

Monday Morning Rewind – March 31, 2008

Good morning! Ever feel like damaged goods? Guilt, shame, and anger can make us feel worthless. How does God deal with “damaged goods”? On Sabbath we looked at the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery for the answer.

John 8:1-11 records the scene of a partially clothed woman being dragged into the temple courtyard by a mob of lawyers and Pharisees. They bring the woman to Jesus to see if He will uphold the law of Moses that says she should die (see Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22), or if He'll forgive her and show disregard for the law. But in bringing the woman without her male accomplice the Pharisees are breaking the very law they were pretending to uphold in order to trap Jesus.

Jesus knew that they had set this woman up! She stood there, trembling in shame and guilt, mere bait used by the Pharisees to catch Jesus. So what does Jesus do? He starts writing on the ground with His finger. “The same finger that engraved the commandments on Sinai’s peak and seared the warning on Belshazzar’s wall now scribbles in the courtyard floor.” (Max Lucado)

The accusers don't like this delay and press for action. It is then Jesus says, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7). According to the law, the witnesses of the crime were to throw the first stones. Jesus doesn't say they can't do it; He simply adds a caveat—sinlessness! The Bible says, “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). No human being can meet Jesus' standard. All stand condemned before a holy God. All, therefore deserve death. They might as well bludgeon themselves with the rocks because the law that condemns the adulteress condemns them as well. Jesus returns to His writing. Many scholars believe Jesus was writing the sins of the accusers in the courtyard dust. To avoid being discovered, they “began to go away one at a time, the older ones first...” (verse 9). But even to His enemies, Jesus shows mercy. He writes their sins in sand—a non-permanent medium. The characters He wrote on the pavement dust were soon obliterated by the Temple traffic. Though He Himself wrote His law with His own finger on stone, He wrote the sins of these men in sand.

Jesus is left standing alone with the woman. “Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said” (verse 10). She still awaited judgment because Jesus was the only one qualified to throw a stone. He alone was “without sin.” But instead of picking up a rock, the Rock of Ages uttered those immortal words of life: “Then neither do I condemn you, . . . Go now and leave your life of sin.” (verse 11)

Rewind to John 3:17 and reflect on how Jesus deals with damaged goods. Jesus judges with mercy and without excusing sin. How can He do both? He will soon take her death penalty. Her sin will result in death—His own!

Reread this powerful story in John 8 and remember these life-changing lessons:

1. Jesus is not soft on sin; He's hard on hypocrisy.
2. Jesus doesn't dismiss the consequences of sin; He pays the consequences Himself.
3. Jesus doesn't judge us; our own actions do that.
4. A genuine encounter with grace will lead to genuine repentance.
5. The law of God cannot be changed, but the law-breaking heart of man can be.
6. I never stand alone in my guilt and shame; Jesus stands with me.

On this Monday morning, know that Jesus is standing *with* you, not against you. Let His words of life bring you hope and heal the wounds of guilt and shame: “Neither do I condemn you, . . . Go now and leave your life of sin.” With those words ringing in your ears, never let the enemy call you “damaged goods” again. You've been redeemed. —Pastor Randy