

ESF, Lord's day service message
11/4/2018

The Lord of Truth and Grace

Text: John 8:1-11

¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

A man was in an accident, and his shoulder was slightly injured, but he decided he could claim a nice bit of money from the insurance company. He hired a lawyer who would go along with the plan, and they ended up in court. The insurance company's lawyer asked, "Mr. Smith, please show us how much your shoulder was injured in the accident by extending that arm upward as far as the shoulder will allow it to go."

The man obliged by raising his arm to a horizontal position and stopped. "That's it."

Then the lawyer said, "Mr. Smith, will you now please show us how far you were able to raise that arm before the accident."

Again the man obliged and quickly raised his arm to the vertical so it was pointing directly toward the ceiling. Oops!

Have you ever been caught in the act of making a serious mistake? Have you ever been publicly humiliated by a mistake you made, and the shame was too heavy to bear? Have you ever felt that your mistake is too serious and the price is too high to be paid?

There is good news. Jesus can pay the price on behalf of you. Jesus can set you free from the unbearable burden of shame. How? By truth and grace. In the first chapter of the book of John, the apostle John introduced Jesus Christ as the Lord full of grace and truth.

Jesus is "*the One who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (verse 14).

"From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (verses 16-17).

In today's story, John explains why Jesus is the Lord full of grace and truth and how He sets us free from the burden of guilt and shame.

Jesus gives us truth and grace in silence

Some people brought an adulterous woman to Jesus and demanded that Jesus give an answer what to do. They thought they could certainly put Jesus in a deadly trap. The trap had two sides. First, if Jesus told them to

stone her, they could accuse him of violating Roman law. Because according to Roman law, the Jews were not permitted to execute anyone. They also could deny that Jesus is the Savior of sinners. They would attack Jesus publicly *“How can you be the Savior, when you cannot save even one single sinner? You are not the Savior but a liar.”*

The other side of the trap was this: if Jesus told them not to stone her, they would accuse Jesus of ignoring the law of Moses. Because according to the law of Moses, such an adulterous woman should be stone to death. Then they would accuse Jesus of violating the law of Moses.

So, either of the two answers would bring trouble to Jesus.

All the people there were turning their faces to Jesus and waited for His answer holding their breath: *“What answer will he give?”*

It was an intense moment. But Jesus did not hurry to give an answer. He did not say anything for a while and just bent down and started to write something on the ground with his finger (verse 6). Some people try to guess what Jesus wrote at that time. Jesus might have written some word from the Scripture or something else. But we don't know for sure. The important thing is not the content of His writing at that time but why He was writing without saying anything.

Why did He not give an answer but take a moment of silence? Was it because He did not know what to say? Was it because He needed time to think about the right answer? Was it because He needed time to think about how to escape from the trap? None of these were the reason Jesus took a time of silence.

The reason He was silent was to give them time to search their conscience before He said something. With silence, Jesus spoke to their conscience: “I know that you are asking this question not to bring justice but to trap me. You pretend to bring justice according to the law of Moses regarding adultery. But listen to the voice of your conscience. Are you sure that you are righteous enough to judge this woman?” Jesus challenged them to repent from their hypocrisy through His silence. So, His silence was not a lack of wisdom. His silence was a merciful persuasion for them to look at their hearts.

To the woman accused of adultery Jesus’ silence was a nervous time. She was waiting for a verdict in shame and hopelessness. Jesus knew the truth that according to the law she had to be stoned to death. However, Jesus also knew the way of grace that could save her. Jesus was preparing to save her from the condemnation. By silence, He was speaking to her not only of truth but also of grace.

Often the Lord will speak of what we have to hear through silence. Sometimes we wonder why God is silent when we think He has to say something or do something. We cry out, “God why are you silent in such a time as this?”

God’s silence does not mean that God does not care about what we are going through. God takes care of us even when we don’t hear anything from Him. Through silence God may speak to our conscience. God may test our faith, and mold us to be thoughtful and more patient. God always prepares for the best for us while He is silent. God encourages us to trust Him in stillness. “*Be still and know that I am God.*” (Psalm 46:10)

By truth and grace Jesus sets us free from guilt and death

When the people forced Jesus to answer their demand of what they should do to such a sinful woman, Jesus said: *"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."* Then was there anyone who could stone her? No! Look at the response of the people to that word in verse 9: *At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.* By saying this word, Jesus saved the woman's life from being condemned and stoned to death. The woman who deserved to be stoned to death was saved. It was grace.

