

Jesus, The Friend Of Sinners.

Text: John 8:1-11

Suggested Hymns:

426, 311, 165, 283, 618

1) Jesus deals mercifully with the hypocrite

2) Jesus deals mercifully with the fallen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 8:1-11, ¹ *But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.* ² *Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.* ³ *Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,* ⁴ *they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.* ⁵ *"Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"*

⁶ *This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.* ⁷ *So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."* ⁸ *And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

⁹ *Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.* ¹⁰ *When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"* ¹¹ *She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Everyone needs a friend. Surely, everyone recognises the truth of this statement. The toddler entering kindergarten for the first time enters upon a new and strange world. How all alone and frightened he feels! However

a friend will make all the difference in the world! There will be laughter, and there will be play, and fear and lonesomeness will disappear.

Think of the youngster whose family has moved to a different city just before the beginning of the school term. He enters the local high school as a stranger. How all alone and forsaken he feels! What he would give for just one friend to have around!

How desperately an individual needs a friend, especially when he is in trouble! Think of the young man who must move to a large city to seek his livelihood. How shall he obtain work? How shall he find a place to live?

Suddenly he remembers that an old schoolmate of his lives in this city and decides to get in touch with him. His schoolmate is overjoyed at meeting him again and is willing to help him in his predicament. He assists him in finding a place to live and introduces him to a business executive who takes him to his employer. Except for that friend, he might have been stranded.

However, the individual's greatest needs are not his material needs, but his spiritual needs. In time of spiritual need the greatest Friend of all is Jesus, the Friend of Sinners. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Deals Mercifully With The Hypocrite

Firstly, we note that the hypocrite was not motivated by love for his neighbour. Early one morning, as was His custom, Jesus went up to the Temple to teach the people that flocked there. However, this morning His discourse is deliberately interrupted by the scribes and the Pharisees. They bring before Him a woman taken in adultery. They claim there can be no doubt concerning the charge, for they state that they have irrefutable proof. Now, Moses, whom all the Jews revered, stated in his Law that all such people should be stoned, but what was His verdict?

Outwardly, it would seem, the scribes and Pharisees respected Jesus and were anxious to gain His verdict on a very difficult case. However, the text clearly shows that they were trying to lay a trap for Him. "Now," they thought to themselves, "we have Him. No matter what His answer is, it can be used to discredit and destroy Him before the people.

If He decides that this woman should not be stoned, then we can accuse Him of ignoring the Law of Moses and being a patron of offences. If He decides that she should be stoned, then we can accuse Him of being untrue to His own teachings of love and mercy and speak of His behaviour as being inconsistent with the character of the Messiah.”

The conduct of these men shows that they are hypocrites. They are not motivated by love for Jesus, but rather they seek His undoing. They seek to trap Jesus and discredit Him in the eyes of the people.

These scribes and Pharisees had also set themselves up as guardians of the Law. They sought to lead others to believe that their condemnation of this woman flowed from their zeal to safeguard the Law and to maintain righteousness. But did they really care one bit for the Law that told them to show mercy? When they found this poor unhappy woman, did their hearts beat with pity for her?

Did they say with sorrow, *“This temptation has been too great for our poor sister, and we must save her from the brink of the abyss”*? Not a word of it. Not a thought of pity quivered in their hearts. Not a word of comfort fell from their lips. They were interested only in condemning this poor woman and in parading their own virtue before the people. They are a picture of human malice — bent not on helping, but on destroying others.

The sect of the Pharisees has not died out. From time to time we may meet such a Pharisee today. He professes great love for Christ and His commandments, but all this is shown to be an empty profession. Behold, he is more ready to condemn than the Lord Jesus! See how he hounds his fellow men and condemns them because of some sin, all the while imagining that by dooming others to perdition he is proving his own fitness to the highest heaven.

He himself may drink to excess and impoverish his family, he may gamble away the money that his children need for food; he may be a miserly, shrivelled soul that refuses to raise a hand for the building of the Kingdom; he may spend hours on the phone slandering and defaming his neighbours; but when the opportunity presents itself, he rises as the peak of perfection and hurls the curses of the Law at a poor fellow sinner and consigns him to the company of demons.

Such an individual does not have the spirit of Christ, for Christ forgives and receives the world's worst sinners.

In contrast to this we see that Jesus' conduct is prompted by love. As the people see these men lead the accused before Jesus and hear them state her crime so fully and so emphatically, they may be led to think that these are just men who live daily in fear and love of Almighty God. Outwardly people may think that these men are eager to honour the Law and to maintain righteousness.

Jesus, however, knows that the main difference between the accused and her accusers is this, that her sin has been found out and theirs has not. His eye searches the heart of the accusers and sees underneath the lurking hypocrisy. These accusers know nothing of love and mercy to their fellow men. But Jesus has come to seek also these hypocrites. His love and His mercy embraced even them. They, too, were to be called to repentance.

