



October 30, 2022

“Dramatic Grace”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

Wednesday Classes 6:30-8:00

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JOHN 7:53-8:11 ~

Pericope Adulterae (pě-řě-cō-pā ä-dül-tě-řī), otherwise known as “The Woman Caught in Adultery.”
Sunday, November 6, at 9:30 for a full discussion on the controversy surrounding this passage.

JOHN 7:53-8:2 ~ sets the stage. Early on the morning following the festival, Jesus returned to the _____ and “sat down” “to teach.”

JOHN 8:3-6 ~

Scribes, the certified copyists of _____, accompanied the Pharisee delegation on sanctioned Sanhedrin business. Interrupting Jesus’, they cast a woman into the center of the class and announced that she was _____ “in the very act” of “adultery.”

Their question makes it obvious that she was merely a _____. The person really on trial was _____. A fact that verse 6 confirms.

There are questions designed to _____ and questions designed to _____. This was the latter. If Jesus agreed with their take on the Biblical requirement, He would be arrested and handed over to the governor’s troops as an insurgent. If Jesus decided the other way, He would be arrested and handed over to the Sanhedrin for openly rejecting _____ Law.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

What did Jesus do? Well, He _____ them and started “writing on the ground with His finger.”

JOHN 8:7-9 ~

You cannot “_____” if someone does what you ask right away. They were shocked and frustrated by Jesus’ completely unexpected reaction. Not only did Jesus not take the _____, He also didn’t start an endless _____ with them about the human interpretation of God Holy Word.

He actually commanded them, “If you are perfect, as the Law requires, go for it.” What that means is judge with _____ and then carry out justice appropriately, for the right reasons, humbly, prayerfully, and with mercy, like God, the perfect _____.

They were not there to seek justice at all – they were there to trap Jesus. Their primary sin at the moment was judging the woman, judging Jesus, and judging everyone else with an evil _____ agenda.

Jesus stooped over again and continued writing with His finger. Don’t get wrapped up in _____ He wrote, but in the _____ He wrote.

The ground under Jesus was solid _____. Dust is κοινότης (kōn-ē-ōr-tōs), dirt is ῥύπος (rū-pōs), sand is ἄμμος (ām-mōs). Jesus wrote on _____ (Exodus 31:18). Jesus, as the finger of God, is the only perfect Judge.

When a person is confronted by Christ – convicted by the Holy Spirit – they have two _____, then as now.

We all want _____ for ourselves, but we generally want judgment and punishment (we call it justice) for all others. That fear of lawlessness caused by “cheap grace” and the fear that this passage teaches that no human can judge another, is the reason it is _____. Neither are true.

JOHN 8:10&11 ~

She was _____, but so are we all, and that’s the point. No human being is without _____, but Jesus, the One Who writes God’s Commands, He is the Perfect Judge. Trust Him with your case.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



Lêtheia

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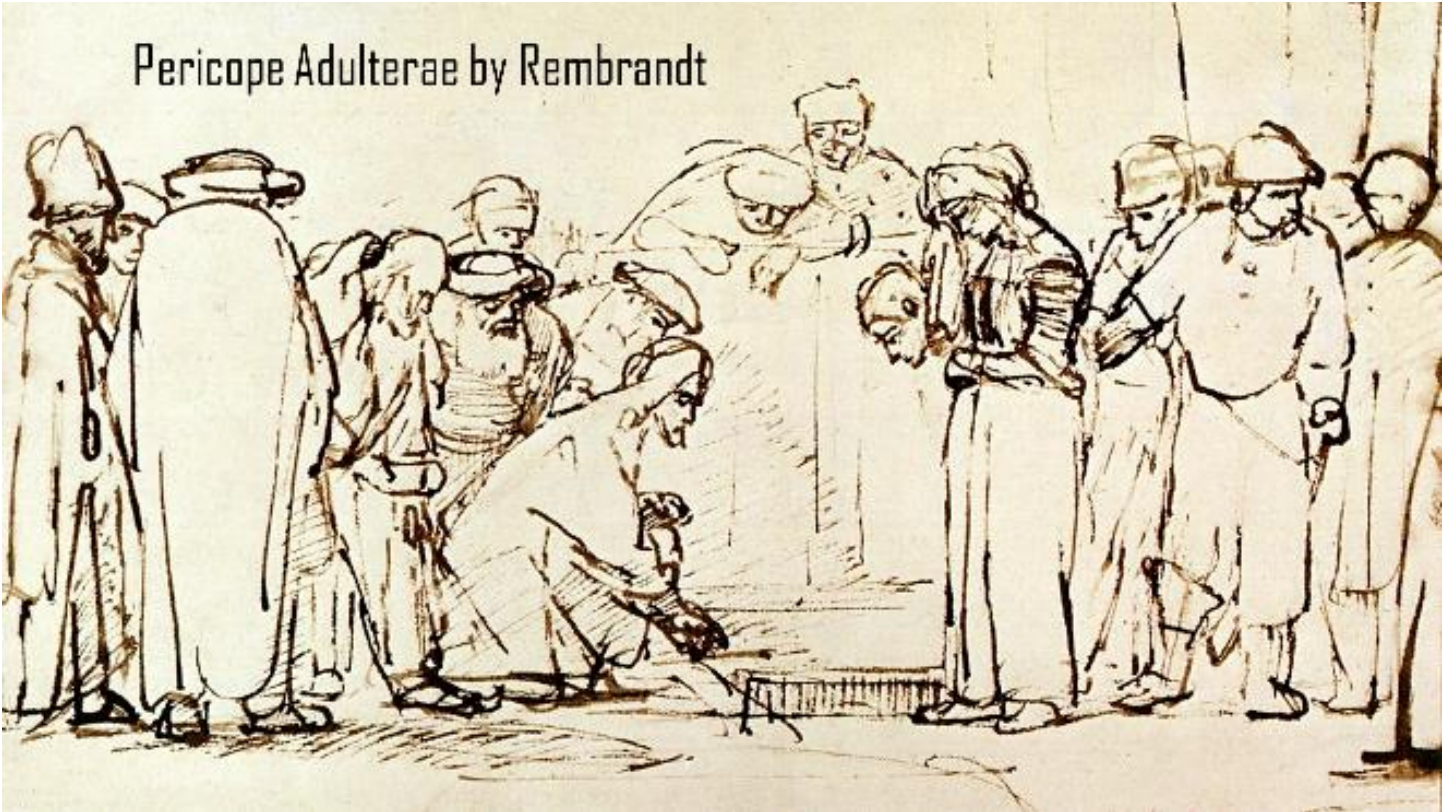
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We left Jesus in the Temple area with a lot of stunned people – some for Him, and some against. We left the “Jews” trying to kill Him in a very abusive meeting frustrated by their inability to either capture Him or to stop Him...

