

Sunday 17th February 2013 - "Go and sin no more" - Full of Grace and Truth - John 8: 1

Continuing our studies in John's Gospel we come to Chapter 8. The first part of this Chapter poses questions for some Bible scholars. Here are some of them.

In some of your Bibles there will be a note saying that it wasn't included in the earliest manuscripts. Even did John write it? Who was this woman?

Where was the man? It takes two to tango (or commit adultery) - Both accountable to law.

Was it a put up job - a sort of Biblical honey trap?

Why did Jesus write in the sand? What did He write?

I'm not going to look at those issues.

We are going to take this as Scripture and know that as it says in 2 Timothy it is for our instruction, "rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness"

(New Living) *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*

(The Message) *Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.*

What is God saying to us today in 2013 in St Andrew's Canterbury?

Jesus stood on the middle of this situation confronted by exposed sin and the sins which were concealed. He stands in the middle of our lives - our lives of exposed and covered up sins. He stands as the Light of the World - Full of grace and Truth. Living out what was spoken about Him in Chapter One. God is saying He wants to make us **FIT FOR PURPOSE**

I'm a cat person.

We recently added 2 cats to our family. They're lovely, but you can't tell them anything.

Someone has written: *"Let me suggest you consider the difference between dogs and cats. The master pets a dog, and the dog wags its tail and thinks, "He must be a god." But the master pets his cat, and the cat purrs, shuts its eyes and thinks to itself, "I must be a god." Though Jesus in grace reached down to us, there is still a perverse human tendency to think like a cat."*

Jesus IS THE truth. God is truth and we always want to rewrite the rule book. Rules given for our own good. The woman is a picture of the sinful nature of we human beings.

I recently heard a powerful talk about the Truth of/is God. In and from the fall we want to make our own truth. The World says right is wrong and wrong is right.

Our Pastor wrote a recent article in the Church News on sex outside marriage. (See quote)

In Charles Schultz's cartoon, "Peanuts," Lucy is seen saying that if she was in charge of the world, she'd change everything. Charlie says, "That wouldn't be easy. Where would you start?" Lucy looks directly at him, and without hesitation, points her finger at him and says, "I'd start with you."

The leaders represent our hidden sins and our critical spirit. When we point a finger at someone or at something there are always 4 pointing back at ourselves.

We are always lined up against the Truth that is Jesus. He came to fulfil the law. What God said is for our own good. We should be living according to the Maker's instructions.

LAW AND GRACE It is in Jesus that we see the balance of Law and Grace personified.

Law and Grace do not compete with each other; they complement each other. The Law was given to reveal sin (that's the Truth we see revealed in Jesus) We are condemned and convicted by the law before we can be cleansed by God's grace. This is the balance of God's holiness and grace we see in Jesus.

What a privilege - we have seen the glory ¹⁴ *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. **We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14***

When we see the enormity involved in the Grace of God in Jesus it should help us want to obey the Truth in Him out of **love and gratitude** not **fear or grudgingly**.

A husband and wife didn't really love each other. The man was very demanding, - so much so that he prepared a list of rules and regulations for his wife to follow. He insisted that she read them over every day and obey them to the letter. Among other things, his "do's and don'ts" indicated such details as what time she had to get up in the morning, when his breakfast should be served, and how the housework should be done. After several long years, the husband died. As time passed, the woman fell in love with another man, one who dearly loved her. Soon they were married. This husband did everything he could to make his new wife happy, continually showering her with tokens of his appreciation. One day as she was cleaning house, she found tucked away in a drawer the list of commands her first husband had drawn up for her. As she looked it over, it dawned on her that even though her present husband hadn't given her any kind of list, she was doing everything her first husband's list required anyway. She realized she was so devoted to this man that her deepest desire was to please him out of love, not obligation.

Is our deepest desire to please God out of love, not of obligation or fear?

If we are honest it's not always our deepest desire. Self creeps in. From Adam till St Paul and on to ourselves it has always been so. Paul reflected in his letter to the Romans

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. ²² I love God's law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. ²⁴ Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? ²⁵ Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. Romans 7:21

It is only by the grace of God that we can overcome and live lives which are pleasing to Him.

