

Adulterous Woman & Grace

A sermon on John 8:1-11

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Interesting readings today:

Isaiah 43 vv. 16-21 God, who made a way out of Egypt for the Israelites – by implication will again make a way out for his people; will do “a new thing” and make a way for us – a way to salvation; so this is about God’s promise to rescue his people

Psalm 126 The Lord turning again the fortunes of Zion; restoring the people

Phil 3:6-14 Not righteousness based on keeping religious laws, But from faith in Jesus Christ – Paul writing years’ after the Resurrection, and in reflection of what it all means: Speaks about the power of knowing Christ, and Christ’s Resurrection Exhorts us to press on, towards the end-goal of union with God in Christ for eternity

Gospel: **Why this reading, in Lent?**

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To Begin:     Story – if laugh, not because funny but because toes curl up  
                  [John de G’s experience]  
                  Assurance – I will not ask for any personal disclosures!

Focus seems to be on adultery – although as soon as you get into the story you see it has almost nothing to do with adultery per se.

Adultery – at one level, only one amongst many sins:

Greed, lying, coveting your neighbours’ possessions, stealing and fraud, dishonouring God and God’s Name... (as per Ten Commands recited each Sunday in Lent)

Yet it is also an awful sin – involves mistrust, sacred bonds broken, deceit involved, a broken Commandment, and a cause of immense hurt in a marriage relationship; and a common practice, at least by what we know from people's lives and as one of the more frequently reported incidents in newspapers.

Now, let me check, have I heard correctly? A man and a woman were caught in adultery. The crowd brought the man and the woman to Jesus... Correct, huh?

Aha! – Only the woman was brought. Interesting. Need I say more on that?

The word, "Caught", caught my attention...

My own Ignorance of Latin, but I know the phrase: "In flagrante delicto"

..."delicto" almost sounds like "delight". (I know it doesn't mean that – the phrase essentially means "caught in the act".)

But, unless I am reading too much into the passage, one can almost sense the delight of the crowd; they have caught her, and are going to use her – use her to condemn her and also to make a point with regard to Jesus, to catch Jesus out

Jesus' response? Writing in the sand – he who is without sin, cast the first stone; everyone eventually left – and Jesus' interaction with the woman was profound:

Neither do I condemn you

Go now and leave your life of sin

### **A Remarkable Encounter of Grace**

Lack of condemnation (not equal to condonation); he did not condone her adultery, but did not condemn!

Now I see clearly that this is a very suitable passage for a Sunday in Lent (and for many other Sundays too)!

Someone wrote **a summary of that Gospel passage** in prose style:  
(not attributable to any single person)

When her accusers had left  
 Jesus turned to the woman and asked:  
 "Is it true what these men said?"  
 She nodded her head.  
 "That means you were in sin then."  
 Once again she nodded her head.  
 "To be in sin is to be in darkness.  
 And you were not made for darkness but for light."  
 He paused, and then added: "Has no one condemned you?"  
 "No one, Sir" she replied.  
 "Well then, neither will I condemn you.  
 Go in peace, walk in the light,  
 And do not enslave yourself again."

A faint smile appeared on her tear-stained face  
 And she began to move away.  
 She went slowly at first,  
 As if fearing that at any second he might stop her in her tracks and recall her.  
 But then she picked up speed and bounded away  
 With all the enthusiasm of a reluctant school-goer  
 Who had just been given an unexpected free day.

She was dismissed with infinite gentleness  
 And the most delicate of reproofs  
 How differently it might have ended  
 But for the grace and compassion of Jesus

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God, we find ourselves in the presence of a miracle!
 We are astonished!
 You have shown us again the miracle of forgiveness.
 We have been turned towards death and You have turned us round to life.
 You have offered us Your life again in cleansing, forgiving, restoring love.
 We have been reminded of the depth of your grace.
 How grateful we are!
 We lift our voices to You and we lift our hearts in praise and thanksgiving,
 in the name of Jesus.

Hear us then, as we offer our prayers to You for people in need...
 Lord, in Your love ... [HEAR OUR PRAYER ...]