John 7:53–8:2, 53 Everyone went to his home. 1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them.

Pericope Adulterae by Rembrandt



These are the opening verses in a passage that runs through chapter 8, verse 11, collectively called, in Latin, the Pericope Adulterae. You've heard me use the word pericope, which, from the Greek, means to cut around, in this sense, to separate out, a passage that can sort of stand alone. I prefer it to the word story because a story has a hint of something made up. Anyway, you can probably discern what the other word means and so the Pericope Adulterae is the passage concerning the "Woman Caught in Adultery."

It is arguably the most controversial pericope in the Bible. Many modern Biblical scholars, even some very

good ones, have thrown in the towel and have accepted that these verses do not belong here in John's Gospel and perhaps do not belong in the Bible at all.

I worked fast this week and actually finished this sermon Thursday and then scrapped it in its entirety because I had devoted almost the whole thing to discussing the validity of the pericope. I rewrote it to discuss the significance instead.

I hatched a plan to present the sermon I rewrote and then to invite anyone wanting to stick around afterwards to hear the first one. That seemed to be too much and then there's food and childcare and a lot of other things to consider, so I scrapped that also.

Here's what I'm going to do. I am going to thoroughly cover the issue of validity at 9:30 next Sunday. We will have childcare. If you want to know all about it, you are cordially invited to find out then. In lieu of regular Sunday school next week we'll discuss this issue, and it is open to all comers of all ages.

The part I just read, those 3 verses starting in John 7:53, are simply setting the stage for what comes next, and they are quite benign. Nothing strange here. Everyone, from the people for Jesus to the people against Him, and from the Sanhedrin leaders to the Temple police, went home after a week-long festival punctuated by four days of intense confrontations with Jesus.



Jesus, for His part, went to the Mount of Olives. It is often assumed that He stayed with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, in the small village of Bethany on the backside of the Mount of Olives. It's roughly a mile and a half from the Temple. It's also possible that He

camped out on the western slope overlooking the Temple in the vicinity of the Garden of Gethsemane. That's immediately across the Kidron Valley less than 500 yards from the Temple as the crow flies.

Early the following morning, Jesus returned to the Temple and picked up an ever-growing crowd along the way. By the time He arrived in the covered court area, He "sat down" "to teach." Sitting was the normal position for the Rabbi, preacher, teacher, and in most cases his listeners would stand – the opposite of what we do today.

Now, other than you comfortably sitting in soft padded chairs and me standing, there is nothing remarkable about any of that. As I said, it is entirely benign and so completely natural to what we know about Jesus, that there is nothing here that is even mildly surprising.

Yet, as I said, these 3 verses together with the next 9 verses constitute a controversial section of Holy Scripture. In your Bible, unless it's a King James Version, this passage is marked off in some way, with brackets, a footnote, or italics, etc. By doing so, the translators call into question the validity of the passage.

It does no one any good at all to ignore the issue, nor does it do any good at all to distort reality to make us feel better. This church is and always has been about the Truth. We never shy away from difficult things, we never sugar-coat, dismiss, or pretend.

