



Sermon, Sunday July 24, 2022

“Do not judge, but love your neighbor”

SCRIPTURE: John 8:1-11 ¹while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and, making her stand before all of them, ⁴they said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. ⁵Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

Introduction: We are all forgiven sinners.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

I visited Berkeley, CA during a family trip for the past two weeks. It was to give my two children a tour of the UC Berkeley Campus and to visit the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) where I studied. My family stayed in a hotel in downtown Berkeley. By the way, near downtown Berkeley, People’s Park, a symbol of the American anti-war movement, is located. People's Park was created during radical political activity in the late 1960s. Now the park has become the home of the Homeless.

My two kids, who have grown up in the safety of Ames and Ankeny, found it very shocking to see so many Homeless living in People’s Park. My son was terrified and scared watching the Homeless. Drugs users and drunken Homeless people screaming were enough to instill fear in my children. There are social activists to solve the homeless problem in our society, but for most ordinary people, Homelessness is also a target to avoid. There is a heart of prejudice and condemnation against those who go against our common sense and norms. And it is not easy to overcome such prejudice and condemnation.

Today's text is Jesus' lessons about our hearts that can't love our neighbors but condemn our neighbors with judgement. According to today's text, Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives and went to the temple the next day to teach. At that time, the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus with a woman caught in the act of adultery. They demanded Jesus' answer to their question about the woman in adultery. **They said to Jesus, "The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"** However, the scribes and Pharisees did not seek an answer to their question about the adulterous woman from Jesus. They asked the question with the purpose of accusing Jesus through His answer about the adulterous woman. If Jesus said the woman should be released, He would be accused of not obeying the law, saying that He was the son of God. On the other hand, if Jesus said the woman should be stoned according to the law, it was breaking the Roman law that prohibits the death penalty for any ethnic group. They hope to find an excuse to attack Jesus by their questions about the adulterous woman.



In this difficult situation, Jesus stooped down and writes something on the dust. **Then he said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."** Those who heard these words of Jesus left the place one by one. In the end, many people who were there left and she was left alone with Jesus. **Jesus said to the woman, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."**

Jesus did not rebuke the adulterous woman whom people condemned as an unclean sinner but forgave her. This is the content of today's text. Through today's text, Jesus teaches us how to enrich the world. It is not condemning but loving your neighbor.

Body: How can we love our neighbor?

However, it is easy to condemn a neighbor and difficult to love a neighbor. Because our nature is constantly tolerant of ourselves but strict with others. It's also because we generally don't give up easily on values, we think are right.

Even in today's text, this tendency of people is clear. In the eyes of those who brought the adulterous woman to Jesus, there is only a woman who has broken the law of Moses and is ok to be stoned to death. But what was the heart of the adulterous woman who was brought before Jesus?

The scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus, **"Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"**

But Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground, and he straightened up and said to them, **"Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."** Then everyone left, leaving only Jesus and the woman who had committed adultery. Jesus said to the woman, **"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"** She said, **"No one, sir."** And Jesus said, **"Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."**

The adulterous woman must have known the consequences of her actions. Also, the woman could not overcome her sinful instinct on her own. So, it's result is adultery. And now she was brought out in front of people, and all that was left was judgment for her actions. Her heart was filled with guilt, shame, and hopelessness. But the Lord proclaims forgiveness of sins to such a woman.

Jesus commanded the adulteress not to sin again. The Lord cast out lust, fear, and despair from the adulterous woman's heart so that she would never sin again. Now her' heart filled with thanks, joy, and love. Please think about it. The heart of the woman who committed adultery is full of the Lord's love and overflowing with gratitude for the forgiveness of her sins, how can she sin again? Also, if the heart of Jesus is in our hearts, how can we commit evil again?

So, the way we can love our neighbor is when we look to Jesus and fill our hearts with the Lord, we can praise the Lord and we can love our neighbor. Often, many people think that the life of faith must be done with hard work or effort. As I say emphatically, there are things that take precedence over effort and hard work. The Lord wants a life of faith with Jesus in our hearts, not a life of faith that we do with our will and effort.

So, true faith is not something you try to say, 'You must not commit adultery, you must not steal, you must not gamble, you must not play much computer games'. As we can see from today's text, the adulterous woman's heart was full of sexual immorality before she met Jesus. However, after meeting Jesus, that heart disappeared, and peace and joy came. When we meet Jesus with our hearts and accept the words of Jesus, we gain the heart of Jesus. As a result, the evil thoughts within us are removed and we overflow with gratitude and joy. Our hearts naturally become Christians who resemble Jesus.



That is why Jesus puts His words into our hearts every day. **That is why Jeremiah 31:33 says, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.”** In this way, Jesus puts His heart and His Word into our hearts every day. When Jesus comes into our hearts, we have no choice but to become like Jesus. It's not about trying to do good; it's not about trying not to sin. When the heart of Jesus is in us, it leads us to do good, to live a life of obedience to God, and to add great peace and joy to us. May these blessings be with all of us.

Conclusion: A Christian who lives by the power of the love of Jesus Christ on the cross

Now let's summarize today's sermon. What is the beginning of love for your neighbor? It is not condemning the neighbor. By the way, we are used to instinctively condemning others. So, we must be able to see ourselves before condemning our neighbors.

According to today's text, the woman who committed adultery was saved by the love of Jesus. Jesus tells this woman, **"Go now and leave your life of sin."** **Romans 8:1 says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”**

Because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has saved us from the law of sin and death. The law of the Spirit of life is the law that was completed through the love of Jesus Christ on the cross for us. So, the new commandment Jesus gave us is to love one another. To condemn a neighbor is to kill a person. But first, looking after yourself and loving your neighbor through the love of Jesus is the way to save people. May the blessing of saving people's lives through the power of Jesus' love be with you.

