

Woman caught in adultery - Mission Focus

John 8: 2 - 11.

At dawn Jesus appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They 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. ⁷ 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." ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

⁹ At 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. ¹⁰ Jesus 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."

Jesus, God's missionary, his own Word who became flesh to reach out to us and to everyone who acknowledges the need for a relationship with their Creator and Redeemer, once again deals with the reality of human need and pain when he met the "woman caught in adultery".

The circumstances are shockingly cruel and corrupt. The teachers of the law used her as bait to set a trap for Jesus in order to accuse him of being in defiance of the law of Moses. They have no compassion and have no consideration for the salvation of this woman. The man who was involved, is not even mentioned, as if one could commit adultery on your own. Harsh politicking and complete lack of compassion see a person in spiritual need abused and left with no care or concern by her religious teachers.

Jesus represents the complete opposite of such vindictiveness in this narrative and is clearly revealed as the Pastor of sinners, the Friend of those who suffer as a result of heartless underhanded agendas and the Answer to the ultimate need of the destitute, downtrodden and marginalised.

He does not defy the law of Moses, but he does resist the self-righteous agenda of the religious teachers: "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" he said to them, and when they all left without an answer to this challenge of Jesus, we hear the Saviour's voice setting her free through forgiveness and through positive instruction when he said "neither do I condemn you" and "go now and leave your life of sin."

The Jesus we meet in this narrative reminds me of the word of Paul in 1 Tim 1: 15: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst."

He still uses "the worst" - you and I, to reach out to all, including the scandalised and exploited, to allow the Word of forgiveness and renewal to become flesh in all circumstances.

When reading this story, I simply want to join the hymn writer in exalting such a Saviour when the poet says:

*Jesus! My Shepherd, Saviour, Friend,
my Prophet, Priest and King.*

*My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.*