Next Sunday at 9:30, I'm going to explain the controversy. It is an opportunity open to all, and like all opportunities, it's entirely up to you whether or not you will take advantage – the option is completely yours.

Why have I chosen to do it this way? I want you to know the significance of the episode – I want you to see the character of Jesus in what is one of the most dramatic displays of grace found in our Bible. I want you to know Jesus better today. Well, we don't have the time to do both. I can't preach on the verses and explain the controversy in the time allotted. You say, make it a two-parter. I don't want today, or next Sunday, to be just an information day.



John 8:3–6, 3The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, 4they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5“Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” 6They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

Verse 3, the Scribes are accompanying the Pharisees and both groups are on sanctioned Sanhedrin business. Scribes were specially trained and certified

copyists of Scripture. As such they functioned as experts in the text of what we call the Old Testament. They are variously called lawyers, teachers of the Law, jurists, scholars, etc. Their presence indicates that whatever happened next, it would be official from a legal standpoint. In other words, they were there as expert witnesses and judges. This was a serious legal proceeding with formal ramifications.

They interrupted Jesus' class and pushed a woman into the center of the group of people who had gathered to listen to Jesus. She was caught "in the very act" of "adultery."

Their question to Jesus makes it painfully obvious that they have no concern for her at all – she was merely a prop – the person they are after is Jesus. Jesus is the one on trial here, not her. Jesus is the reason the Scribes are there in their official capacity and in case anyone missed that patently transparent reality from their question, John plainly states that fact in verse 6, "They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him."

They don't merely ask, "Hey, Jesus, if a person blatantly breaks one of the Ten Commandments, let's say adultery, what action should we take against them?" No, they bring a guilty lawbreaker and cast her before Him for dramatic purposes. They bring her to make it real, to make it emotional, to make it life and death, rather than just an academic discussion. "This woman, and here she is cast in front of You, in all her shame and misery, this sinner of the highest order – she has been caught in the very act of the most disloyal, despicable, and scandalous crime conceivable. What do we do with her?"

Beyond that it is in public with the few people who actually believe in Jesus and with legal experts recording His every word, move, gesture, and facial expression. To say that Jesus had been put on the spot, is a gross understatement.

And beyond all of that, they stated in their question qualifying explanations – always a sure sign of a trap. They remind Jesus in their question that the Law commands us to kill such a person by stoning them to death. So, since that's the case, "what say you, trapped Jesus?"

I actually get these kinds of questions all the time – questions designed to trap me, rather than to sincerely learn from me. When someone asks me “what version of the Bible do you use?” I can instantly tell whether they want information from me about English translations, or whether they are testing me. In the latter case, any answer other than the Authorized Version, in other words the King James Version, and I’ve been caught red-handed as a false teacher as far as they are concerned.

When they call me out in front of witnesses, especially witnesses who might want to learn from me, their motives are clear.

