

An Adulterer

“Unknown by Name”



“But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 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. Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.”

John 8:6-8

What constitutes adultery? A quick look in a thesaurus tells us that synonyms for it include infidelity, disloyalty, falseness, treachery, betrayal, deceitfulness, and faithlessness. If these are true, then perhaps we are all guilty of adultery.

In the instance mentioned in the Scripture, we find the teachers of the law and the Pharisees who are trying to trick Jesus. He has been preaching and doing miracles, and they couldn't control Him or the people who were following Him, so they felt they had to do something to stop this Jesus.

They brought in a woman who had been unfaithful in her marriage vows and told Jesus that according to the “law” this woman should be stoned. We don't know her name, but it is not important. We all know someone guilty of a sin that we think is wrong. It is often fun to answer a question with a thought that puts the questioner on the defense. That is exactly what Jesus did. He knelt down and wrote in the sand as he was thinking and then quietly replied “Let anyone of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” He had trapped them. They left because they didn't know what to do next. They all knew they were guilty of sin.

He didn't tell her to keep on living the way she had been. He knew she was guilty and she knew she was guilty, but so were all the others who had condemned her. He told her to go and continue her life free of sin. She had received the grace of God, the best gift we can each receive.

The question of adultery is plaguing many churches today and definitions are as varied as the people involved. It may not be the same sin mentioned in this Scripture, but it is nevertheless defined by many as a sin of adultery. We are to hate the sin, but love the sinner.

A friend of mine lived in another city in a very nice neighborhood, but people started to move in that “weren't like them” and they feared the neighborhood “going to the dogs.” Instead of meeting the people and welcoming

them, they began to talk about them. Except for one man who took time to talk with the new people and found them to be very nice and eager to get along. Their “credentials” turned out to be better than most of the people who lived there and thanks to that one man, they were eventually accepted. It happens in every community of people.

“God came once and absolved our sinners and placed us in His family.”



Church people (whatever that means!) are just as guilty of this. Is one denomination better than another? Aren't we all supposed to be reaching out to tell others about the God who loved us so much that He gave His life for us? It doesn't matter if we are Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, or Methodist.

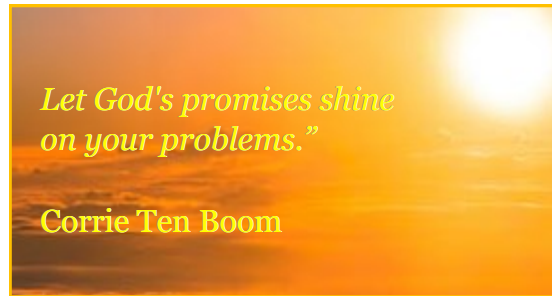
Eugene Peterson gives another view of pride in Matthew. He really brings it down to each one of us. *“Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, and criticize their faults— unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. It's easy to see a smudge on our neighbor's face and*

be oblivious to the ugly sneer on our own. Do we have the nerve to say, 'Let me wash your face for you,' when our own face is distorted by contempt? It's this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor."
Matthew: 7:1-5 THE MESSAGE

"Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now."
Mister Rogers

With this in mind, we are all at times guilty of many sins. It may not be adultery but we are all proud at times of our innocence. There is an old revival hymn based on Psalm 51:7 – *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."* I don't want to be purged with hyssop. Hyssop is a fragrant plant supposedly used in aromatherapy and alternative medicines. It may smell nice, but is that what I want, or what I need. A hymn based on this same scripture was written in 1872 by James Nicholson. The chorus asks God *"Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow, Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."* Sometimes I don't want to be pure. We need to be careful for what

I recently heard a saying that goes something like this – *"When you ask God to guide your footsteps, you have to start walking."*



"I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time- waking and sleeping. It does not change God. It changes me."
C. S. Lewis

Prayer: Dear Lord. You are so awesome in the way you provide for us, and we so often are negligent in showing that love to others. We condemn because it is much easier. Help us to love as You love, and live as You would like us to live with our neighbors. Amen

1. Why is it so much easier to condemn others rather than change our own ways?
2. How do we handle the sin if we really think it is going to hurt the person(s) involved?
3. Do we dare to get involved? Should we get involved? Are we adulterers?
4. WWJD is a familiar slogan today "What Would Jesus Do?" How can we answer that question when we are faced with the sins of others? Of ourselves?

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