

THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

(A Study of the Gospel of John)

INTRODUCTION: There are a lot of adjectives that could be used to describe **Jesus**, and were used by the people who witnessed His earthly ministry: **good, kind, compassionate, merciful, wise, reverent, holy**

But there is another adjective I am not sure we would often put on the list but is one that is especially appropriate: **SURPRISING**

Jesus was hardly every predictable.

- Every time He answered a question, people were amazed at His answer.
- Every time He taught, He offered an amazingly different perspective to a subject.
- In every situation He was in, that called for a moment of decisive action, Jesus almost always astounded those watching what was taking place.

And this is certainly true in the story in our text today in John 8. Actually, we begin in the final verse of chapter 7.

John 7:53–8:12 And everyone went to his *own* house. 1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. 3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” 6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” 11 She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” 12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

Personally, I think almost everybody who witnessed this encounter was surprised.

- The Pharisees and scribes were surprised because they were sure that either Jesus would contradict the Law of Moses by letting the woman go free or violate Roman law by condemning her to death.
- The woman was surprised because she was certain she was going to die that day.
- The crowd was surprised, including probably the apostles, because they probably just expected Jesus to say the woman should go free.
- And most of all, the woman’s accusers, some of whom probably already had rocks in their hands, were surprised when Jesus gave them the choice of brutally proclaiming their own lying hypocrisy or by mercifully dropping the stone, admitting their own guilt.

Today, however, most of you were not surprised. This account is among the favorite stories that people who read the Bible and go to church love about our Lord. As soon as the story starts, many of you know how it ends, so for you there is no surprise.

Or is there?

Because I find that even among those of us who know the story well enough to tell it to others, sometimes reach erroneous conclusions about

- what this story means,
- what implications it has,
- what applications should be made from it to our lives.

Consequently, even some who know the facts of the story well are still surprised at what the story means.

I want to ask you to join me in examining the story intently both to expose the error of false conclusions and to shine the spotlight upon God’s truth that is illustrated in this event in Jesus’ life.

So, what we are going to do is to look at

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
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I have four for us to think about.

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Sin should not be judged.</i>		

Now, that conclusion is a broad one, but it is one commonly reached by people both inside and outside of the church. It is often supported by quoting Jesus

Matthew 7:1 “**Judge not, that you be not judged.**”

This conclusion is often extended in our culture to say

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Sin should not be judged.</i>	<i>A person’s sin is a private matter.</i>	

Therefore some people believe that no Christian, no church, nobody ought to address sin in another person’s life under any circumstances. They will say, “This is a private matter between them and God.”

But here is the question: Was and is that Jesus’ conclusion on which He acted with the adulteress? Is that what Jesus taught us by precept and example?

The answer is “No!” The truth Jesus taught and was acting on in this situation was

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Sin should not be judged.</i>	<i>A person’s sin is a private matter.</i>	<i>Only God can judge sin.</i>

1. Jesus taught that sin will be judged and warned of it often.

Matthew 12:36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

2. Jesus taught that men are not to judge other men in the sense of final judgment and condemnation.

Luke 6:37 “**Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**”

3. Only God is free of sin and can therefore judge righteously. Therefore, only God can make judgment.

Matthew 7:3–5 3 And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

4. **This does not mean that we are not to discern or evaluate right from wrong and make choices and decisions based upon it.** Jesus said,

John 7:24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

We are to be discerning, make evaluations, and act upon those things based on God’s righteous judgment, not upon our own. That means we must resort to learning what God says in His Word and base our evaluations upon His judgment.

The second conclusion people reach from this story is

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Everybody sins.</i>		

That, of course, is absolutely correct. However, not so with the extension.

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Everybody sins.</i>	<i>Therefore, sin is not really a big deal.</i>	

Now, I am not saying that a lot of people say with their lips, “Because everybody sins, sin is not really a big deal.”

I am saying that most of us, maybe all of us some of the time or a lot of the time, think and act like that is the truth.

- We get caught in a sin or catch ourselves in a sin and respond mentally, “Well, everyone sins.”
- A sinful habit comes to our attention and our mind says, “Everybody sins, and that is mine.”
- A knowledge of sin in our lives, an awareness of sin in our walk with the Lord, ought to bring conviction in our heart and a certain burden to our soul.
- The truth of the matter is that often this is not the case. Instead we dismiss it and quickly reroute our thinking to go around it to other things because we are really thinking, “Everybody sins; it’s not really a big deal.”

What we need to see here in Jesus’ interaction with both the adulteress and her accusers is that He certainly did not have the perspective that because everybody did it, it did not matter all that much.

- Jesus did not excuse or minimize the woman’s sin.
- Jesus did not overlook the sin of her accusers either. In fact, He forced them to acknowledge their sin which they had been overlooking and excusing.

