

# Judged: Not Guilty

(A Study of the Gospel of John; Message #28)

John 8:1-11

- A. This is a story of heartache and shame, a story of grace and forgiveness
- B. This story was put in our canon late; it shows the heart of Jesus' ministry
  - 1. The story is missing from the earliest manuscripts
  - 2. Calvin judged it charitably as "*containing nothing unworthy of the apostolic spirit*"

## THE BACKGROUND (8:1-5)

- A. Jesus is in the temple teaching in the courtyard
  - 1. The class is interrupted by a mob of religious leaders
  - 2. And struggling to keep her balance in the middle is a woman
    - a. From this day on she'll be known as an adulteress
    - b. Moral failure finds easy recall
- B. What the woman did is shameful; what the Pharisees did is despicable
  - 1. Scripture did command the death of adulterers (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24) underscoring the significance of marital fidelity
  - 2. She's been caught. But she's not the catch. She's simply the bait
- C. Pretty proud of themselves - these agents of righteousness
  - 1. They hope this will be memorable: the day they snagged the Nazarene
  - 2. The woman doesn't really matter. Her future? Her reputation? No one cares

## THE BATTLEFIELD (8:6-9)

- A. The woman looks at the ground; she knows she has been framed
  - 1. She looks down and sees the rocks in their hands - rocks of righteousness destined to stone the lust out of her
  - 2. She thinks about running. But where would she go?
  - 3. She looks at the Rabbi. For the first time she sees a kind face
- B. Jesus bends over to draw on the ground
  - 1. But the "mob" is persistent and unrelenting
    - a. It's a reminder of the serious religion's single-mindedness
    - b. Truth, i.e., compliance to the letter of the law - regardless of the cost

- 2. Jesus' calm response is classic and proverbial
  - a. With his response Jesus honors the ancient Biblical teaching
  - b. With his response he honors compassion for her and every shamed person
- 3. Jesus' question is intended to probe our motives toward one another
- C. Their plot is foiled. They can't accuse Jesus of ignoring the Scripture
  - 1. "*Who among them will presume the sinlessness Jesus requires?*"
  - 2. "*They came as one, but one by one they slip away...*"

## THE BENEVOLENCE (10-11)

- A. Before long, Jesus and the woman are left alone
  - 1. Jesus' address and information-seeking question treat her as one who can be trusted, as a human being
  - 2. His second question: "*Has no one condemned you?*" is deeper, but still gentle
    - a. In asking, Jesus engages her as a responsible ("response-able") person
    - b. In asking, Jesus takes her - and her sin - seriously
- B. She looks around: "*No one, sir?*"
  - 1. Three words in English; just two in Greek. Her only words in this entire story
  - 2. She now sees only (fallen) rocks - miniature tombstones of man's pride
    - "*Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*" (Matthew 5:3)
    - "*Blessed are the brokenhearted, for it is they who will be comforted*" (Matthew 5:4)
- C. Jesus gives her a promise and a commission
  - 1. She gets a promise: forgiveness of her sin and amnesty
  - 2. She gets a commission: "*Don't sin anymore!*"
- D. She turns and walks into anonymity; no name; yet she is all of us
  - 1. If you've ever wondered how God reacts when we mess up, now you know
  - 2. Just two words: Not guilty!