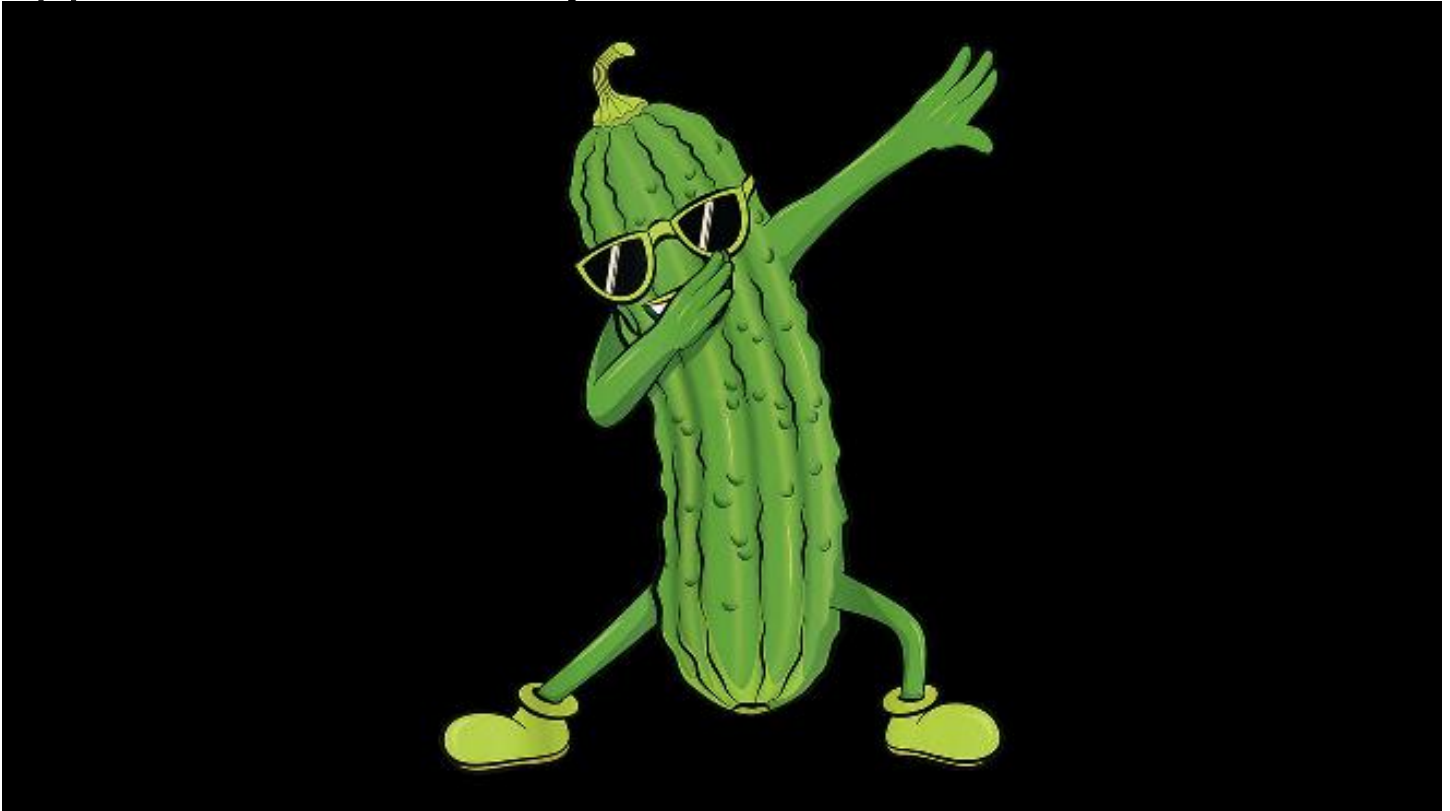
When they add to their question a qualifying explanation like, we know modern translators over the last 200 years have corrupted the Bible, taking verses out and distorting others, and even calling John 7:53 through 8:11 into question, so which version do you use? it leaves no doubt what they are after. This was nothing more than a setup to get Jesus to condemn Himself.

What exactly was the trap they laid? In general, from the Scribe's perspective, the highest Law of Almighty God as given by Moses, demanded that the woman be stoned for her crime, and if Jesus agreed with that course of action, He would be upholding the Law.

However, if He upheld the Law, He would simultaneously be demonstrating to His followers the opposite of the mercy, grace, and forgiveness, He openly taught. It would be a double standard. Was it a double standard because He was afraid of the officials, or a double standard because He was double minded, or a double standard because He was currying favor? In addition, He would be advocating a violation of Roman law by taking capital punishment into the hands of the Jews.

If Jesus decided in the first direction, upholding God's Law and violating Roman law, He would be arrested and handed over to the governor's troops as an insurgent, fomenting rebellion against Roman law and order. Not to mention alienating His disciples as a false teacher, saying one thing to them and a completely different thing to others. If Jesus decided the other way, He would be arrested and handed over to the

Sanhedrin for openly rejecting God's Law. Not to mention alienating His disciples as a false teacher opposed to God's Holy Law.



It was a pickle.

What did Jesus do? Well, He ignored them and started “writing on the ground with His finger.” You could say, as Calvin did in his commentary of 500 years ago, that Jesus was showing His disdain for their duplicity and cruelty, by ignoring them. You could focus on what Jesus was writing as Jerome did in his commentary of 1,600 years ago. You could focus on the symbolism of

Jesus writing as Augustine did at the same time as Jerome.

Think about the scene – put yourself there – let's go back in time and be a proverbial fly on the wall. It's early morning, Jesus is quietly teaching a group of interested Jewish people in the Temple court.

A commotion grabs everyone's attention. It's an authorized party of Pharisees and legal experts sent from the Jewish Ruling Council on official business, and they are roughly dragging a woman along. With single-minded focus of purpose, they come straight up to Jesus and His group and throw the woman into their midst. They forcefully demand from Jesus a verdict. "You, man who calls Yourself a 'Teacher,' what judgment do you render in this case!"



And Jesus simply bends over and starts running His finger on the ground tracing out one Hebrew letter after another. Can you imagine the frustration generated from that simple act? “Hey, we’re talking to you – this is supposed to be intensely dramatic, and emotional, and stressful – You are ruining the effect – You are taking all the drama, emotion, and pressure out of our carefully orchestrated presentation... Answer us You – Answer us now!”

Don’t believe me? Look what happened next...
John 8:7–9, 7But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is

without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” 8Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.

Jesus, still seated, stooped over – He bent down close to the ground upon which He was sitting and wrote with His finger. They practically lost their minds – “they persisted.” You cannot persist if someone does what you ask right away. It must have been somewhat comical. These religious officials, shocked and frustrated by Jesus’ completely unexpected reaction, the people standing there awkwardly embarrassed or curiously interested. The woman completely bewildered and Jesus calmly ignoring them all. With the ultimate self-control of the Holy Spirit Jesus, with dignity and quiet confidence snubbed their whole setup.

