharisees then answered them, oh, you have not also been led astray, have you?

[23 : 12] It's like you send out your soldiers to fight against the enemy and they come back and they say, yeah, you know what, these guys aren't so bad after all, I think we want to shoot these dudes. And you look at them and go, what?

Are you kidding me? That's exactly what's happening right here. No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in him, has he?

You don't see us doing this, but this crowd which does not know the law is accursed. Now, hold on to that. Verse 49, the crowd doesn't know the law.

They're accursed. They're small-minded people. They're nothing. They're fodder. They're things for us to trample on at best.

They don't know what they're talking about. They don't know the law. We're experts in the law. This is our wheelhouse. This is what we know. What do they know? Nicodemus, he who came to Jesus before, remember, in the night, being one of them, one of the high leaders, said to them, our law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he's doing, does it?

[24 : 29] They answered him, you're not also from Galilee, are you? Search and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee. See, anything they can do to twist the law in their favor, they're going to do.

They're so biased. They're very prejudiced. They're not looking at the law impartially. They're already applying it to Jesus based on their agenda. This is why I'm sharing this with you because this is giving you insight into their heart as they bring this woman and throw her down in front of Jesus and demand that he passed sentence on her to be stoned.

They can't wait to pick up the first rock and bash her skull in. These are wicked men. They don't care about people, but they don't know who they're dealing with, do they?

Having been foiled in their attempts to arrest Jesus, they are now getting even more desperate and so they take it upon themselves to use this woman caught in adultery for their own evil ends.

You say, well, it's in the morning, and so here's what I think most likely happened. Now, this is Jeff just surmising. The text doesn't tell us this. I'll just offer this to you. I think probably what happened is that they actually caught this woman the night before or in the wee hours.

[25 : 45] And so they've probably been holding on to her and they saw this as an opportunity to conspire together and use this to trip him up. So they've had enough time not only to catch this woman, but to concoct this plan to test him and expose him and deface him, right?

That's what's going on here. So these are very calculating men. Consistent then with their evil nature and wicked agenda, the leaders rudely interrupt Jesus' teaching.

See, they want to make a big scene. Jesus is teaching in the temple, and now they make this big ruckus and they drag this poor woman in and throw her down in front of everybody and start pointing at her and telling the whole world what she just did.

Oh, how humiliating. But they don't care anything about that. Why? Well, they want to make a public discredit of Jesus in the eyes of the people.

They want to have cause to arrest him and kill him. Their plan involves using the woman's crime to put Jesus in what we would call a double bind.

[26 : 51] So that whatever he does, whatever he says, he will lose face in front of the people.

Upholding the law like any true and wonderful rabbi would means that he would have to uphold her death.

If I'm going to honor the law, then I've got to command them to stone her. Supporting her death will undermine his reputation as a champion of and defender of the common people.

You see the bind that he's in? If I go with the law and I have these religious leaders stone her, then I'm going to lose face with the people as someone who's supposed to come and help defend them and support them.

But if he lets her go, that subverts and undermines the law so that he discredits himself as a true rabbi. So either way, they think they have him in their clutches. There's no way he's going to get out of this one.

So they throw this poor woman in front of Jesus and on the surface it sounds as if they are the ones concerned to see God's law upheld. They appear very pious.

[27 : 54] They appear very religious. They appear very high sounding and above all of this nonsense. We are the guardians of the truth. But the text tells us very plainly that they're full of hypocrisy and that they're using this woman as a pawn to discredit the Lord.

That brings us then to what they are actually guilty of themselves. This is so incredible how Jesus uses the truth to turn this whole thing on its ear for these men.

And so we come to this second aspect and that's their guilt. Their guilt. We'll go back in to the context again in John chapter 7 and begin in verse 11.

