

Read Psalm 117. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).

Does faith help you? Does it matter what you believe? Does faith matter in your daily life? Is it meaningful for others? Do they see the difference it makes for you, and say “I want that!”

As a pastor, I hope faith makes a great deal of difference. I hope it enriches your life, and the lives of those around you. But for some people, Jesus made life complicated.

Jesus became a problem for John the Baptist when John was imprisoned by Herod. His expectations for the Messiah were a little different. It took some effort for John to figure out what he believed and who Jesus was.

So Jesus doesn't always meet your expectations of who He is.

But Jesus did exercise considerable authority in people's lives. He freed them in both the spiritual realm and in life's reality. The community took note—this man is different; he exercises power. Some loved him, but others resented His authority because it often overrode their own ideas about faith.

For instance, Jesus healed on the Sabbath. Isn't that breaking the rules? Jesus ate with outsiders. Shouldn't we avoid sinners? And his disciples forsook the ritual cleansing. They ate and drank when other rabbis' disciples were fasting. Heaven help us!

Now that might seem like small potatoes to us. Who cares? But to them, Jesus' methods were a little edgy to a culture which was already controlled by Rome. So Jesus' authority bugged the church leaders.

Are you particular about how things should be? What is the flavor of your faith? Today we are going to discover that by using a process developed by a woman named Dee Allen. She is a friend and spiritual mentor. She has written a book.

We will begin by reading Psalm 117 in the eloquent language of the King James Version:

O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

For his merciful kindness is great toward us:

and the truth of the LORD *endureth* forever. Praise ye the LORD.

Open your hands. In your left hand, envision the command to “Praise the Lord.” In your right hand envision why we are commanded to praise the Lord: “His merciful kindness is great toward us” and He gives us his truth.

So close your eyes, open your left hand, and think of one reason to praise the Lord. If you can't think of a thing, tell the Lord, “I can't think of any reason to praise you right now.”

Then hold out your right hand as if you are receiving something from God, and imagine his merciful kindness toward you.

As you do this little exercise, is somebody interfering with your ability to envision God's merciful kindness toward you? Is there someone that you would say, *if it wasn't for that person my life would be fine? But he/she is disturbing my faith.*

So now keep that in mind as we READ the story from John 8:1b-11.

If the men did the little exercise with Psalm 117, they might not be able to praise God. They would probably say, *if it wasn't for this Jesus our Jewish life would be better.*

The woman was also their chief problem. She was someone's wife, or someone's daughter, or someone's lover. She created all their problems with God. If it wasn't for her, life for them would be happier; the nation would be better off; faith would actually work.

Think of the person that is your chief problem. If they didn't do this or that,  
if they didn't argue;  
if they weren't so non-communicative;  
if they didn't drink;  
if they didn't live so far away;  
if they didn't marry that jerk;  
Fill in the blank \_\_\_\_\_,

then life would be fine—you could actually praise God, like the Psalmist said.

Jesus was teaching in the temple with a crowd around him—it was great! That is, until the leaders and teachers of the church interrupted him with this woman. So they were Jesus' chief problem. They needed help. Though they didn't realize it, the woman wasn't their main problem. It was the fact that their religion—what they believed—was interfering with their faith.

They were filled with anger. But it was not necessarily against the unfaithful woman, though they thought it was. Their anger was also against Jesus, who was messing up their religion.

He needed to teach them that old maxim of the pointing finger. No matter how you position it, to point your finger at someone means three fingers are pointing back to you.

Jesus said it like this:

Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye (Mt 7:3-5).

Jesus said:

Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back (Lk 6:37-38).

So he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

What was Jesus writing? Was he doodling? Calming his anger? Buying time so he could think? Being the judge writing out his case before he announces it? It's a mystery!

Perhaps he wrote,

Young lady, you've gotten yourself into a heap of trouble. . .  
*Ay, yi, yi*, how long must I put up with them!  
God wrote on stone tablets . . .  
How many times must I . . .  
Love doesn't keep a record of wrongs.  
For all have sinned.  
Praise the Lord, for his merciful kindness is great.

When finished he said, "Go ahead, you who are without sin," but each one slinked away, convicted. They had a greater problem that was far more hurtful. They were blind to their own sin and need for forgiveness, which kept them from praising God and enjoying his merciful kindness toward them.

What keeps you from praising God and enjoying his merciful kindness toward you?

Now Jesus was alone with the woman. Where are the accusers?

She gave no confession, standing there before the One with great authority. He saw her need and it was for forgiveness. Did you notice that only after he forgave her that he gave her the instruction: "Now go and sin no more." He didn't say don't commit adultery again, but gave a global "no more disdaining God." Praise him instead, because He loves you. Recognize his merciful kindness, then seek his everlasting truth which you can stand in with his help, out of your encounter with Him.

John writes: "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

Jesus came to liberate and heal; not to judge but to save. In response we are asked to:

"By the mercies of God to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, for this is our spiritual worship" (Ro 12:1).

Let's go back to our hands. Close your eyes. In your left hand, from this story tell God a praise. In the right hand put the person who thwarts you, who interferes with your faith. Praise God for them. Drop the stone. Leave the person to Him. Thank God for his merciful kindness toward you.

Let this marvelous truth sustain you as you go and do not disdain God any more.

AMEN