

September 16, 2012  
Satan's Favorite Lies

## **Some Things Can't Be Forgiven**

John 8:2-11

### **Opening Words:**

History tells us a mother once approached Napoleon seeking a pardon for her son. The emperor replied that the young man had committed a certain offense twice and justice demanded death. "But I don't ask for justice," the mother explained. "I plead for mercy." "But your son does not deserve mercy," Napoleon replied. "Sir," the woman cried, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." "Well, then," the emperor said, "I will have mercy." And he spared the woman's son. At the very heart of this morning's Gospel lesson is the word mercy. When was the last time you received mercy? When was the last time you showed mercy to someone else?

This is message number two in my sermon series, *Satan's Favorite Lies*. Each week we are going to expose a different lie. By the end of October we are going to look at seven different lies. We began last week with the lie, *God Can't Be Trusted*. This week, we are going to expose the lie, *Some Things Can't Be Forgiven*. May God give you ears to hear this morning's Gospel lesson, John 8:2-11.

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### **John 8:2-11**

2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

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This story came out years after President Calvin Coolidge's death. In the early days of his presidency, Coolidge awoke one morning in his hotel room to find a cat burglar. Coolidge engaged the thief in quiet conversation and discovered he was a college student who had no money. He couldn't to pay his hotel bill or buy a ticket back to campus. Coolidge asked, "How much do you need?" The young man replied, "\$32." Coolidge counted \$32 out of his wallet and handed it to the young man. He said, "Consider it a loan." Then he advised the young man to leave the way he had come so as to avoid the Secret Service! (Yes, the loan was paid back.) I love that story because

Calvin Coolidge cared more about the young man than he did the law. What is more important to you, the law or the person? If that makes you think say, "**Amen!**" Let us look at this morning's Gospel lesson together.

According to the text, the Master is in Jerusalem. The sun had just appeared for a new day. Jesus was in the outer courts of the Temple, teaching those who had assembled. We do not know Jesus' topic but we do know Jesus was interrupted by his enemies, the teachers of the law. In a show of force they suddenly appear with a woman, who has sinned. No one debates her guilt. Everyone agrees she has done wrong. She is guilty of adultery. (Isn't it interesting only the woman appeared on that day. The last time I checked it took both a man and a woman to commit adultery.) Unlike our day, their day did not tolerate sexual immorality. Our society says you have sex with anyone at any time. Their law demanded that the adulterer be stoned. They bring this sinful woman to Jesus and remind him about the law. Verse five says they asked Jesus his opinion, "*What do you say?*" Let me say this clearly. The teachers of the law are not really interested in Jesus' opinion. They are not interested in justice. They are not interested in the woman. They are not really interested in protecting the law. They are only interested in one thing eliminating Jesus.

Verse six says it clearly, "*They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.*" It is hard to see two thousand years later but it was one of those questions that had no right answer. It is like asking the question, "Do you still beat your wife?" If you answer, "No," then it means you used to beat your wife. If you answer, "Yes," then it means you still beat your wife. If Jesus says, "No," then it looks like he is ignoring the laws of Moses. If Jesus says, "Yes," then he is breaking Roman law, who refused to permit the Jews to take the life. It appears was the perfect trap but Jesus seizes that opportunity to teach the crowd about the Kingdom of God. How is sin handled in the Kingdom of God? How do you handle the sin in your life? How do you handle the sin of others? If that makes you think say, "**Amen!**"

Today, I want to look at three things Jesus taught in the outer courts on that day. They are divine truths that can't be ignored today. They are alive and well in our world. The first divine truth deals with **the sins of others**. It is easy to identify the sins of others. However, Colossians 3:13 says, "*Forgive as you are forgiven.*" The second divine truth deals with **your sins**. It is a little more difficult to identify your sins. However, Romans 3:23 says, "*All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.*" The third divine truth deal with **God's response to sin**. Remember, we are here to expose the lie; *some things can not be forgiven*. So if you are ready to begin say, "**Amen!**" Each one is illustrated for us in this morning's Gospel lesson.

### **The Sins of Others**

This is divine truth number one. It is easy to identify the sins of others. Look at the text with me. No one in the story is questioning this woman's guilt. She was, so to speak, caught with her pants down. We do not know the details of the story. We do not know if this was her first offense. We do not know if she was a repeat offender. The details really don't matter. The only thing that really matters is her guilt. Do you know of anyone who is guilty? Do you know of anyone who has done something that will never be forgotten? Do you know of anyone who will never be forgiven? When his or her

name is spoken everyone goes for their favorite rock? How easy it is to identify other people's sins. And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**

Her name is Sarah. She is not a member here. She has never worshipped here. However, she has both visited and called the church countless times. She is not the most attractive woman. She could lose a few pounds. She could wash her hair and her body. She smells like a cigarette, which explains why her breathing is labored. Her story is different, yet her story is the same. I have heard countless versions of her hardship stories through the years. She wants one thing, HELP! And with the help of Helping Hands funds, I have helped her twice. The first time I paid for a motel room, when she had no where to sleep. The second time I gave her a gift certificate for food, when she had no food. Let me say this clearly. I will never help her again. This is why.