So the Jews were seeking him, seeking Jesus at the feast and were saying, see how often this is coming up that the Jews were looking for opportunity to discredit him and arrest him? Where is he? That's what they want to know. We're seeking him. Where is he? Well, there was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Jesus because some were saying he's a good man and others were saying, no, no, on the contrary, he leads the people astray.

[29 : 06] Yet no one was speaking openly of him for fear of the Jews. But when it was now the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach.

Here he is again in an opportunity to teach. The Jews then were astonished saying, how has this man become learned having never been educated?

So Jesus answered them and said, here it is. My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone is willing to do his will, he will know of the teaching, whether it's of God or whether I speak from myself.

Now look at more of the context. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but he who is seeking the glory of the one. See that capital O, the father who sent him.

He is true and there's no unrighteousness in him. Did not Moses give you the law? And yet none of you carries out the law.

[30 : 04] Why do you seek to kill me? Now that is critical. He's already established this reality in their relationship to the law. Now get this.

Don't let it get by you. They've thrown this woman down in front of Jesus. Probably they ended up pushing her down and then standing her up and holding her there.

See this thing? This thing deserves death. What say you? And as they stand there in that scene demanding that the law be prescribed for her, Jesus has already told them, you, every one of you are lawbreakers.

You're not keeping the law. You don't care anything about the law. Have you not come with hypocrisy in your heart to murder me? He's already encountered that with them.

He's already confronted them with that very reality prior to this scene with this woman. All that's been exposed in front of the people. That's the critical point that Jesus is going to use in just a few moments.

[31 : 09] That's the critical point that all this is going to hinge on as Jesus then turns his attention to the woman. Here they are defrauding the people, dishonoring God's law, murder in their hearts, cruel, cold, accusing, and then humiliating this poor woman.

So they insist she should be stoned to death right away. Say the word, Jesus, and she's a dead woman. Now notice what Jesus does. What does it say he does in response to what they demand? He stoops and writes on the ground with his finger. Now look, we don't know what he wrote. Only Jesus and the Father knows what he wrote. Maybe the people there were able to make out something that he was doing.

It doesn't. If that was important for us to know what he wrote, then the text would tell us. It doesn't. So there's some other issue going on here with him writing in the dirt beyond us knowing exactly what he wrote.

What's the point of him doing that? Why is that in the Bible? Why is he stooping down to write in the dirt? Well, I think it's pretty clear. If we don't overthink this, I think it's pretty clear.

[32 : 20] As you picture this happening in your mind, are you possibly doing this? I've had moments similar to this with my children where my kids come to me and there's some issue going

on and I'm thinking through how I'm going to handle it and I can remember standing there or sitting there or whatever talking with my kids and then you know, I might start doing this, you know, or just going like this and as I talk with them and.

You know, it's sober. You're you're. It's a sober moment. They can see this is this is weighing on you. I'm not approaching this lightly.

I'm thinking about this. I'm I'm right here in this moment. Do I think that what he wrote in the ground was insignificant? No, I think it was significant for them, but it's not necessary for us to know what it is, obviously.

So we move past that reality. What's the obvious indication of the situation?

Well, think about what do these people do? They were so confident in their trap that they press Jesus even harder to answer them in front of the entire crowd.

[33 : 42] And the silence that Jesus is maintaining now in light of this barrage is, I think, the exact reason that he stooped down on the ground and did what he did. It's the pregnant pause before the plunge.

I think all of that is a way of Jesus drawing this big collective that's what I think is going on. He's letting the situation grow more intense. How do we know that? Well, the text is telling us that as he stoops down on the ground to write with his finger number of verse seven, they persisted. Now, that word is an intense word that means that they were right on top of them demanding, insisting that he give them an answer. There may have been several of them hollering, emotional. It could have been a very high emotional moment. And then that poor woman, man, you want to weep when you start really thinking about this poor woman standing there and, you know, her life hanging in the balance with these powerful men.

[34 : 51] And Jesus stooping down on the ground writing with his finger in the dirt. And she's watching this whole thing. Finally, Jesus stands up in light of the pressure.

