

GOD IS RICH IN MERCY

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Introduction

I want to encourage you to know that the God of all mercy, the Father who is rich in all mercy, is toward us that we might walk the way that He is calling us to walk; that we might be the person He has called us to be.

In John chapter 8 we read the story of a woman who was caught in adultery and brought to Jesus by the Scribes and the Pharisees. Reading from verse 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. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"'

It is interesting to pause at that point and think what *we* would say. Would we be filled with righteous indignation at her transgression? Would we be filled with clemency and compassion for this poor woman who was being victimised in such a terrible way?

'Neither do I condemn you'

'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. 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." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 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. 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?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

God's mercy is toward us

The whole background of this particular story in the Scriptures is that the Scribes and the Pharisees were conspiring against Jesus. They had already sent guards to arrest Him and the guards came back empty-handed and said, 'No man ever spoke like this Man.'¹ There was a conspiracy happening here but Jesus actually ignores all of that. He takes the opportunity to declare the mercy of God the Father in a very powerful way and the effect that mercy can have in a person's life. God is rich in mercy toward us and that mercy has an effect.

Now if you remember, earlier in Jesus' ministry He had already declared that He didn't come to destroy the law and that He wasn't going to change the slightest letter of the law. He came to fulfil it.² And in that same exercise, at that same time, He also redefined adultery. This woman had been caught in the very act but Jesus spoke about adultery beginning in the heart. Whoever looks with lust has already committed adultery.³

He was demonstrating here the purpose for which the word of God has come. Concerning the law that came through Moses, He said there is not one jot or one tittle that is going to change, and anyone who teaches anyone to disregard the law will be least in the kingdom of heaven. But the

¹Joh 7:46

²Mat 5:17-19

³Mat 5:28

purpose for which the law had come was the purpose for which He, Himself, who is the living word, came.

He says of Himself, 'I didn't come to condemn the world but to save it'. 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost'.⁴ There are many Scriptures that we could read. 'God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved'.⁵ This is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'.⁶

The word brings mercy

Here is the purpose for which the Word came. Here is the purpose for which the law came, but here is something greater than the law, here is the Word of God, standing before them, and He demonstrates the way in which the word works - it brings mercy.

Mercy offered for salvation

Jesus doesn't offer this woman clemency because He feels sorry for her and He doesn't act the way He does because He thinks this is terribly unfair. He isn't moved by these sorts of things because of the thought that she deserves a second chance. He moves simply to offer mercy to her that she might find salvation.

A pathway to salvation

The mercy of God is the capacity that God has in Himself to reach out and to draw those who are lost to Himself, to recover them to who He has predestined them to be. There is the mercy of God - to recover those who are lost and to gather them to Himself - and here is a woman who clearly was lost. In fact, here is a crowd before Him all of whom are lost. Some are caught in their sin and many are not evidently caught in their sin, but

4 Luk 19:10

5 Joh 3:17

6 1 Tim 1:15

nevertheless are trapped in their self-righteousness and fallen state. Jesus moves in the mercy of God to bring redemption, to bring a pathway for people to come and to find salvation.

Now no condemnation

Jesus says three things to the woman. Firstly He speaks of no condemnation. When the mercy of God moved, the power of the law to condemn was taken away. 'Is there no one left to condemn you?' No, no one. 'Neither do I', He says, 'I do not condemn you.' That's the means by which the Lord works toward us. In Romans it says, 'Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'.⁷

Power to be different

Secondly, mercy comes to save - He speaks and says, 'Go and sin no more.' This was not just an exhortation from Jesus to do better, as if to say, 'Go on, off you go. Just make sure you don't get caught again. Make sure you don't do it again'. He says, 'Go and sin no more', and if she received that word to herself, she could be empowered to be delivered from the lust and the fallen state in her heart - to walk a different way. Isn't that exciting? The word comes and if we do not resist, it carries with it the power to be different.

A pathway of light

The third thing that He says, He says not only to her but to all. Verse 12 - 'Then He spoke to them again'. He spoke to everyone; He speaks to us. He says, 'I am the light of the world.' He speaks to them of a pathway. He speaks to her of a pathway. 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me, is not going to walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' - the light of *zoe* life, the light of the life of the Father. How will we have that light? - we will have His life.

The light that He was talking about is not the light of the law, knowing what we should do. All those who had brought that woman to Jesus

7 Rom 8:1

knew what they should do; they knew what the law said; they knew what God had declared through Moses. There was no light in that. There is no light in self-righteousness, being happy with our best efforts. This woman had been living in darkness. In fact the people gathered there were all caught in darkness. Jesus said to them all, 'If you follow Me, I am offering you a pathway where you are going to know something different - you are going to know the light of life, the life of the Father.'

He spoke this way to the woman; He spoke this way to those gathered there to condemn her. He speaks this way to *us* about His mercy. He speaks to *you* about His mercy, reaching out to you to draw you to Himself, to call you to live according to the name that He named for you before the beginning.

The promise of knowing life

In John 12:46 Jesus says, 'I have come as a light into the world that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness'. There is the promise of knowing life and of knowing light. He then says, 'If anyone hears my words and does not believe, I do not judge him'.

Receive and be saved

Now here is the mercy of Christ at work. He says, actually, that He did not come into the world to judge the world or condemn it. There will be a judgement, but He said here very clearly that if anyone hears His words and does not believe, He does not judge them, for He did not come to judge the world but to save the world. Now take note here - if you are thinking, 'here is a defence for me. I don't want to receive this word, I don't want to believe this word, and isn't it good, Jesus isn't going to judge me' - what Jesus said was, 'I didn't come to judge the world, I came to *save* the world'. Rather than being content with avoiding judgement, can we be stirred within our heart to receive what God Himself has for us that we can be saved?

He goes on and says, 'He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, has that which judges him'⁸. There is already something that will judge that person. The words that have been spoken, they will judge him on the last day.

His merciful provision

He is offering to us a pathway today. 'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.'⁹ Today, when He is speaking to you, He is offering to you *zoe* life, the life of the Father that you might walk in the light of that life; freed from the darkness that besets all of us so very easily; freed from the bondages that seem unbreakable so that we walk in the light of life.

This is what we have in our hand as we gather to the Lord's table - His body and His blood. When He spoke about this He said, 'This is My body which is broken for you.' When you eat of it, do it in remembrance. This is the cup in the New Covenant, a New Covenant in His blood. When you drink, do it in remembrance, in remembrance of the fact that He has made provision for us to know His life, out of His great mercy.

The mercy of God is His power to draw those who are lost to Himself and to recover them to their name. Let's remember, God is rich in mercy!

8 Joh 3:18

9 Heb 3:15