

John 8: 1-11

Then each of them went home, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

At daybreak, he reappeared in the Temple area, and when the people started coming to him, Jesus sat down and began to teach them.

A couple had been caught in the act of adultery, though the scribes and Pharisees brought only the woman, and they said, “this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. In the Law of Moses, the punishment for this act is stoning. What do you say about it?

They were posing this question to trap Jesus so that they could charge him with something.

Jesus simply bent down and started tracing on the ground with his finger.

When they persisted in their questioning, Jesus straightened up and said to them, “Let the person among you who is without sin throw the first stone at her.”

Then he bent down again and wrote on the ground.

The audience drifted away one by one, beginning with the elder.

This left Jesus alone with the woman, who continued to stand there.

Jesus finally straightened up again and said,

“Where did they go? Has no one condemned you?”

“No one Teacher” came the reply.

“I don’t condemn you either.

Go on your way—but from now on—sin no more.”

Meditation:

Have you ever seriously thought about what happened in the Garden of Eden?

In the second chapter of Genesis, verse 15 it says:

**And the Lord God commanded the man,
'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;
but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,
for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'**

Now, I don't know about you, but I thought part of my job as a Mom, was to teach my children the difference between good and evil!

Kids...well, for that matter, all of us get into a great deal of trouble and woe by not knowing the difference between the two!

So, why in the world would God make this the one condition for living inside the Garden?

Scholars who study these things way more than I explain it this way:

**when we think we know what is good and what is evil,
we quickly become judge and jury.**

**We can quickly devolve into the kind of person who points a finger at someone else
and says: "Look at how bad they are!"**

And that is exactly what is happening in our reading today.

Now, first of all...let's be clear...

the story of the Garden of Eden is not talking about wise decision making...

it is talking about the danger of placing ourselves in the position of superiority and power and judgment that does not belong to us...

So.....Back to our story....

Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery!

Caught in the very act? Really....How?

Usually when people are doing that kind of thing,

well, let's just say that you are not advertising it!

So, how is it that someone actually caught them??

A number scholars see this situation as a set up.

The woman was manipulated by the scribes and the Pharisees to trap Jesus. She was used.

The scribes and the Pharisees weren't at all interested in the woman or her partner or the moral integrity of their community...

they were only interested in trapping Jesus...

Our story today is not one of forgiveness, either...

Jesus doesn't deny that the woman broke the law of Moses...

and forgiveness never is mentioned

he simply tells the woman he does not condemn her

and then to 'sin' no more...

Now, if, as Christians we believe as St. Paul has said

that Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God, ...

Then this story implies that God, knowing full well the mistakes we have made and the sins we have committed...

God does not condemn us.

And if God does not condemn us...

**Who in the world do we think we are
that we could condemn any one else?**

If God does not condemn us, what does that do the notion of hell?

**If God does not condemn us, then there is no way
God would send anyone to eternal punishment...**

**I have had conversations with lots of folks about the existence... or not...
of hell and a good number people get really upset when I tell them
that the God I believe in sends no one to hell.**

Why is that I have wondered...

**and I have begun to believe that those who believe in hell
or 'being good' only for the opportunity to be rewarded,
not because of the inherent rightness of what is being asked of us.**

For example...

**people may feel have to tell the truth, that they may not lie
otherwise God will get mad at them and punish them
rather than being truthful so that they maybe people of integrity
and be trustworthy.**

**Others may give to the poor or volunteer at homeless shelters
so that they earn their rewards in heaven,
rather than understanding the essential 'rightness' or
goodness of helping those in need.**

The biblical understanding of 'sin' is really 'missing the mark'.

**It is not so much a moral failing,
as it is going in the wrong direction...**

In the Gospel teachings,

**Jesus does not condemn those who "miss the mark"
rather he invites them, and us, to readjust, re-direct, change the course
of our lives so that we no longer walk the way of selfishness and harm,
but that we walk the way of love.**

**Jesus knew that adherence to the letter of the Law,
would never produce loving people,
only fearful, judging people.**

**He spent his whole life trying to change people's
understanding about God....**

**That his God was not a potentate up high judging people
worthy of reward or punishment,
but a loving Father who desires all of his children to
know and live in abundant and gracious Love.**

**Remember our story of the prodigal son last week?
The father in that parable loved his way ward son
and his resentful and jealous son equally....**

**Jesus knew how important it was that we have a true
understanding of God,
Because who are God is...greatly influences who we are...**

**Our understanding of God...our image of God
whether we are aware of it or not,
greatly influences how we function in the world,**

how we relate to our friends and our family
how we raise our kids,
how we vote...
how we spend our money...
how we treat ourselves.

It is has been shown that if we believe in a jealous God
who has strict boundaries and rules
and who punishes those who go outside the rules...
then that is reflected in our relationships and our lives.

But if we honor and believe in a loving, forgiving God...
that too is reflected in our relationships and our lives.

So, our understanding of God is very important.
and Jesus understood that.

Apparently he understood the story of the Garden of Eden...
and for that we can all take a big sigh of relief
and say ‘Thank you! Amen!!’