To the surprise of the Pharisees, Jesus did not answer their question. He stooped down and wrote in the dust at His feet, as though He had not heard them. But they are not to be put off so easily. They clamour for an answer. Finally Jesus raises Himself and tells them, ***"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."***

Jesus points to personal chastity as the only possible condition for carrying out this ancient and severe law. Slowly the profoundness of this remark dawns upon the accusers of this woman. It strikes their conscience and awakens it. They realise that Jesus is saying to them, *"Who are you that you are so set on the punishment of this woman? Have you no sins of your own to repent of? Is it your appointed task to sit in judgment upon your fellow men, as though you yourselves were perfect? It would be better for you to look to your own hearts and to inspect your own conduct in the light of God's Word."*

Their own conscience condemns them. Here again Jesus attended to the great work which He came into the world to perform, and that was to lead sinners to repentance, not to destroy, but to save. They sought to trap Him, but He sought to lead them to repentance and to convert them. At His words the hypocrisy of their whole plan stares them in the face, and slowly, one by one, they slink away.

Jesus clearly shows that personal innocence is the highest qualification for judging the sins of others. Who can measure up to that standard? Surely, conscience reminds you that you, too, have sinned by harshly and unmercifully condemning your neighbour. Does Jesus harshly denounce you and mercilessly condemn you? No, He left His heavenly home, became the lowliest of the lowly, trod Calvary's painful path in order that mercy and forgiveness might be offered even to you.

Let Jesus also be a Friend to you. Let His love guide you in dealing with your fellow sinner. Let His mercy teach you to be merciful to your neighbour.

2. He Deals Mercifully with the Fallen Jesus Condemns Sin, but Not the Sinner

After a time Jesus raises Himself and, looking about, sees that the woman's accusers are gone. She alone is left standing before Him. He asks her, ***"Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"*** ¹¹ ***She said, "No one, Lord."*** What will Jesus do now? Will He utter that condemnation? Will He cast the first stone? ***"Neither do I condemn you"*** He declares. These words are words of forgiveness. He has not come to condemn the sinner, but to save.

It is noteworthy that the accused has not uttered one word in her own defence or tried to place the blame for her sin on another. She has not denied her sin. She knows she has sinned and has broken God's Law. Neither does Jesus make light of her sin, but clearly recognises its greatness. Never has Jesus tolerated or condoned sin. He hates sin and calls it by its rightful name. But inasmuch as she with sorrow acknowledges her sin, He absolves her. He says to her in effect, ***"Be of good courage; your sins are forgiven."*** Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you. He does not condemn the woman herself, but her sin, in the words, ***go and sin no more.***

Perhaps this story has awakened an echo in your own heart, and you realise with dismay that you, too, have sinned. Will not Christ condemn you? He condemns your sin, but He tells you, ***go and sin no more.*** He will not condemn you, for Jesus has come ***"to seek and to save that which is lost."***¹ This is still your day of grace. You can still find mercy at His hands. He has not yet

mounted His throne of judgment, but beware - Do not strain His long-suffering patience to the breaking point, ***go and sin no more.***

Finally let us realise that Jesus deals mercifully with the sinner. With these words Jesus also leads the accused to recognise the fact that her guilt did not bar her from the hope of forgiveness.

She was bowed down with the sense of her own guilt. Not one word has she uttered to justify herself. Her accusers had given her no cause to hope for forgiveness. They had condemned her. Jesus, on the other hand, did not utter one word to drive her to despair. He had not driven her from His presence with loathing. He dealt mercifully with her, as with one that had strayed, it is true, but one that was nevertheless to be sought and led back to the path of righteousness. Here Jesus proves that He has not come "*to quench the smoking flax*" nor "*to break the bruised reed.*"²

Jesus tells her, "'Go in peace,' but from this moment 'sin no more.'" With these words He shows her that since she now had obtained the pardon of Heaven and eternal life, she must mend her life. Sincere repentance will lead her to break off with her sin at once and forever.

None is more compassionate to sinners than our Lord Jesus. As the Friend of all penitent sinners, He pardons her for His redemption's sake, and He stands ready and willing to strengthen, to help, to guide her, so that henceforth she may be victorious in the day of temptation.

Learn of your Saviour to stretch out the hand of mercy to the fallen. Never let it be said of you that you by word or look drove them to despair. Think of your neighbour who has stumbled and fallen and from whom you have been keeping your distance. Go to him in love. Tell him that Jesus, the Friend of sinners, also wishes to be his personal Friend and help him in all his spiritual needs. Assure him that the Lord, who forgave the dying thief and a repentant Simon Peter, has mercy and forgiveness for all his needs. Lift him up, and turn his feet once more into the right way. As Scripture says in Matthew 5:7,⁷ ***Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.*** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 19:10

² Isaiah 42:3