

Everybody Must Get Stoned John 8:2-11

Just Desserts – Friday August 7, 2015 First of the First Friday Night Worship Services
Saint Marks United Methodist Church, Charleston WV

Jesus loved to tell stories. Over and over, throughout the Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, people came to him asking questions, asking for the solutions to problems, and he refused to answer. Instead, he often just told them a story. Jesus likes for people to figure stuff out themselves. He knows that we pay more attention to what we tell ourselves, than what others tell us.

The grumbling Pharisees came asking: *Why are you eating with sinners?* And he told them three stories: (a) about a man who lost and found a sheep, (b) about a woman who lost and found a coin, (c) about a father who lost and found a son, and then lost the second son in the finding of the first (the story of the Prodigal Son.) (Luke 15)

Another time, someone came asking him *Who is my neighbor?* And Jesus told him the story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10.23-37)

A key to understanding the meaning of Jesus' storytelling is in the person in the story whose point of view is the most like your own. The person whom you most feel like, will shape the message you learn from the story.

The same is true about stories in the Bible that are about Jesus. For example, in the story I am going to read tonight, you can identify with the adulterous woman, with the self-righteous crowd, or with the forgiving savior. Listen and see whose point of view is most like yours:

²Early in the morning [Jesus] came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" ⁶This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹But

when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

From whose point of view did you hear the story:

- the adulterous woman
- the judgmental crowd or
- the forgiving savior

There are some people who see themselves in the role of the woman – guilty. Caught in the act. No defense.

So they make excuses.

- Hey, I **didn't have any chance growing up.**
- Hey, **where is the man who was doing it with me?** How come you didn't bring him in here, too? This just isn't fair!
- Look, **I'm just playing the hand I was dealt. I'm doing the best I can.**

I **haven't always been a preacher.** Before I went to school to learn how to be a preacher, I was a lawyer. Even worse, I was a **prosecuting attorney.** In our office, we knew all about people playing this role. **GUILTY BUT I HAVE A GLORIOUS EXCUSE.** We had a check off sheet for the review of cases; just assign the case the number of the excuse:

1. I was drunk.
2. I was on drugs.
3. My parents did not love me.
4. They did it to me first.
5. I ate too many Hostess Twinkies and I was on a sugar high; I had no control over my behavior.
6. Etc. etc. I think we had about 20 excuses based on the normal ones we heard.

If you notice, in this story, **JESUS DID NOT ASK FOR ANY EXCUSES FROM THE WOMAN. HE DIDN'T HAVE TIME FOR EXCUSES. EXCUSES DON'T CUT IT WITH JESUS.**

There is also the role of the **Judgmental crowd.**

They wanted the woman punished. Or, they wanted to be able to make Jesus look bad for being soft on the law. Maybe they could report him to the Roman authorities for speaking out against the law.

They were LAW-AND-ORDER kinds of people.

These people are **always ready to pull out their stones and throw them** at someone else. Even if they have done the very same thing themselves.

In fact, sometimes, even more so, if they had done the same thing. If they can stone somebody else, then maybe people will forget to stone them. (In the footnotes in some Bibles, it says that some ancient manuscripts say that Jesus was writing the names of the people in the crowd who had also committed adultery with this same woman.)

I am sometimes amazed at how many people I see who are guilty of all kinds of things, but still want to make sure that somebody else gets punished.

What often separates the **first group of people** from the **second group of people** is their situation.

Most people want JUSTICE / PUNISHMENT when it comes to other people. Those same people are able and willing to make up, and to accept, all kinds of excuses when it comes to themselves and their families.

And there are a lot of people who mess up and know they mess up, and although they are willing to do all kinds of things to escape the consequences

of their conduct ... even when they GET OFF, they still aren't able to ACCEPT FORGIVENESS. The shame continues to cling to them.

Too often when people mess up, they believe that THEY ARE MESSED UP.

And that's why the **third perspective** on this story is important to understand.

There is **Jesus the savior**.

Listen to the story again – from the perspective of Jesus the savior. Notice the following things:

- (1) He does not deal with the issue of guilt
- (2) Excuses are not something he even considers
- (3) The only fairness test he makes is that nobody is allowed to throw stones if there is anything for which they too should be stoned.
- (4) Doing something bad does not make the person bad, unlovable, nor unforgivable.

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Bob Dylan understood the meaning of this story. Everybody deserves to be stoned. **(Begin playing “Rainy Day Women #12 & 35)**

- We all mess up.
- We all deserve to be stoned.
- People knowing they deserved to be stoned, but have excuses.
- People knowing they deserved to be stoned, still hope they can get away with it.

And, then, on the other hand:

- We all are carrying around stones with other people’s names on them.
- People that we want to be punished.
- People who have not treated us right.

And then there is Jesus the Savior **(Play the song: “Jesus loves me, this I know”)**

- Jesus loves me.
- Jesus knows I’ve messed up.
- Jesus knows that there are no sinless people who have a right to stand in judgment of me. Although he DOES have the right to condemn me. BUT he doesn’t do it. Because Jesus loves me. Jesus saves me ... just as I am. There is nothing I can ever do that will make Jesus stop loving me.

Is there someone that you’ve done something wrong against? Someone who has a right to be upset with you – regardless of all your excuses.

- Jesus loves you. Jesus forgives you.

Is there someone that has done something wrong to you? Someone whom you have a right to be upset with – regardless of all their excuses.

- Jesus loves them. Jesus forgives them.

Now the thing about Jesus is –

- He never MAKES you forgive other people.
- He never MAKES you accept his forgiveness.
- Just like his stories, everybody has to figure out their own answer.

Back in his day. Also, now, in our time.

- Whose got a rock with your name on it?
- Whose name do you have on a rock you are carrying?
- Jesus does not condemn you. What are you going to do?
- Why don't you sing with me?

[Sing again the song, that is played on the piano.]

Let us now go to the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We will pass out the liturgy sheets. I will say what is in the light print; you will say what is in the dark print. When you come up to receive, know that all are welcome, all are invited. ...