

Reflection for Ash Wednesday

JOHN Chapter 8 – Verses 1 To 11

8¹ *but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

²At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered round him, and he sat down to teach them. ³The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ ⁶They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷When 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.’ ⁸Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’

¹¹‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin.’

After Jesus had finished teaching in the temple, He went to the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem for the night. This was His usual custom when He was in Jerusalem.

The next day, the Jewish leaders brought before Jesus a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. According to the Jewish law, Moses commanded that both the man and the woman caught in adultery were to be executed. So the Jewish leaders asked Jesus what should be done to the woman. They asked this in order to trap Him. If Jesus said to stone her, He would appear unmerciful. Also, the Roman authorities would oppose Him, because it was against Roman law for the Jews to execute anyone. But if Jesus said not to stone her, He would be disobeying the Jewish law, and then the Jews would be able to accuse Him of breaking the law. So whatever he answered, Jesus would be contradicting one law or another, thereby discrediting Himself. Jesus didn't answer at once. He bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. We don't know what He wrote.

Jesus did not fall into their trap. Jesus said, in effect: ‘Let her be stoned; she has sinned. But those who throw the stones must be **without sin** themselves.’

Jesus meant that their motives, in stoning the woman, should be completely pure. No judge is without sin, yet he must still judge. However he must judge with pure motives. He must judge justly and according to the law. These Jewish leaders were accusing this woman for evil reasons. It is even possible that the woman had been unlawfully ceased. If the Jews stoned the woman illegally, they too could be punished for murder.

All the woman's accusers left. The older ones first, because they understood Jesus' meaning the quickest. But everyone knew in his heart that he was unworthy to cast a stone at the woman. There is a great lesson in this story for all of us. How quick we are to pick up stones to throw at others. Such stones are things like evil talk, slander, false witness, gossiping. We should look first at ourselves, and we shall see that we are not worthy to throw stones at anyone but ourselves.

Jesus did not condemn the woman however He condemned her sin. We must not think from this story that Jesus ignores our sin. Jesus never ignores sin. On the final day of judgement we will not receive mercy, on that day we will be judged according to our works. However, in this life if a person truly repents, he has the chance to obtain mercy and forgiveness.

Notice that according to what is written, Jesus did not forgive the woman of her sin. That is because she had not yet repented. She had not yet asked for forgiveness.

To receive forgiveness, we must first repent. Amen.