Jesus didn’t rise to the bait by being pressured to answer quickly and by doing so, He largely defused the conflict. Jesus intentionally deescalated the situation.

They had tried to catch Him off-guard, and He had turned the tables – they were the ones off-guard now.

Another thing of note, Jesus also didn't start an endless debate with them about the human interpretation of God Holy Word. He as always, cut to the heart of the matter. He said, "If you are perfect, as the Law requires, go for it – stone her." He actually commanded them. It's a command "Throw the stone." What it means is lost in translation. The point is judge with justice and then carry out justice. Judge, as the officials charged with that sacred duty the way God judges – perfectly. So, ascertain through incredibly humble prayer – in full recognition of your own failings – what God has decided.

Let's talk about their charge. They stated very emphatically that the Law required that she be put to death, that "Moses commanded them to stone such a woman," but is that true?



Well, it depends upon whether the woman was married or engaged to be married. In Deuteronomy chapter 22, it says that both the man and the woman guilty of adultery must be executed, but no method of death is given. Then it says, if a man rapes an engaged girl and she screams, or otherwise fights back, only the man shall be executed, but again no method is specified. Finally, if a man is caught committing adultery with an engaged girl and she did not cry out or fight back, both of them shall be taken to the city gate and stoned to death. That's the consistent requirements of the Law. Jesus didn't start a legal debate with His opponents because the legalistic wrangling over the minutia of

God's Word to bolster human opinion is a human endeavor.



We should glean from this a few things. 1) First, when confronted by an attack, when able, delay your response. It blunts the attack without escalation. 2) Second, try to get to the heart of the matter ignoring the stated matter. People rarely attack with what's really bothering them and they rarely respond with what they really think. Try to, in the power of the Holy Spirit, discern what the real issue is and then address that.

Finally, understand that wrangling over Bible interpretation is what people do – it's never what God does. God has revealed to us His character in His Word and that is always to do with general principles, not hard rules.



After much sanctimonious virtue signaling on their part Jesus finally straightened up and addressed them with a single sentence, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”.

It has become all the rage in our social media culture to virtue signal. That's the tired, completely hypocritical, use of public statements purely designed to show

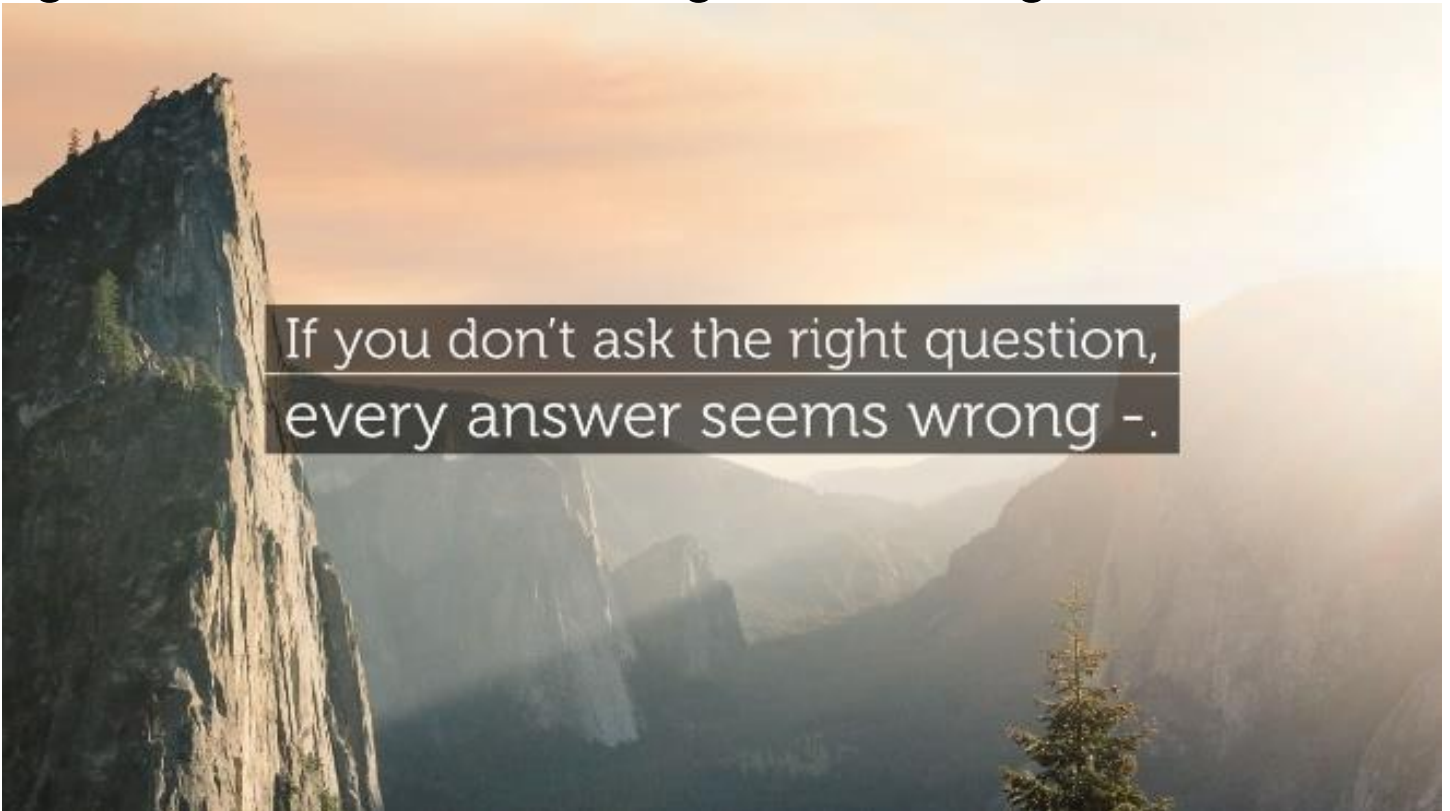
everyone else how woke, or hip, or with it, you are – to demonstrate through your broadcast sentiments and opinions, your wonderful character, your lofty social conscience, and your moral and ethical superiority.