He looks them directly in the eyes and he calmly challenges them to do one thing. Remember what I just read to you earlier now, just a few minutes ago.

He challenges them to uphold the law in their own hearts and lives. How did he do that? Well, Deuteronomy 17, seven, I'll just reference it. Deuteronomy 17, seven says those who stand forward as eyewitnesses must be the first ones to execute the sentence.

That's a demand of the law. If you are the one that brings forward an eyewitness account that's going to put a person in the place of the death penalty, then you have to be one of the first people to pick up a stone and get it started.

The weight of that is designed to make you carefully think about your testimony. It's there and designed to weigh on you in a way that sobers you and says, you know what?

[36 : 06] If my testimony is going to bring a verdict of guilty, I need to realize I'm going to be expected to be first in line to execute the sentence. Oh, man.

What if you were the person whose testimony would cause you to stand there and pull the lever on the guy that drops him down and hangs it? It's pretty sobering, isn't it?

Jesus is pretty wise, isn't he? One of the things that we can know about this is that Jesus wrote that law. Right?

This is his law. And so they're not going to outdo Jesus in the way of knowing the law and how to apply it. But that's exactly what they're trying to do. We'll use the law to trip him up.

Morons. That's what they are. Moron means unthinking, useless in your mind. And that's what they've become. They so hate Jesus so much and they're so eaten up with hypocrisy that their minds are useless.

[37 : 12] They're morons. So confident and yet so wrong. There's a catch if they're to do this. If they're to pull this off, there's a catch.

And it's that little part about being without sin yourself. It's in Exodus 23. If you go way back, I want to look at this one.

Exodus 23 verses 1 through 3. You shall not bear a false report. You see that? Do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.

Now, based on verse one alone, do they have a case? What do you think? Listen now.

You shall not bear a false report. Are they bearing a false report? Do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. Are they being malicious witnesses?

[38 : 16] Are they being wicked in their hearts? They're disqualified. The law has already disqualified these guys. Even if she is guilty, they're just as guilty in their hearts.

They ought to be saying, and then after you get done with her, you better judge us too. But no, they're not saying that. Look, verse two. You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to do what?

Pervert justice. Nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute. On and on it goes, and it lets these guys know, you're already standing in contempt of court.

Your testimony shouldn't even count. And Jesus knows this. Remember, this is his law. They can't be malicious. Are they being malicious in their... Yes.

They can't be that. You can't come as a malicious witness. You can't do that. You can't bring this person before the judge with an axe to grind. You can't do that.

[39 : 27] They can't. They can't. They can't. They can't band together with others in perverting justice. So they must not be hypocritical.

Even though the woman is guilty, they are all these things in their hearts. And Jesus knows that. So Jesus sees right into those hearts. He discerns their wickedness.

He discerns their hypocritical intentions. And he uses God's law to expose them. And this is what he says. This is building right on Deuteronomy and Exodus. He says this.

He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. That is brilliant. But it is based on the law. I don't know if you ever knew that. Those words aren't just there to convict them about, well, judge not.

Right? No. That's not what this is. This is according to the law. Those of you who don't have that hypocrisy and malicious intent in your heart and haven't used this woman not only to pervert the cause of justice, but for your own agenda.

[40 : 32] If you can truly say that in your heart, you get up here and throw the first stone and they know, oh, he's got us. He's got us. Once again, we're done.

The law's correct and impartial application to them, traps them and silences them. And so what do they do? The older ones, more experienced in the law.

See, young men are passionate, but young men are often pretty stupid. It's just part of it. I'm sorry. I was one of those guys where you just, you have so much zeal and so much passion for what you think you believe in and you just want to see things done.

And you have to have some older gray headed guys just kind of pat you and calm you down and say, no, no, no. Listen, man, we really appreciate the zeal, but let's measure this thing out a little better and let's go about it a little slower and more calculated.

