

JESUS SETS A SINFUL WOMAN FREE

John 8:1-12 Lesson #20

Key Verse: 11

Scholars are not sure about where in the Bible this event should be placed. It seems that it is well-placed here, however, for in chapter 8 Jesus teaches us about slavery to sin and true freedom (8:31,32). This event shows us the forgiving grace of Jesus, the grace that sets sinners free.

1. Jesus teaches in the temple (1-8)

The Jewish authorities failed in an attempt to arrest Jesus because the officers they had sent to arrest him were moved by his words. After being the center of a heated controversy in the temple, Jesus left and went to the mount of Olives, the place of prayer. He prayed all night, then returned to the temple at dawn. Spiritually hungry people gathered around him, so he sat down to teach them.

The religious leaders, however were jealous of his influence and popularity. They made a plan to discredit him before the people. Even more, they were trying to trap him in some kind of legal snare. They brought a woman before Jesus. They said that she had been caught in the act of adultery. According to Moses' law, she should be stoned to death. Roman Law, however, did not allow Jewish religious leaders to execute anyone (18:31). These religious leaders asked Jesus what he thought should be done with the woman. They wanted him either to incriminate himself or to discredit himself.

These Pharisees had no love in their hearts and no desire to lead this woman to repentance. Their hearts were full of murder and destruction. One wonders where they found this woman and how they caught her. And where was the man with whom she had committed adultery. Moses law said that he should be killed, too [Lev. 20:10; Dt 22::22].

Jesus knew everything; he said nothing. Then he challenged them. "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he again doodled in the sand and gave them time to think. Why did they all leave, beginning with the eldest? Perhaps each one began to think about himself--and each realized that he was not qualified to throw a stone. Perhaps no one wanted to take the initiative or the responsibility for stoning her. They knew they were sinners, and worse, they were cowards. Jesus' words exposed them. They left, one by one.

Then Jesus turned to the woman. He did not condemn her. He set her free. He set her free from the grip of cold legalists. He set her free from slavery to sin. He set her free with the words, "Go now and leave your life of sin." We don't know how this woman came to live a life of sin. Perhaps, like the Samaritan woman in chapter 4, she was searching for meaning and for someone whom she could worship and love. Perhaps she was a prisoner of physical desire. Perhaps poverty had led her to sell her body. Jesus didn't ask questions. He forgave her and gave her a word of command. If she received his word in her heart, she could begin a new life. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is very different from those religious people who use the law, or use rules of their own making to crush and destroy people who are sick, helpless slaves of sin. Jesus loves us. He gave his life for us. Jesus did not come to condemn sinners. He came to save. He offers forgiveness and new life. No matter how tightly we are bound by our desires or emotions or our sinful habits, Jesus says to us, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of

sin." When we receive his one word, his love and his Spirit give us power to overcome sin and law and Satan.

2. Jesus' invitation (12)

In verse 12 Jesus gave this sinful woman new direction for life. He also invited the Pharisees who condemned her and his own disciples--to all the people. He said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." This woman had been captured at night. She lived in the shadows, doing things that should not be done. Those who caught her also lived in the darkness. They had caught her at night. When they dragged her to Jesus, they were dragging her to the light--and they themselves were exposing themselves as men of darkness. Jesus invited them as he invites us to follow him and walk in the light of life.