



**SERIES: September 2022 – February 2023 Believe**

**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**

**Tuesday, November 22, 2022**

**Scripture: John 7:53-8:7**

**TITLE: God's Mercy Overcomes**

Have you ever been caught red handed? I have on more than one occasion. It's never fun. But when it's happened has it been a teachable moment or just a moment of embarrassment and shame?

Jesus will transform a moment of shame and turn it into a moment of redemption.

What happened? Turn with me to John 7:53 – 8:7

They went each to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This 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. And 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."

Before I unpack this famous and notorious passage, you may notice in your Bible that it is in brackets. Why is that? The issue with this passage is it's not found in the earliest manuscript copies of John. It appears to be a late addition. So, many scholars debate if this passage is authentic and should be included in the Bible. What scholars do agree on is that the contents appear to be consistent with the life and teaching of Christ. So, likely historical, but possibly not original to John's writing. But because we believe it was historical, we will look at it today.

Jesus goes to the temple to teach. The Pharisees know He's there so they've got a predicament for Him. They catch a man and a woman in the act of adultery but they only grab the woman. Adultery today is still frowned upon but it's hardly a big deal for the culture. Today the idea is "if it makes you happy, then go for it." Well, the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment is "do not commit adultery." In other words, marriage is sacred to God. Keeping your commitment to your spouse is important. Sex is a beautiful gift for a husband and wife in marriage. That's it. The penalty for adultery at the time of Jesus was death. Leviticus 20:10 prescribes death for both the man and woman.

But notice, the Pharisees and scribes only bring the woman. They really don't care about the sin of adultery. They're simply using the situation to trap Jesus.

What should Jesus do? Condemn the sinner and jeopardize his reputation as a compassionate teacher? Or will he reject the judgment and reject the Mosaic law? It's like asking an innocent person "Are you still kicking dogs?" If you say, "Yes," you're a dog kicker? If you say, "No," you're still a notorious dog kicker. You can't win.

Jesus isn't going to fall for it. He is the compassionate one who condemns sin. So He writes some unknown thing in the dirt and comes back and says, "Let the one who is without sin throw the first stone."

Jesus isn't denying her sin. She was a sinner caught in a gross sin. He wouldn't deny His law and best standards. But He would not deny their own sinful hearts.

We all struggle with this. We focus on other people's sin, so our sins look smaller. We say, "Sure, I gossip but at least I don't sleep around." "Sure, I fib on my taxes but I'm not a drug addict."

Sin is sin and God hates sin. Thankfully, God also loves the world without reservation. He offers salvation freely. So how we treat people should be based on the grace of God not self-righteous hypocrisy. God's mercy overcomes our sin.

Today be thankful for God's mercy that is so powerful. So share it with those who need it most. When you do, Jesus will win the day.