

Remnant Life Church
April 6, 2025
The Mercy of Jesus
John 7:53-8:1-11

Jesus is about 6 months out from His arrest in the Garden

- The Feast of Tabernacles is over with Passover fast approaching
- The hatred the Jewish leaders have for Jesus is intensifying and they are growing desperate to find a reason to arrest Him
- We read in the 7th chapter of **John** that Jesus' teaching is dividing the people
 - Not only because of its content but in who they believe He is
 - Some say He is a prophet – John the Baptist, Elijah or perhaps Jeremiah (**Matt 16:14**)
 - Others are convinced He is the Messiah
 - While others don't know what to think and are more concerned about the Romans and how they are going to be set free from their overbearing rule
 - Jesus, however, is dealing more and more with the religious leaders, specifically the Pharisees, who are trying to find a justification to not only have Him arrested, but executed

Before Palm Sunday arrives, I've wanted us to take a closer look at two teachings of Jesus as He is moving closer to the appointed hour of fulfilling the reason He had come to earth

- Last Sunday, we talked about how the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of being unclean because they did not ceremonially wash themselves before eating
- Jesus corrected them by saying it was not what went into the body that made somebody unclean, but rather what came out
 - Jesus was teaching that it is the heart, what is inside a person, that is most important because that is the place where our words and actions are given birth
- This morning, Jesus is again dealing with the Pharisees
 - They have brought a woman before Him, caught in the act of adultery
 - And they pose a question to Jesus that they likely feel very confident is going to give them what they want
 - At worst, a way to discredit His teaching
 - And at best, a reason to have Him arrested

READ – John 7:53-8:1-11

- There is serious doubt that this segment of John was in his original writing
 - The biggest problem is that it does not occur in the earliest translations of the text
 - The strongest case for its acceptance into NT canon is that it does appear in Jerome's Latin Vulgate which was the earliest complete translation out of the Greek and Hebrew allowing for the message of the Bible to be translated into all languages
 - He wrote this in the late 4th century beginning in the mid-380s AD
- There is nearly universal agreement that the event is likely historical in nature
 - But whether it was text inspired by the Holy Spirit remains in debate

- I believe that it is important based solely on the subject matter (the mercy of Jesus) and the consistency it demonstrates with the whole of Jesus' life and ministry

What is the context in which the Pharisees are approaching Jesus?

- First, it is not their concern that the law has been broken
 - What law?
 - In **Deut 22** the law states that anyone guilty of adultery must be put to death
 - Specifically, both the guilty man and woman receive the same punishment
 - Here is a clear indication that the Pharisees do not care about justice
 - Where is the man?
- Second, not only do they not care about the law, but their intent quickly becomes evident by the trap they believe has now been set
 - How do they think they have trapped Jesus?
 - They want to know, would He refuse to uphold the Law?
 - If Jesus were unwilling to follow the Law, His credibility as a teacher and Rabbi would have instantly been undermined
 - They could also now accuse Him of being lawless and be able to bring Him into their courts with all kinds of charges that now would have some basis of validity
 - Or would He uphold the Law and endorse the punishment?
 - If He had done this, it would have been difficult to reconcile this decision with Jesus' two and a half years of teaching that people must forgive one another, be compassionate, and love those who are broken and even disreputable
 - And had He not been telling people that to know the Father is to experience a new birth, a life-transformation?
 - And if He had, in the name of the Law of Moses, endorsed a death sentence of this woman, He would be in violation of the law of the Romans, which said only the Prefect had the authority to impose a capital sentence
 - They had Him!
 - Endorse the sentence, and the Romans would deal with Him
 - Ignore the sentence and be in violation of their sacred law

But then Jesus did something that He often did, He did something unexpected

- He did not answer them
 - Instead, we read that He bent down and began to write in the dirt
 - Not once, but twice
 - We have nothing that tells us what He wrote
 - It has been the subject of discussion and speculation ever since
 - Some have suggested that He wrote nothing but was simply, taking a moment to allow the intensity to ease
 - But Jesus never did anything without a purpose

- Others insist that He was not writing but demonstrating with His posture that the words the Pharisees had spoken were not worth responding to
- Others have postulated that perhaps He wrote two Old Testament scripture verses
 - The first time, **Ex 23:1b** – *Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness*
 - The Pharisees obviously had wickedness in their hearts
 - A malicious witness was one who was willing to testify even though they had no knowledge of the validity of the charge
 - The second time, **Ex 23:7** – *Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.*
 - This would certainly follow past behavior and actions of Jesus
 - When Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness
 - He only quoted Scripture to satan
- I like to think that there was a fourth possibility
 - Perhaps Jesus started writing names in the dirt
 - The names of the men who had also been with this woman
 - Perhaps the names included some of those standing around Him at that moment
 - Perhaps all of them
- The truth is we do not know what Jesus wrote but we do know that the men who had brought the woman began to leave
 - Beginning with the oldest of them
 - Perhaps the names written down the first time
 - The younger ones after
 - Perhaps the names on the second list
- But Jesus concludes this moral confrontation in a perfect manner to address the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the true condition of their hearts
 - **John 8:7** – *If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.*
 - Jesus again, brings them back to the Law they claim to love and follow so faithfully
 - In both **Deuteronomy** and **Leviticus** the law states that the accuser and witness to the crime must be the first to throw the stones of execution
 - But, the law continues, they must not and cannot be participants in the crime itself
 - That is not to say that the accuser must be sinless
 - Or that they must be free of lust in order to condemn adultery
 - It means the accuser must not be guilty of this particular sin

Jesus also showed her mercy, as He does for each of us here this morning

- This woman was given a new opportunity
- Because love and grace have opened the door to a new way of living for her

That same door is before each of you this morning

- But it may be opening to different places
- Perhaps for some of you, the door opens to salvation
 - Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin
 - You can receive salvation and the forgiveness of your sins by simply believing in Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Savior
- For others, it may be the door to the freedom of clinging to unforgiveness
 - To forgive someone is to receive your own freedom from the shackles of bitterness
- And still for others it may be the door to dealing with unresolved issues in your own life
 - Things that you have been forgiven of
 - Yet you continue to carry them around

Walk through that door this morning!

- Jesus forgave the woman and changed her life
- You too can leave here a changed man or woman because of the forgiveness and the mercy of Jesus Christ
- And then, you can also be free to extend that to others and show them what the power of Jesus' love can do to change your life forever