“NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU”

How many of you brought your Bibles this morning? If you have your Bible with you, turn to John Chapter 8. I need you to tell me what you see either in the margin, in the heading or in a footnote about this passage.

SHOW slide with various statements in different translations

What I want you to note about this passage (John 7:53 to 8:11) is that it was not in the earliest known manuscripts. There are thousands of preserved N.T. manuscripts still in existence today. None of the original “autographs” still exists. They’ve long since disappeared or been lost or destroyed. The first commentary on this passage is dated in the 5th C. What this tells us is that the Apostle John did not include this particular story in his original Gospel, the one he himself actually penned at the end of the 1st C. It was added much later. There is some debate about this passage – should it even be included in our Bible? Who wrote it? When did this event occur? Etc. Most textual criticism scholars (efforts are spent determining what is original and what was added later) believe that this passage was not written by John but by Luke (11 words used in this passage that John did not use anywhere else in his Gospel, the style of Greek is more like Luke’s than it is John’s). Having said all that, it does not mean that these verses are not God’s word… I believe that they are. They have been preserved by God for a reason. It does not mean that this story didn’t happen… I believe that it did. It was probably a well-known incident that had been passed down thru oral tradition. And it certainly does not mean that we should ignore it.

John Piper makes this statement regarding the significance of this passage and why it has been preserved through the centuries: “The most remarkable point of this story is that Jesus exalts Himself above the Law of Moses, changes its appointed punishment, and reestablishes righteousness on the foundation of grace. I don’t doubt that this is why the story was preserved. It is an amazing story.” I want you to know that I agree with him and so we ARE going to study this passage this morning.

Let me set up this narrative for you, based on what I’ve read from various Bible commentaries. This event does NOT take place during the Feast of the Tabernacles. Verse 53 rules out that possibility: “They went each to his own house.” If the verses just prior to this, which we studied last week, took place on the last day of the feast (John 7:37 informs us that they did), then when they all went home from the Temple at the end of the day, the feast would have been over.

With that said, next week we will pick back up with verse 12 and I’ll explain why I believe what Jesus is teaching from 8:12 to the end of Ch 8 is taught on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles. This further drives home that the passage we’re looking at today is out of place here. So let me give you the setting for this passage. The place is at the Temple in Jerusalem. Same place we were last week at the end of John Ch 7. But the timeframe is some 6 months after the Feast of the Tabernacles. I believe it fits well in the narrative of Luke’s Gospel at the end of Chapter 21, in the middle of Passion Week (the week leading up to Jesus’ betrayal, arrest and crucifixion). During that time Jesus is once again in the Temple in Jerusalem teaching the people. Later in our study of John we will get into Ch 12 which contains many of Jesus’ teachings during that week. Let me show you why I think it takes place then. This is from Luke 21…

READ Luke 21:37-38

Now, let’s go to our passage today in John…

READ John 7:53-8:2

So we see that Jesus is in the Temple and He’s teaching. But it’s at a later point in time. Let me stop here and ask you, does it really matter…to us here in Rockwall Texas in December of 2017? Not really. What’s important for us is that this passage teaches something significant about Jesus. It gives us truth that we can learn from, to take away from this classroom and go and apply it to our everyday lives. I think sometimes we can get distracted or bogged down by the little details and we fail to see what really matters. So while Jesus is in the middle of teaching in the Temple, there is an interruption…

READ John 8:3-6a

Stop right there. We’ll pick back up from here in a minute. We need to unpack some things first. It says in v 6 that The Pharisees are testing Jesus. And, by the way, this isn’t the first time. Matt 16:1: “And the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Him [Jesus] they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.” Matt 19:3: “And Pharisees came up to Him [Jesus] and tested Him by asking, ‘Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?’” Matt 22:18: “But Jesus, aware of their malice [the Pharisees], said, ‘Why put Me to the test, you hypocrites?’”

These Pharisees don’t love the Law. They hate Jesus. In fact they’ve been trying to get Jesus for quite a while now. They want to silence this Jesus, this blasphemer, this trouble-maker once and for all. They want to kill Him. They’ve tried to arrest Him but they can’t. God’s sovereign hand is protecting Jesus. So instead they try to trap Jesus into saying the wrong thing and discredit Him in front of the people. And this test presents a moral dilemma. No matter how Jesus answers their question, they’ve got Him. If He answers that the woman should NOT be stoned then Jesus is in direct violation of the Mosaic Law.

READ Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22

So He can’t answer “no, she should not be put to death.” If Jesus answers by agreeing with them that YES, she should be stoned, then that puts Him on dangerous ground in that He would be violating of Roman law. At this time Roman law did not allow the Jews to carry out their own executions. I think there was some argument in here about this the last time I brought this up (people pointing to the stoning of Stephen for example). But I feel confident in saying this because of an exchange that takes place later between Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, and the Jewish leaders regarding what is to be done with Jesus…

READ John 18:31

So there you have it. What happens with Stephen later was an unlawful execution. So Jesus can’t answer “Yes, she should be killed.” The Jewish leaders have Jesus trapped. So how is He going to get out of this one? No matter what answer He gives they have Him. One word of caution here: if you’re going to attempt to trick someone, trip them up, make them incriminate themselves, don’t do it to somebody who knows everything about you! That strategy just might backfire on you.

