

Week of April 22-28

GLASS HOUSES

Scripture Reading: Read John chapter 8

Today's chapter reading opens with an interesting story about a woman taken in adultery. It's interesting because, as you may have noticed if you read this chapter in a modern translation, there is a question about its authenticity in John's gospel. It doesn't make use of John's vocabulary or grammatical structure. It interrupts the flow of the text. The account doesn't show up here in most of the ancient copies of John's gospel before the 6th century and, when it does appear, it is found in a variety of other places, either later in John 8, at the end of John or it is inserted in Luke. Yet, this doesn't mean that it is not historical. It seems clear enough that the scribes who copied the Scripture felt it was too important to be lost even if they didn't know where to attach it. It also rings true. It reflects the character of Christ as revealed in the gospels. It may, therefore, be accepted as historical and a true account in the life of Christ.

So, what does it show us? It reveals yet another attempt by the religious leaders to trap Jesus. By challenging him to give a judgment on the woman, they hoped to either expose him as soft on the law if he let her go or turn him over the Romans for advocating an unsanctioned exercise of the death penalty if he condemned her to stoning. They were convinced they had him either way.

Jesus, amazingly enough, does not respond at first. He simply stoops down on the ground and begins to write in the sand. A familiar maxim that you may have heard is "*People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.*" When Jesus was challenged by the religious leaders to give a verdict, I wonder if he wrote something of the sort in the sand. You see, the Old Testament law required both the man and the woman to be put to death for adultery, not just the woman. The religious leaders claimed to have caught the woman in the act. If this were so, where was the man? Hmm? It's because it was a setup and Jesus knew it. They were throwing stones while living in glass houses.

When the religious leaders kept questioning Jesus, he rose and said, "*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.*" He stooped down and once again wrote on the ground. This time, the accusers ceased accusing. They knew they were guilty and they left, starting with the oldest down to the youngest. With the accusers gone, Jesus chooses not to condemn the woman but neither does he send her back to a life of sin. He calls her to a new way of life instead. That's what grace is all about.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Who do you identify with in this story? Are you the woman who was accused? Do you need forgiveness and a new life? Are you an accuser living in a glass house with a stone in your hand? Do you need to drop the stones and stop accusing? Do you identify with Jesus? Is there someone who has been accused by another and you need to stand in the gap with grace? Ask the Lord where you fit in the story and pray/act accordingly as led by the Spirit.

Take-away: *If you're going to live in a glass house, it's better to show grace than throw stones.*