You know, just calm down. It's okay. Everything take deep breath, eat some fruit, whatever. That's what they need to do. So the older ones start to slink away first because they realize checkmate right away.

[41 : 38] They realize checkmate. We're done. Let's get out of here before he makes us look even more foolish. And then the young guys, you know, they're looking around seeing all their leaders leaving.

And so they're like, what's going on? And they leave. Jesus applies the law with integrity. He elevates God's law.

By using it in a just way, by applying it equally to each person involved in this drama. And this is proper justice. This is how it ought to be done.

This is how it ought to be done. We have in our country the scales, right? And remember, she's blind, Lady Justice, right? And the scales. Well, that's really true of Jesus.

If this is true that Jesus applies the law equally to each person without partiality, then here's the problem. How then does he not condemn the guilty woman so that he allows her to go free?

[42 : 39] How can he do that? Now, most of you will know the answer to this. You're already tracking ahead and thinking, well, it's a cross, Jeff. That's right. That's right. But we've got to deal now with the accused.

We've got to deal with this woman. Teacher, this woman's been caught in the act of adultery. That is, in the very act. And in the law, we're commanded to stone such women as this.

What then do you say? This is what they want to know. Well, we've got the guile of the woman.

What do I mean? Well, it says right here the woman was caught in the very act of adultery with a man.

So one or perhaps both of these two individuals were married to someone else for it to be adultery. Both then were being disloyal. Both were being deceitful.

Both were sinning against the other. And most importantly, both were sinning against God. And so her guile, in her duplicity, she was trying to hide this particular act.

[43 : 42] And then her guilt. Her guilt. She's guilty. Here's the reality. This woman, and you need to see this with her because this is us, this woman is both a sufferer because she's been sinned against.

Did the man she was with sin against her? Yes, he did. And did she sin against him? Yes, she did. And so she is both a sufferer being sinned against.

And also she is a sinner in that she herself sinned. And this is the way typically we live life as Christians.

We are guilty of sinning against other people and causing hurt to them and other things. And we are also people who sin against others and are sinned against.

And we have those dynamics going on in our life that we need to navigate in the Lord. And fortunately, the Bible speaks to this from page to page to page.

[44 : 44] Here's the reality then. This woman is a sufferer and a sinner. And in the 7th and 10th commandments, we are clearly seeing an establishment of God's heart and prescription about marital fidelity.

It's not like God hadn't spoken on this. And it says, don't commit adultery. And then it says, don't covet your neighbor's wife. Don't do that. But the fact that Jesus has discredited her accusers, it doesn't change that she is truly guilty of this sin and deserves to be punished for it according to God's law.

Jesus would do this to anyone caught in this sin. Not just her. He applies the law to her without partiality. Just like He did with the religious leaders.

And His verdict on her foreshadows His verdict on each person who comes to Him broken and humiliated by their guile, their guilt, and their sin.

Now, can you see that about your life? We want to let this drama draw us in to what we're supposed to be seeing here about our Lord. We are this woman, criminally standing before God the Father, guilty in our sins.

[46 : 04] And Jesus is on the scene. What will He do knowing that we are guilty and we deserve to be condemned in the eyes of Almighty God?

He can't overlook our guilt. So again, this verdict foreshadows His verdict on each one of us as we come to Him in our guile and in our guilt and stand before Him.

Folks, I want you to see this scene. Vividly let this be in your mind. I see this woman probably standing there in some state of tattered dress.

I'm sure these men were rough with her. I'm sure that she's been crying her eyes out. She's just a mess. I can see her standing there trembling.

You could probably physically see her body trembling in fear and in the humiliation that she feels that she's now been dragged before all these people who are her neighbors and her friends, perhaps even family members.

[47 : 15] And she's been exposed in this secret sin. It's not so secret anymore. And these men don't have an ounce of compassion on her as a human being. Not an ounce.