Now, the obvious question to be asked when you read this passage in light of the Law of Moses is, “where is the man?” They have the woman who was caught in the act of adultery. She obviously wasn’t alone. So where is the guy she was with? Notice, Jesus never asks that question, does He? In fact He never responds to the Pharisees’ question at all.

Instead… READ John 8:6b-8

This is the only place in all of scripture that records Jesus writing something. What is it that Jesus wrote? That’s the question that everyone asks. The obvious and correct answer is “We don’t know. The Bible doesn’t tell us.” But I’m not going to just leave it at that. I have my own ideas and I base them on this text. I don’t always agree with J. Vernon McGee, that old radio preacher that you may remember. But in his commentary on this passage I think the man is on to something. Let me summarize what he says. Jesus writes down something that makes these religious men stop accusing the woman and leave. Whatever Jesus writes has to be something personal. McGee thinks that what Jesus writes down are names – perhaps names of women, women that these men had been with at some point in their past, but that nobody knows about. They had gotten away with it. In that time and culture women didn’t come forward with sexual allegations like we see happening so often today. There is a statement that John makes about Jesus back in Ch 2 that I want to remind you of – “But Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for He himself knew what was in man.” So Jesus would have known what secrets these men were keeping (whatever sin they might have committed).

READ John 8:9

One by one, all of her accusers leave, the older, wiser ones leading the way. So, is this woman guilty of the sin of adultery for which she was accused? Absolutely. She was caught in the very act (v 4). Should this woman be punished for her sin? Yes, according to the Law of Moses. She deserves to be stoned to death. But what happens instead?

READ John 8:10-11

Instead of condemnation from Jesus, she receives mercy. Augustine commenting on this passage in the 5th C said, “There are left the two – misery and mercy.” She was brought before Jesus, the very Son of God, guilty, embarrassed, shattered and completely without hope. She now she stands next to Jesus divinely pardoned.

But that’s just like Jesus, isn’t it. He is so compassionate, so moved by the lost condition of mankind. The Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10)

Assuming that I’m right and this account takes place during Passion week, Jesus is well aware that in just a couple of days after this encounter that He is going to go to the cross and He is going to die for this woman’s sins. Instead of condemning her and killing her as she deserves, He pardons her, not because He is condoning her sin, but because He is going to take her place on the cross. He’s going to pay for her sin. Her sin in essence puts Jesus on the cross, but He loves her enough to do it. Amazing!

The application for us here in this room is obvious, but let me lay it out for you. Just like the woman, we all stand guilty in our sins. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom 3:23) “There is none righteous, no, not one.” (Rom 3:10) “There is none that does good, not even one.” (Ps 14:3) We are all sinners. We are no less guilty than this woman.

Just like this woman had her accusers, and they were right in their accusation, so do we. Satan stands day and night before God accusing us (Rev 12:10). And he’s been doing this since way back in the O.T. (Job 1 and Zech 3).

And just like this woman, we all deserve death for what we have done. “For the wages of sin is death…” (Rom 6:23a) Because of our sin and original sin we all deserve death – physical, spiritual and eternal death. (Rom 5:12)

That’s the bad news. But there’s good news. The good news is that just like this woman we receive a divine pardon. We receive mercy. We’re not punished for what we did wrong. But that’s not all, there is more good news. God gives us a gift. We receive grace. We get something wonderful to enjoy that we did not earn nor do we deserve. The second part of Rom 6:23 says, “But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” To one of the Pharisees, to a man named Nicodemus, Jesus made this statement: “For God so loved the world, [you and me included] that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” And then Jesus adds this… “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, [this woman, those Pharisees, you or me] but in order that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:16-17) And then after that Jesus talks about how the light of the world has come into the world. And that’s what we’ll talk about next week!

Just one more point before we sing. The last thing Jesus told this woman is, what – the end of v 11 – “Go and from now on sin no more.” Because of God’s grace and mercy we have a new foundation. It changes our life. It changes everything. That’s the message of the Book of Romans. In fact it’s the message of all of the epistles. Having been forgiven, having experienced God’s amazing grace, we don’t live like we used to. I’m not going to go so far as to say that we will be sinless, but it will not be our normal way of life. “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!” (2 Cor 5:17 NLT). When we come to Christ by faith and believe and experience salvation, we are not the same as we were before. So, if you haven’t done so already, come to Jesus and let Him change you from the inside out.

It’s the Christmas season. We celebrate the coming of our Savior. “Joy to the world, the Lord is come – Let earth receive her King” The good news of the gospel never gets old and we should never stop telling others about it nor stop singing its glorious truth. Let’s sing… “Joy to the World.”