No, Jesus’ perspective was, “Yes

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught

<i>Everybody sins.</i>	<i>Therefore, sin is not really a big deal.</i>	<i>Everybody sins, and everybody’s sin is a big deal.</i>
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- Sin, at its root, is rebellion against God.
- It is willful disobedience of the Almighty.
- Every single sin is a stepping stone to more sins and bigger sins.
- **Sin is what separates people from God. It keeps the lost out of heaven and strains the fellowship of the redeemed from their Savior.**

The third conclusion people make from this account of Jesus and the adulteress is

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Being stoned to death was too severe a penalty for the woman’s sin.</i>		

- Some may reach this conclusion out of ignorance of the Old Testament Law, but concerning this matter the Pharisees were correct.
- Some, even knowing this was what the Bible says, still believe the penalty is greater than the crime. If you have feelings this direction, allow those feelings to be a warning to you that this is the very reason we are not to be the judges because our evaluations are often perverted. We need to seek to know and then believe God’s righteous judgments.
- The severity of the penalty was because of the sacredness of marriage and the importance of that relationship to husband and wife, to children, to family at large, to the community, and ultimately to the race itself. Our nation has come to the brink of abandoning all belief in the sacredness of marriage, and we are paying the natural penalty for it, and we will pay more.

For us today, however, the most important thing to note is that Jesus did not buy into this philosophy. He in no way indicated that Moses had erred in understanding God’s law nor had the Pharisees erred in describing it. Death was an appropriate penalty for adultery. In fact, what Jesus taught was

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Being stoned to death was too severe a penalty for the woman’s sin.</i>		<i>The wages of every sin is death. The woman’s accusers were worthy of death as well.</i>

Most of us can quote Rom. 6:23 which states that the wages of sin is death. We say it often, and we affirm its meaning, but we seldom contemplate the fullness of the reality of that statement.

- Sin kills relationships – with God and with people.

- Sin halts spiritual progress and development.
- Sin impedes projects for the good of an individual, a family, even of a nation.
- Sin brings death, and not just the sin of adultery. The wages of every sin is death.

And finally, from this event in the life of Jesus people often conclude

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Jesus´ desire was for the woman to be forgiven rather than condemned.</i>		

Again, this conclusion is correct; it is just incomplete.

The extension of this conclusion is also lacking.

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Jesus´ desire was for the woman to be forgiven rather than condemned.</i>	<i>Jesus, as the Son of God, had the authority to make that happen.</i>	

Jesus wanted the woman to be forgiven, but He wanted more than that.

Conclusions People Reach	Extensions of Those Conclusions	The Truth Really Taught
<i>Jesus´ desire was for the woman to be forgiven rather than condemned.</i>	<i>Jesus, as the Son of God, had the authority to make that happen.</i>	<i>Jesus´ desire was for the woman to be forgiven and <u>transformed.</u></i>

- Jesus wanted the woman forgiven in such a way as to restore her relationship with God.
- He did not want to just give her a passing, “Oh, that’s OK, no big deal.” He wanted her to be a child of God and to become all that her Creator had designed her to be.
- Jesus wanted her to be transformed and made into His own likeness, which thing is the very purpose of God.

In addition, for this to happen was not just a matter of the Messiah, Son of God waving His hand, and declaring it to be so. God, whether we are speaking of the first, second, or third person of the Holy Trinity which is God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, ... God does not violate His own character. That is why the Bible says God cannot lie. It is not that He lacks the power to tell a lie but that He does not – never does.

God never just winks at us and then pretends sin never happened.

The wages of sin is death – always, every time, without exception.

The only way for the adulteress to be forgiven was for Jesus to go to the cross.

When Jesus said,

John 8:10–11 ... “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” 11 She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

- If Jesus had not gone to the cross and there had the sin of the adulteress placed upon Himself,
- If Jesus had not become guilty of the sin which she committed with her illicit lover,
- If the sin of adultery had not produced its spoiled fruit of death in the life of Jesus as He hung upon the tree,

Jesus could not have made good on His promise. “Neither do I condemn you.”

Without the cross, she would have been condemned; and because the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, it would have been the lips of Christ Himself that would have said to her, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

And if it had not been for the cross, which makes the new birth possible, the woman could have never been transformed. She would have never left her adultery or any of her other sins, for she like we was a slave to sin until Christ set us free by the power of the cross.

But Jesus was steadfastly headed to the cross. He knew what He had left heaven to do. He knew what He would do. And so He said,

John 8:12 ... “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

CONCLUSION: My friend, do you know that the death penalty will be paid for every sin you have ever committed? Either it was paid by Jesus when He died on the cross or you will pay for it by the second death which is the Lake of Fire.

Which is it for you? If you have not trusted Christ by surrendering to Him as Lord of your life, you can today. Come in our invitation time and say, “I want to trust in Jesus as my Lord and Savior.”

Dear brother or sister who has trusted in Christ. Shall we treat sin so lightly just because it is our common affliction as human beings. If the roof were about to collapse under the weight of rain, would you be unconcerned because everybody inside would die?

Shall we heap up sins just because we know that their penalty was heaped upon Christ instead of directly upon us? Shall we refuse to be transformed and made like Him because continued sin in our lives blocks the changes His Spirit would delight to make in us?