She's just a piece of meat. She's just someone to use for their agenda. They have no regard for her at all. In fact, it's the opposite. These men are so bloodthirsty.

They want to drag her out in front of everybody. And watch her die a gruesome death. Screaming and hollering under the blows of rocks, battering her body until she's dead.

Would you want to trust your soul to these guys? Let's change it up a little bit.

We're not just this woman, are we? Who else are we in the crowd? We're these men. Can you handle that? We're these men.

[48 : 21] Co-hearted. Ruthless. Brutal. Harsh. Demanding. Selfish.

Prideful. Full of our own agenda. That's who we are. And until you accept that that's who you are and that you're capable of anything, given the right conditions and the proper moment, you're fooling yourself.

This is the truth of who we are. This is the truth of who we are. And we need Jesus, don't we? Jesus doesn't punish this poor woman.

And He maintains the integrity of God's law at the same time. How does He do that? Well, that brings us to this. The advocate. The advocate. The advocate.

Again, Jesus stoops down and writes on the ground in verse 8, when they heard His pronouncement that He who is without sin among you, let Him be the first to throw a stone, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone.

[49 : 32] And there the woman in the center of the court. He waited until everybody was out. And it's just Jesus and the woman standing there together.

And He's stooped down on the ground. And He's been doing the writing thing. And now she's just standing there all by herself, trembling, scared to death.

She doesn't know what's going on. And He stands up. And as He does, He catches her eyes. Now, perhaps for the first time, and looks right at her. Did He have to walk up to her and lift her chin to look at her?

Was she standing there like this? That's how I'd be there. I'd be wanting to find a hole to crawl into. If Jesus had brought me before everybody and said, I'm going to expose all your sins, I'm going to let everybody know what you've been and what you've done, wouldn't you want to go find a hole? I wonder, did He have to lift her chin, just gently, and look at her? Where's everybody? Where'd they all go? Where are all your accusers? Notice how she says.

[50 : 45] Economy of words. Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you? She said, now notice, no one, Lord. Or sir.

It's a term of high respect. No one, Lord. That's all she said. Three words. She doesn't know what to do. She doesn't know what's happening.

And then this astonishing statement. I do not condemn you either. I do not condemn you either.

An advocate, and I'm going to put this up here for you to see. We'll go to 1 John 2 in just a minute.

Look at this. An advocate is a person who speaks or writes in support or defense of a person.

These are the three definitions that are offered in Webster's. A person who pleads for or on behalf of another, an intercessor.

[51 : 47] A person who pleads the cause of another in a court of law. Now go to 1 John 2, if you would. Same author as the Gospel of John.

1 John 2, verses 1 and 2. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

This is who this woman has. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Jesus is the only advocate. This is who He is. The religious leaders wanted Jesus to take up the roles of both judge and jury in order to entrap Him.

But Jesus doesn't allow Him to redefine His role or to twist God's law. Instead, He steps up to take the role of a defense attorney or an advocate of the accused. He can be both lawyer and judge.

[52 : 49] In His role as advocate, we see His genuineness and His grace. His genuine... There's no guile in Jesus. He has no other agenda but to honor the Father and see His purposes served.

And what is the purpose of the Father? To bring forgiveness to sinners. No defrauding, no mockery, manipulation, hypocrisy, selfish ambition, abuse of the law for His own gain.

Jesus applied the law of God fairly with everyone who was involved. And here's the point. This is what I want to point out to you. Jesus is concerned that God's justice is not set aside or ignored.

As an advocate, He has to uphold the law and apply it impartially. Do you know what justice is?

Justice is getting what you deserve. We don't want justice. If God gives us each what we deserve, then we're in a devil's hell.

So we don't want justice. Adultery is a crime against God's seventh commandment and has to be punished. God can't let it go. Now look, if Jesus is being genuine in His concern for the law, for the Lord and the woman, how can He uphold justice and genuinely pardon her at the same time?