It was the day I gave her a gift certificate to a local grocery store. She came in and told me she was hungry because she hadn't eaten in a couple of days. I was really touched by her story. No one should be hungry. I gave her some time. I gave her the gift certificate. I prayed with her and walked her to the door. I treated her with dignity and respect. (Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.) As we stood at the door she thanked me one more time with a tear in her eyes. She was hungry and hadn't eaten in a few days. From the door I watched her walk toward her ancient SUV. I felt good I had helped someone. Then I looked inside of her vehicle. I will surprised to see people. Maybe I should have given her a larger certificate? Maybe they were hungry too? However, do you know what surprised me the most? The people inside the van threw a bag out of the window from a fast food restaurant. As Sarah drove off with my gift certificate, I went out to pick up the trash. They had run for the border. They were not hungry. There were half eaten tacos spread though out the parking lot. There is no other way to say it. Sarah had lied to me. They had been eating! One of them had order a volcano taco. I felt like a fool and I labeled her a sinner. I will never help her again because I feel like I am part of her problem. Sarah reminds me that it is easy to identify the sins of others. How easy it is to identify the sins of others. How many sinners are in your life? And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**

### **Your Sin**

This is divine truth number two. It is hard to identify yourself as a sinner. Look at the text with me. Everyone is standing around the adulterous woman. They are holding their favorite stone and hungry for justice. Everyone is ready to execute the sentence when Jesus ruins the party. Verse 7 says, *"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."* Suddenly everyone drops their rock and walks away.

Why? Because, everyone is guilty. There was no a single sinless person in the crowd. Everyone had to admit they were a sinner. There is not a single sinless person in this crowd. You have to admit it. You are a sinner! It is easy to identify others people's sins. It is hard to identify yourself as a sinner. If that makes you think say, **"Amen!"**

John Lennon was shot by Mark David Chapman on December 8, 1980. He was entering his apartment building, The Dakota, in New York City. When the news was announced a crowd of people assembled on that spot to remember him. Lennon was dead and Chapman was sent to Attica. He is still in prison today. Though the years journalists have interviewed him. One of them asked Chapman what he regrets most about the whole event. He responded, *"I am saddened that people seem to misunderstand me. I*

*am not a bad person. I only killed one person.* "How difficult it is to identify yourself as a sinner.

One of the great traditions of the church is baptism. As a pastor it is rewarding to baptize our youngest. I like to carry the baby around and introduce them to their new church family. Baptisms are important for three reasons. First, baptisms are like a coming out party. Second, baptisms are a commitment. The parents are promising to raise that child within the faith. The church is promising to create a Christian environment. Third, we are dealing with the child's original sin. It is the sin we inherited from Adam and Eve. It is a flaw within our soul that prevents us from being perfect. Baptisms remind us God is alive and well, there is always hope. Baptisms remind us of the commitment we made when our children. Baptisms remind us that we are sinners. Each one of us wrestles with our own original sin. Romans 3:23 says *"All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.* It is hard to see but it is true. You are a sinner and so am I. And all of God's sinful people said, **"Amen!"**

### **God's Response to Sin**

This is divine truth number three. God treats sinners, like you and me, with mercy and compassion. You need to hear this. God does not condone or accept our sinning. However, God does expect us to do better. Go back to the text one more time. When the scene ends, only two people remain, Jesus and the woman. The Master could have stoned her. He was sinless. However, looks into the woman's face and has compassion. When he looked at her he doesn't see a sexual act, rule breaker! When he looks at her he sees a broken unhappy life, who is wasting her potential. Jesus cared more about the person than he did the law. God cares more about us than the law. What is more important to you, people or the law? If that makes you think say, **"Amen!"**

His name was Justin. I can not tell you what he looks like. I can not tell you what his voice sounds like. I can not tell you his age or where he lives. I have never met him in person. Our relationship was nothing more than a series of emails. He emailed me first because he had a question that was based on a fear. He was afraid he had committed a sin that could not be forgiven. He had read Mark 3:29 and thought he was guilty. It says

*, "Whoever blasphemes against The Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of everlasting sin."* I examined the passage to him. I told him it was directed at a certain group and a certain time of history. I told him he wasn't guilty because I was certain he was going around giving Satan credit for God's great works. I told him God is more interested in the sinner than he is the law. I told him Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for our sins. I told him Jesus died so we could live. I told him to trust Jesus. I asked him if he knew Jesus as his Lord and Savior. His last email was one word, YES! I responded, "I will look for you in heaven."

Is there a Justin in the house? Is there anyone here who is afraid your sins can't be forgiven? Did you know Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice? Do you know you get to live for eternity by accepting him? It is easy to see the sins of others. It is hard to see your own sins. It is easy to accept Jesus. Why wait? The Master said it best *"Go and sin no more."* And all of God's people said, **"Amen!"**