“There is nothing new under the sun.” That’s what the opponents of Jesus were doing. They were actively and personally involved in a scheme to bring a good man down. They didn’t care about the adultery – if they did, where was the other party? Adultery is a crime that requires two to tango – where was the dude? They were not there to seek justice at all – they were there to trap Jesus.

What other sins had those men committed that day? What other sins were they themselves guilty of? Which one of them was without sin? More specifically, the Law, regarding the stoning of a guilty person, required the witnesses who were without complicity, to cast the first stone. It is very likely that these men were complicit in setting up the woman, so that they would have a woman caught in the very act of adultery to present to Jesus. Their primary sin at the moment was judging the woman, judging Jesus, and judging everyone else with an evil human agenda.

Jesus never stood up – He specifically was seated and bent over close to the ground – He then ἀνακύπτω (ä-nä-küp-tō), to “bend up.” He straightened up in His seated position.

After making that short statement Jesus stooped over again and continued writing with His finger.



If you don't ask the right question,
every answer seems wrong -.

When we are faced with a Biblical text, we frequently ask the wrong questions. One of the wrong questions asked of this passage is what did Jesus write? We ask what was Jesus teaching that morning? Who was in attendance? Who was this completely nameless

woman? Who was the guy involved? Where was He? What did Jesus write? Why did they leave from oldest to youngest? God is not interested in giving us those details because they all become distractions to His point. 1) The point is human judges must judge with perfect Godly justice in their heart. 2) The point is Jesus forgives even the most grievous sins if we fall on His mercy. 3) The point is, once forgiven by Christ, sin no more!

So, in what way did Jesus write? Augustine, as I mentioned, commenting on this passage 16 centuries ago, was the first person that I know of to say that Jesus didn't write anything. I agree with Him, and all the scholars that have followed Him, up to and including, Edward Klink in his commentary of only 6 years ago. So many people get wrapped up in what He wrote they miss the way He wrote.

