

THE FIRST 15

Friday, April 19, 2024

Today is Friday, April 19 and we are studying the Gospel of John.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, as I begin another day, I seek your face. I calm the chattering of my busy mind, slow my breathing, and focus on you - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As I continue to study the Gospel of John, open my heart and mind to hear the particular message you have for me today. Bring your blessing with the reading of this holy word. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 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. 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." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 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. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8:3-11

REFLECTION

The religious authorities set a trap for Jesus. The trap was a clever one. The woman was caught in adultery. The Law called for the death penalty. The issue was clear. What will Jesus do about it? To refuse to confirm the stoning means he won't uphold the law and that is heresy. On the other hand, because he is known and admired for his compassion, taking a hard-line in this case would discredit him in the eyes of his growing followers. Jesus' response is remarkable and his wisdom will be remembered for generations to come.

I consider where I am in the story. Am I the one condemned - a clear sinner before the crowd? Am I one of those standing by - pointing the finger? Jesus' voice rings out, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." What is my response to these words? Perhaps I already have a stone in my hand ready to criticize and condemn another with my fault-finding words or disapproving actions. Maybe I am the one hanging my head in shame hoping no one will recognize my secret sin and expose it to the world. No one is without sin. All have fallen short of the glory of God. Everyone needs Jesus.

As the accusers leave the scene aware of their own sinfulness choosing not to cast the first stone, Jesus offers the woman mercy. "I do not condemn you either. Go and sin no more." This story reminds me that I can go to Jesus with my sin no matter what. I can go to Jesus and

openly acknowledge how and when I have fallen short before God, recognizing my trespasses, aware of my transgressions. I go to Jesus and receive forgiveness. In a loving firm voice he tells me to go and sin no more. This story reminds me to be aware of the stones I hold in my hands ready to criticize, blame, condemn and point out the faults of others. Jesus invites me to set down those stones, and look in my own heart for sin. In a loving firm voice he tells me to go and sin no more.

Ask: When have I experienced the shame of sin in my life? When have I been quick to point out the faults of others?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I invite you to judge me. Shine your light on the recesses of my soul, reveal the intentions of my heart and my deepest motivations. Expose my sinful attitudes and wrong thinking so that I may confess it to you and ask for forgiveness. I repent of my wrongdoing and with your blessing I will go and sin no more, leaving behind my transgressions and moving forward with you to grow in grace. Sanctify me in your love and help me mature as your disciple. Amen.