

The Liberated Life

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[0 : 0 0] What does it mean to be liberated in our life? What does it mean to be free? The dictionary definition is freed from social conventions to be freed from enemy occupation. The Bible this morning introduces us to a woman. We don't know her name, we're not told. The woman has been caught jointly in the act of adultery with a man. That's really important to point out that it takes two.

But she's the one that they drag and yet as scripture tells us she will be liberated by love and grace, humility and forgiveness. The people who accused her brought her to Jesus and who was teaching in the temple courts. They brought him at that time right into the middle of the heart of where the religious community meet. It's a place where people have come to be with Jesus. They were fascinated with his teaching. They were there, they were gathered wondering what he would do or say next. And then they drag this woman in. You couldn't arrange a more public stage for this to be played out. And yet here is Jesus and the religious leaders quote the law which says that we should stone her to death. What do you say? What do you say Jesus? What do you say about this situation? Because we want to hear shockingly the law by which they abided said exactly that.

Here were the leaders seeking to discredit Jesus. They'd seen him do the miracles. They'd seen the way in which he'd forgiven people. Everything that was contrary to the law. It was a catch. It was a trap.

They were here to set him up. Did they care about this woman? No they didn't. She was just going to be collateral damage because they wanted to make their point and uphold the law. They didn't care about what happened to this woman. They just wanted to enforce their way and wanted to catch Jesus out. The religious leaders had heard the reports of this rabbi about his increasing influence in their lives and in the lives of people. People were following him. This man was a threat. This man Jesus who shows grace to tax collectors. Who gathers prostitutes. Who speaks to the unclean. Who eats with people who the religious leaders would never eat with. People who they had branded as being unworthy of God's love and God's righteousness and forgiveness. And so by placing this woman in front of him clearly guilty in their eyes would Jesus. Would Jesus show her mercy? Would he break with the conventions? Could they point their fingers at him and claim him to be a heretic? Maybe to be a false prophet? A rabbi who doesn't uphold the law? You see the picture? That was their goal. That was their intention. But this is Jesus. This is the Jesus that we know. Who I guess Jesus knew their hearts. He knew their motives. He knew their intentions. He saw the trap before it arrived. He noticed their insecurities maybe because they had come ready and they had come armed to do what they were going to do according to their law.

You know what? Says Jesus. Do you know what? You're right about the law. That's what the law says. You were right about the punishment that she should be stoned to death. But not today. But not today.

[4 : 13] Because let the one among you who is without sin be the first one to throw the stone at her. At this point those who heard him began to go away one at a time. The older ones first. I find that really interesting in this account that the older ones went first. Why was that? Why was that? Perhaps are they older and wiser? Perhaps were they aware more of their own sin? Perhaps they knew the law better than those that were younger? Perhaps they too in their hearts knew that they had no right to cast this stone. Maybe the younger ones there stayed. They were in high arousal. Maybe ready and zealous to show others how they upheld the law. Maybe they wanted to see blood spilt that day just to show that they were in line with all the conventions. That they could be whipped up into hate. We see it again and again. We saw it crucify him.

A whole group that would come together and be whipped up. It happens and it happens today. But on this day they knew that to act would be blasphemous and they would be the one facing the punishment.

So they dropped their rocks. Jesus was left with the woman and his disciples as well. Can you imagine the moment? I guess the stillness just like that the scene has been transformed.

What was a place of chaos and hate is now being transformed into a place of grace. The storm of anger and judgment has moved on.

And I love this line because it is so Jesus. And if you have heard this in your life as I have many times Jesus straightened up and asked her woman where are they?

[6 : 40] Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you? What a great line. No one sir she said then neither do I condemn you Jesus declares.

Go now and leave your life of sin. It's a beautiful picture of grace that we're given this morning that in a moment this woman who is under judgment of the law is liberated by love.

she is free. We've been singing about that this morning. Free to leave behind her what was death or very nearly death and to live a new life.

Free to leave her life of sin. Totally freed. Jesus brings mercy and love humility and grace into the heart of conflict and judgment and we so often miss the essential in verse 6 and 9 because when we get to verse 6 and 9 where Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger and he straightened up and said let any one of you as without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.

Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. Now you may be thinking now Clive's going to tell us what he wrote in the ground. I'm sorry to disappoint you.

[8 : 11] There's been several that have made several suggestions as to what he would have written and what he did but we're not told. But again commentaries have speculated perhaps more than focusing on what he was writing Jesus stoops down twice.

Jewish men didn't do that in the presence of a woman. he stoops down twice and shows his humility in the face of a woman who has been brought to him effectively being found in a place of sin and he stoops down twice.

What an amazing saviour that we have who meets with us especially in the presence and let's put a marker in the sand today that if anybody tells you that the Bible is misogynistic against women clearly they haven't read it or they don't understand it because Jesus did more in three years of public ministry than any culture has done in thousands of years to raise up the value dignity and richness he places on this woman and all women.

Amen? Amen. Let's not forget his teaching to the religious leaders too that day because they had to look at themselves they had to look at the hate in their own eyes they had to look at their religious piety their holier than thou attitudes with unforgiveness in their hearts and stones in their hands these leaders seeking to discredit him yet Jesus liberated them too because he revealed to them where they were wrong they too had to walk away wrong about how the law of God is designed to work and yes they should love the Lord their God with all their heart with all their soul with all their mind etc but they should also love their neighbour as themselves on these two laws hang all the prophets and the prophets as Jesus reminds us yes there will be a judgement yes there will be a death but it won't be hers and it won't be yours and it won't be from these stones it will be from me says Jesus and it will be from a cross that's the freedom you see the link

I was thinking as I read through this scripture Jesus humbles himself twice before this woman and before the crowd in front of this woman who said and he's done the same for you and me humbling himself by entering this world as a vulnerable baby and secondly as he humbles himself on a cross by dying for us and rising again that we can have freedom and eternal life there's so many links in this scripture that you don't take it just at face value there is so much in here that speaks of the Jesus that we know and that we love and that played out that day on the stage to free us to liberate us from the power of death and sin to free us from any power the enemy may try to hold over us from the accusations from the judgment from the people who point at us that we are free within the love of God in him there is no condemnation

[11 : 48] I just sensed this morning that there may be those of us who need to hear that afresh that in Christ there is no condemnation as people come with their stones to judge you in Christ there is no condemnation we are forgiven and we are free when we meet with Jesus we don't know what happened to this woman's story we don't know what happened after after this dramatic encounter we can only imagine one can only imagine somebody who is forever changed who walks away her eyes have been opened to the actions of what she was doing sin no longer held an appeal it once did and she walks free considering what a free life would be what has been left behind her and what lays before her in freedom that she has in her life and when we meet Jesus sin no longer has a hold sin no longer has its fatal attraction on us grace changes our perspective when we are born again in the power of the Holy Spirit he breaks through and once we lived only to please ourselves but when we have been forgiven our motivation changes we are now live to please

God do we know that powerful forgiveness in our lives I hope we do I sincerely hope we do as we worship as we give thanks for our liberation our freedom here this morning to be able to just come and to worship as one without fear of people breaking in the doors to drag us out are we giving thanks for our liberation as we heard as we sang about day by day moment by moment we have moved from death to new life in Christ and before we walk away today I suppose the challenge is for me and I hope the challenge is for you is what stones do we need to drop where we judge other people what stones do we carry that we hold on to that we hold on to firmly where suddenly judgment comes to mind and the stones maybe that we need to drop knowing the love maybe one two maybe more how many stones do we need to drop today and what do those stones look like for us that we carry to pass judgment on others our thoughts our comments harsh opinions maybe even just that glance

Jesus says to those that gathered drop your stones and leave this one to me leave this to me walk away remembering and give thanks for the good life that I have given you to live because you are liberated and free because of what I have done and what I continue to do the liberating love of God invites us to leave the judgment to him to look at ourselves to drop the stones we so often pick up to throw at others and in doing so he raises us up to new life in him shall we pray raise us up Lord we pray free us from seeking to be judge and jury we leave that to you Lord forgive us our sin thank you

Lord that you free us from sin no more Lord give us clean hands and a pure heart in Jesus name Amen