[54 : 05] The answer is in this word, grace. If we put you in her place and we stand you in the midst and we openly announce your sins, what would be the things or things that you would most be terrified and ashamed of for all of us to know about you?

Think about that. Whether it's in your past or recent. How humiliating for each one of us.

We would be terrified. If all of that were exposed about you, not a single one of us could come to your rescue. As much as I was sitting out there and we were throwing up here on the screen a video of your secret sins and the issues and matters of your heart being given to this video and now it's

being played out in this drama and I was sitting out there watching this happen and I looked over at you and you were just humiliated.

I couldn't jump out of my seat and come and rescue you. Why? Because I'm in the same boat. I can't save you from your sins because I can't even save myself from mine.

That's where we are. Each of us has broken God's law. We've each come under the curse or the penalty of our guilt as lawbreakers. We deserve lawbreakers. So we deserve physical death.

[55 : 31] We deserve spiritual death. Let me run through these Scriptures and I'm done. Look at this. Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to perform them.

Even one. Even one and you're guilty. You and I need an advocate. You and I need Jesus. We need the cross of Christ, don't we? Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

He took care of that. Having become a curse for us. He stood in the place of this woman in her guilt. That's how He could do that. I'm going to think through this and think, this woman must have come to faith in Christ.

Because He was able to pardon her on every level and tell her, go and do this sin no more. Don't live this life anymore. Well, the only way she could do that is if the Holy Spirit lived in her. So He either set her up for failure or He told her the truth.

Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. The Bible tells us while we stand there in our helpless condition before the Lord, playing this drama of our sins out before us at the right time, Jesus died for the ungodly.

[56 : 44] not when they got cleaned up, not when they decided to get a spiritual bath. He died for us in the midst of the worst of what we are. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

It's all about Jesus. Jesus, that's how God upheld His law in Christ and pardoned the woman. He took her sins to the cross just like He does ours.

He satisfied the demands of the law. He fulfilled her spiritual obligation before the Lord. And God credited Jesus' righteousness to her.

It's the only explanation I have for what He was able to say to her so that it is true. True about her life. Neither do I condemn you.

How could He say that? She's guilty. There's only one way that could happen. It's the same way it happens for you and me. He took her guilt on Himself and paid her penalty in His body.

[57 : 57] Well, look at this. Jesus substituted Himself for you. He willingly took on your sins. He willingly went to His death on the cross to suffer and die in your place while bearing the guilt of your sins.

So God poured out His holy anger on Jesus because Jesus was bearing your sins. God condemned Jesus to die because Jesus was being punished in your place.

Jesus was an innocent man in His death. He didn't commit any sins. He took our sins on Himself and died paying for our sins and fulfilled our obligation before Almighty God.

This is the final Scripture. Don't we love this passage? There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set you free from the law of sin and death.

He is guilty for you. You are justified in Him. Now, let me ask you, is that a reason for you and I to be able to look at people right now and say, Merry Christmas?

[59 : 14] because this is all about the gospel, isn't it? It was the cradle that made the cross possible and we need to remember that.

God in human form, born of a virgin, these are truths that we stand on and hills to die on. The cradle made the cross possible. Merry Christmas.

And keep this in mind as we say it. Let's pray together. Father God, we thank You for Your goodness and Your grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we do rejoice that we can say truly, Merry Christmas. It is a merriness in our heart that says as criminals You delivered us from sin and death through Your Holy Son.

And so we celebrate Him and put our faith in Him and we thank You for the testimony of His life.

Even now as we come to sing this final song and Greg comes to dismiss us in prayer, we pray,

Father, that You would be glorified in us through this week and that we will remember our time

together and reflect on it warmly and look forward to if You will it to be so and give us breath for life

to come back here again next Sunday, Lord's Day and celebrate once again the goodness of Your heart for us and to us in Your Son, Jesus.
[60 : 42] In His name we pray. Amen.