As Paul continues in his letter to Romans

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ *Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right.*

So when we get it wrong we can know that we will be forgiven and put right through Jesus.

But is this an excuse to sin? Again Paul posed the question

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? ² By no means!

Jesus quite definitely said to the woman "Go and sin no more!" Didn't excuse her. Price has to be paid. Jesus wants a response from us. Rich young ruler went away when Jesus wanted Him to put Him first.

LIVING OUT OUR LIVES UNDER GRACE - GRACE - FULL LIVES

So, if we are a people who are ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven how should that affect the way we live our day to day lives - at home, in our relationships, at work, in our leisure time, in our church fellowship? How do we respond to other people?

1 For the glory of God

God is a **holy** God. Everything about Him is Holy, Good, True, Upright, Just, Righteous.

If we truly are His children then we should be reflecting some of His characteristics.

*Peter's letter 1¹⁴ So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of **living to satisfy your own desires**. You didn't know any better then. ¹⁵ But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. ¹⁶ For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy."*

Again, this is only by the grace of God through the power of His Spirit working in us that we can start to let this happen. We need to make a conscious decision to put Him first in all things. As Pastor David said last week "If Jesus is not Lord of all he cannot be Lord at all."

We cannot compromise the Truth. Try to hate the sin but love the sinner.

2 Because of Jesus

GRACE = God's riches at Christ's expense. Grace is costly. Jesus wasn't going easy on sin or contradicting the law. For Jesus to forgive this woman meant that one day He had to die for that sin and all her sins. Forgiveness is free, but it is not cheap. Every time we sin it's part of the pain Jesus bore for us on the cross. How can we deliberately go on sinning when we remember what He did for us?

Watching a trapeze show is breathtaking. We wonder at the dexterity and timing. We gasp at near-misses. In most cases, there is a net underneath. When they fall, they jump up and bounce back to the trapeze. In Christ, we live on the trapeze. The whole world should be able to watch and say, "Look how they live, how they love one another. Look how well the husbands treat their wives. And aren't they the best workers in the factories and offices, the best neighbours, the best students?" That is to live on the trapeze, being a show to the world. What happens when we slip? The net is surely there. The blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, has provided forgiveness for ALL our trespasses. Both the net and the ability to stay on the trapeze are works of God's grace.

Let's try to live our lives as individuals and as a community of God's people who know that we have been bought with a price and want to live out our lives before a watching world giving thanks and praise to Him in all we do.

We know that if we slip, but are sorry and confess then He is able to forgive and set us back on the Gospel trapeze to live for Him.

3 For ourselves

I love the cheesy Christmas songs. We play a disc at Toddlers which includes Santa Claus is coming to town.

"You better watch out, you better not pout, you better not cry,

I'm telling you why, Santa Claus is coming to town.

He's making a list, checking it twice, gonna find out who's naughty and nice,

Santa Claus is coming to town.

He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake.

He knows when you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake."

You know. That's how people often look at their lives as Christians. Jesus is coming back. You better watch out - you better be good, cause He knows it all. You better be ready, prepared, faithful, loving, because there's no fooling Him. And when you look at it this way, any honest person would say, "That's just great!" Then I have no chance, cause I know I've been bad."

But that misses the point of the grace of God. Ephesians 2:8-10 tells us that we cannot be good enough to earn God's favour. Instead, He gives us the gift of eternal life when we believe in Jesus, and He recreates us

Ephesians 2:8-10 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

God wants a wonderful relationship with each one of us. Every time we do or say those things which are not in line with His best for us it's like throwing a piece of rubbish in tube we saw at the beginning. That tarnishes the image of God for the world. It just spoils our complete unity with Father and makes the cross of Jesus of no value. When Jesus says to us as He said to the woman and to the leaders "Go and sin no more" He's not saying it to spoil our fun, to punish us or because He's angry. He wants us to enter into all the fullness of what it means to be children of God which He has won for us. He wants us "fit for purpose" . the purpose of having an open relationship with Him in all His holiness and the purpose of being His ambassadors in a needy world.

It's only by grace that we can come, but we can. He came "Full of Grace and Truth" and He wants us to be children of Grace and Truth