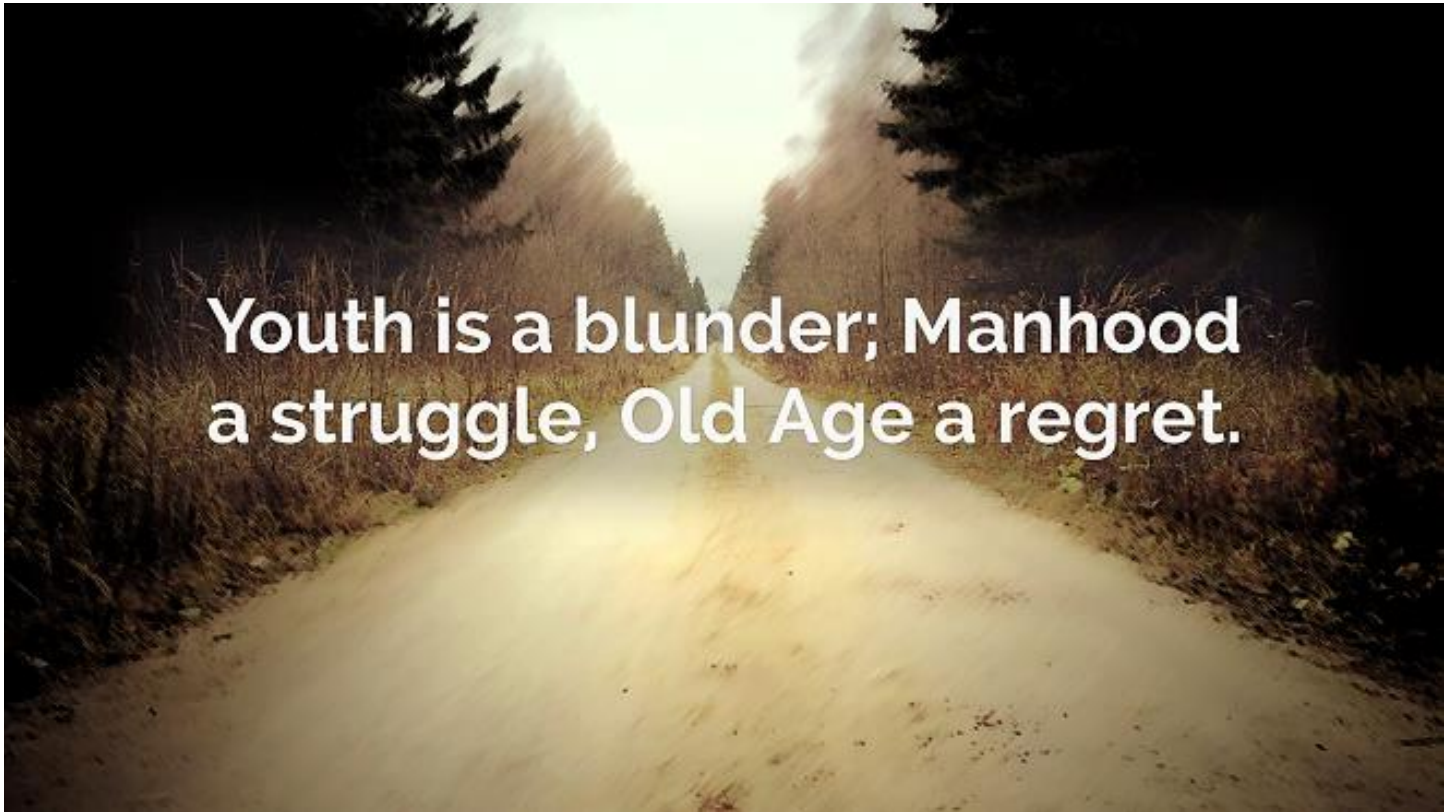
What do I mean? Let's start with where Jesus was – He was under the porticoes in the Temple Court. The ground under Him consisted of hewn stone blocks. Once that fact is acknowledged, we must assume that dust, or sand had blown in and the flagstones were covered enough to allow Jesus to write something.

Where does the text say that? Dust is κοκλιοτός (kōn-ē-ōr-tōs), dirt is ρύπος (rū-pōs), sand is ἄμμος (ām-mōs), none of those words or any others like them are used here. Here it says that Jesus wrote on what He was sitting on, the ground and in this case stone tablets.



Don't worry, the Jewish experts didn't get it at first either. Twice we are specifically told that Jesus wrote on the stones with His finger. Who else ever wrote on stone with His finger? Exodus 31:18, "When He (that's Almighty God) had finished speaking with him (that's Moses – now, taking a side eddy for a moment, who is it who speaks with Moses for Almighty God? The Word

of God speaks, and Who is the Word of God?) So, again, “When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.”



The men departed by order of age. Interesting detail, don't you think? I think it makes complete sense. The older one gets the more aware they are of their own failures and limitations. It is said that old age and regret go hand-in-hand. I find it quite true. I am keenly aware of my deficiencies that I was quite oblivious of a few decades ago.

This is more than that though... more than a simple recognition of one's duplicity in this matter – here there is a Holy Spirit conviction at play as well – this is a supernatural outcome. They recognize in Jesus a pure and perfect Judge and they understand their own shortcomings in that arena. Who can judge? Jesus was emphatically “left alone.” He alone is the Judge.

What's very interesting is the plain fact when a person is confronted by Christ – convicted by the Holy Spirit – they have two choices, then as now. You can run – run away, grab a fig leaf, and try to hide from God, or you can run – run to Jesus and beg Him for mercy. Those officials knew that they were need of forgiveness and they walked away from the only means of that forgiveness.