There was conflict between justice and grace.

The justice was that such a sinner like the woman must be condemned to death. But the grace was that such a sinner could be forgiven and be saved from condemnation. Jesus reconciled the conflict with truth. The truth is that everybody is a sinner just as the adulterous woman. The truth is that there is no one who is free from sin. The truth is that without God's graceful forgiveness, there is no one who has hope. With that truth, Jesus satisfied both justice and grace.

Ultimately to fulfill both justice and grace, Jesus sacrificed His life on the cross. Through His death on the cross He was condemned for our sins and paid full price for our sins. By doing so, He fulfilled justice. Also by His sacrifice, He sets us free from judgement and death. By doing so, He fulfilled grace. Through His cross Jesus fulfilled both the law of justice and the law of grace.

By truth and grace Jesus gives us a second chance

As we all make mistakes, even serious mistakes, we need a second chance. We can receive a second chance only when there is unconditional mercy.

A mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded his death. "But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy." "But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied. "Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all that I ask for." "Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the life of that woman's son.

We all have made serious mistakes. Sometimes when we make a mistake in life it feels so final. When you make a serious mistake, you might think it's all over for you. But in Jesus you still can find a second chance, an opportunity to start a new life.

When Jesus proclaimed that He did not condemn her for her sin, He declared. "*Go now and leave your life of sin (verse 11).*"

With these words, Jesus gave her a second chance. No matter how serious a mistake we have made, in Jesus we can find a second chance. Even if you've messed up, God still has a plan for your life. The bible talks about many men and women who messed up, but with God, they got another chance (Moses, Rahab, Paul, Peter etc.).

Jesus warns us that grace must not be abused

When Jesus set her free from guilt and death and gave her a second chance, He encouraged her to take the second chance seriously:... *leave your life of sin.*

Jesus said this to let her know that although she was forgiven, she should not take sin lightly. Jesus said this to warn her that although a sinner can be forgiven through the grace of God, there is still a cost the sinner must pay. What cost did she have to pay even though she was forgiven by

God for her sin of adultery and saved from death? It was shame. Shame was the cost she had to pay. She was put in great shame when she was dragged out publicly and her sin exposed. Also, her reputation was greatly damaged. From that day, the people would remember that she was an adulterous woman although they could not condemn her. She needed lots of time and effort to recover from her damaged reputation. She had to live in an awkward relationship with people in her community for a while. If she had a husband, it would take a long time to heal the wounded marriage and build up trust with her husband. There is no sin which is free of cost. In Jesus' grace a sinner can be forgiven, but the grace does not mean that it is ok to sin again and again with an idea that there is God's forgiveness.

When people saw that Jesus forgave all kinds of sinners, they might misunderstand the grace of Jesus as a grace of no boundaries. They might abuse and manipulate the grace of Jesus. Jesus clearly says "no" to those people. Romans 6:1-2 says, *Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*

Jesus clearly sets the boundary that they should stay in. Sinning is never Ok no matter how much grace of God you can receive. Forgiveness of God does not mean that it is Ok for you to sin from time to time. Sin brings out the cost you must pay even if you are forgiven.

Hebrews 10:26-29 says,

²⁶ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷ but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸ Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of

God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Jesus brings forgiveness of God's grace to us to help us start a new life. Jesus gracefully loves us but He does not spoil us with His graceful love. Jesus brings God's grace to us but He does not allow us to abuse God's grace. Jesus is not only the Lord of grace but also the Lord of truth.

Jesus also teaches us here to take care of people with the right balance of truth and grace. He teaches us to take care of people with both grace and truth. It is to forgive and love people with firm boundaries of truth. It is not to spoil them with grace, but to encourage them to live in the truth.

If you love people without setting a clear boundary that they have to respect, you will spoil them and then they may abuse your love and manipulate you. When you forgive and love someone with the love of Jesus, you must draw a line. Set a clear boundary which the person should respect.