

The Woman Caught in Adultery

March 12, 2016



Reflection on the Gospel of John, 8:1-11, the 5th Sunday of Lent.

"Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and in the Law Moses has ordered us to stone women of this kind."

This gospel provides an incredible view of the relationship between God and man.

We should be able to identify and relate to the sheer desperation of the woman. The indescribable shame of a public humiliation, being "caught in the *very act* of adultery". This combined with the fear of pain and death of the stoning, provides an image of absolute dread. What could you fear more than total rejection from your community, and being beaten to death with stones?

It is in this moment, that this helpless woman, encounters Christ.

We should also be able to identify and relate to the condemnation of the crowd. Seeing the scandal, and thinking it's their business to pass their personal judgement on the woman. We too do this. In gossiping about friends, in our opinions of celebrities, in the

way we see those who have been found in wrong. We think it's our responsibility to judge those around us.

It is in this moment, that this condemning crowd, encounters Christ.

And oh, what a beautiful encounter. Christ has the incredible ability to speak truth in love; justice in mercy. To raise up the humble, and humble the prideful.

"Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her."

With a simple sentence, He diffuses the crowd's self-righteousness. He shows them their own need for forgiveness, for reconciliation with God. He speaks to us as well. Our condemnation of others blinds us from seeing our own broken relationship with God, as well as seeing Christ in the other person.

"Has no one condemned you?...Neither do I condemn you' said Jesus. 'Go away and from this moment sin no more."

And in the this moment of encounter between weakness and strength, humanity and Divinity, this woman experiences true love and forgiveness, and a call to more. She finds that Jesus, regardless of her guilt, sees her with great dignity. He still sees her as valuable, precious, and worthy of love, and does not condemn her as He could. Instead, He wishes to see her flourish and sin no more. This means to be brought back into relationship with God.

This is a powerful moment. To go from absolute desperation, from the fear of death, to experiencing mercy and freedom from guilt. This is the indescribable nature of Jesus. This is encounter.

And this too is available for all of us.