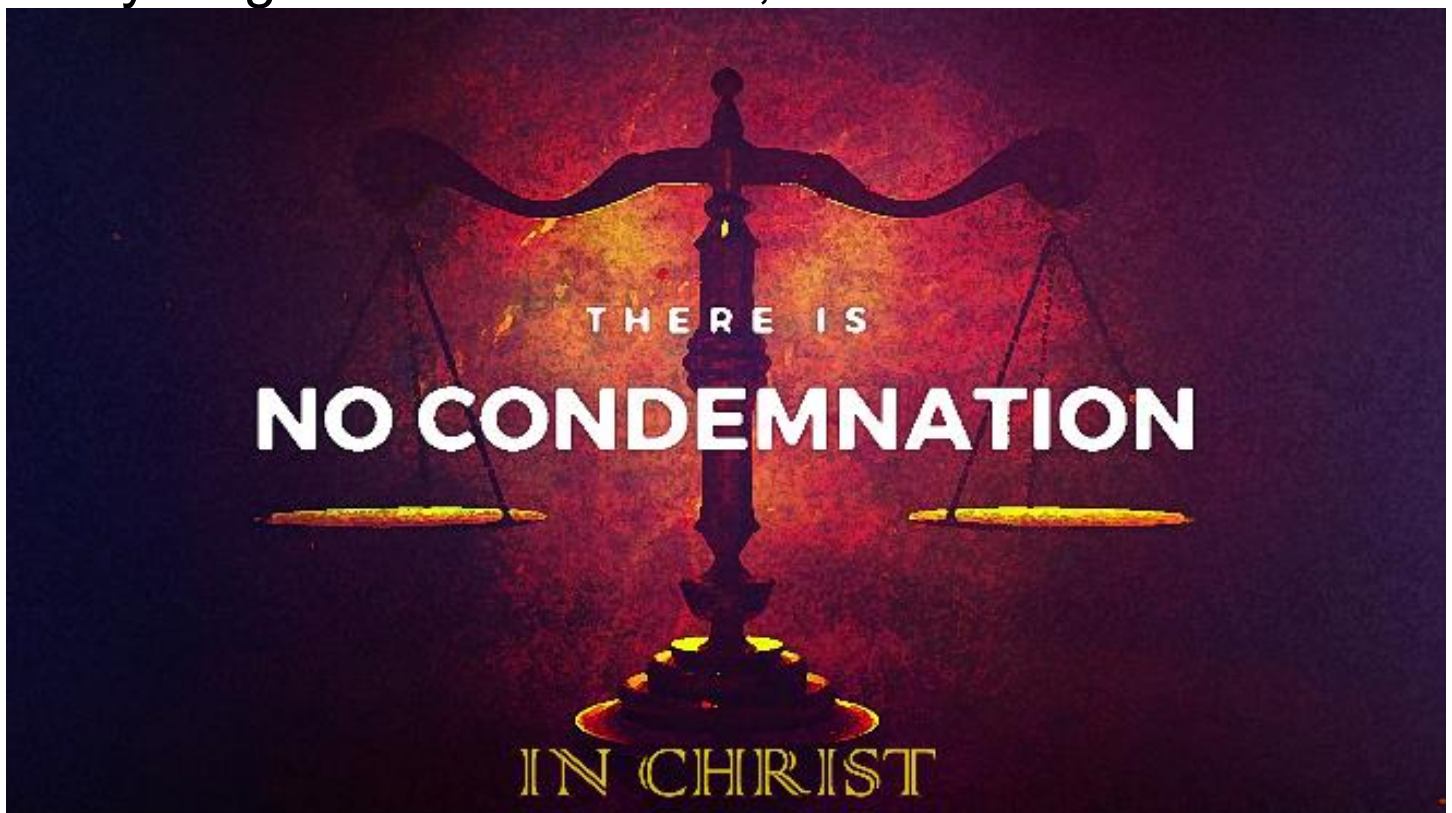
Why? Pride, it always boils down to pride and if you think about that, you'll see that pride is always the result of fear. “There is no fear in God's perfect love,” my friends. Run to Jesus.



What's also very interesting concerning human behavior is that all of us would like mercy for ourselves, but we generally want justice for all others. According to Augustine, again writing 16 centuries ago, the reason for the controversy concerning this passage is that early Christian men did not want it taught to women. According to his account, they were afraid that women would see "Go and sin no more" as a license to sin more."

It's grace and while we love grace for ourselves, we're not sure others deserve such a free pass.

It's truly remarkable how difficult it is for us human beings to get that balance right. Jesus came to save us from sin, not in order to sin. Sin is such a big deal it cost God made man His life. We are imperfect and we sin. God is perfect and, in His Son, He completely forgives us. Our reaction should be to sin less, do everything we can to sin less, not more.



John 8:10&11, 10Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" 11She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

As I said at the outset, this is one of the most dramatic displays of Grace in the entire Bible. As such, it makes legalistic people nervous. There was no need for that in the first couple of centuries and there's no need for that now. Jesus never condoned sin, in fact it's just the opposite. He commanded the woman "From now in sin no more."

He called her "Woman," which is not negative, but it's not sister, or friend either. It distances Him from her. Jesus never condones sin.

She was guilty, but so are we all and that's the point. No human being is without sin, none of us has any right to cast the first stone. But Jesus, the Word of God Who writes God's Commands upon literal stone and more importantly upon the stony heart of man thus turning it to flesh, He and only He can Judge.

He has chosen to do so later, thus allowing an interim in which a person can be forgiven before it is too late.

My friends trust me when I tell you there will come a time, a time much sooner than you think, when you will

be judged. The question at hand is will you be judged standing in your sins or standing in God's Grace?