

Topic	Jesus As The Light And Truth
Reference	John 8 : 2-30
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Today we have two separate accounts;

- Jesus and the adulterous woman
- Jesus's proclamation that He is the light of the world

These two appear to be unrelated.

Three Sundays ago precisely on the 13th of May, the city Surabaya witnessed much carnage, three churches in the city were attacked by a group of suicide bombers between 6:30 and 7:53 in the morning. 14 innocent civilians were tragically killed in these three churches including worshippers and security guards. Now these three coordinated suicide attacks were carried out by one single family, a family of six including the father and mother, their two teenage sons and their two daughters; one aged 12 and the younger one was only 9 years old. It is bad enough that adults carry out this kind of evil acts but to involve young children in their hideous crime is indeed despicable. Now from eyewitnesses' accounts, it appears that the four siblings took part willingly in the attack, but considering the fact that their reasoning faculties were still not yet fully developed to allow them or induce them to joining the attack, is nothing less than pure evil. What parents will allow or ask their own children to kill innocent people by killing themselves. Indeed, we live in an increasingly dark world.

Now Surabaya has now become well-known as the target of terrorist attacks perpetuated by evil people, what is less known is that over the past 20-30 years, the city has seen a phenomenal growth in the number of people who profess Jesus as Lord and Savior. The spirit of God has been moving mightily across Indonesia, especially in the big cities including Jakarta and their churches are all packed with new believers, young and old. Surabaya is the home to one of the largest churches in the world.

The light of Jesus has been shining brightly in Surabaya. The light of Jesus has been attracting thousands upon thousands in the city to embrace the message of the cross. In the light of the terrorist attack of 13th May, we can see them as a kind of attempt by the enemies of God to derail the spread of the gospel in Surabaya. Now some of you may be reminded of this verse in John chapter 1:5

John 1:5 (NLT) *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

So we can be assured that the forces of darkness in Surabaya can never dim the light of Jesus over the city. God's people in Surabaya will not be disheartened nor defeated by this tragic event. In fact, believe is likely that even more people will be drawn to the light of Jesus.

JESUS AND THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN:

From verse 2 we find that Jesus was at the temple courts, teaching crowd that have gathered around him. It says here that it was very early in the morning and the next thing, some teachers of the law and some Pharisees who were oppose to Jesus, they brought before him a woman who has been caught in adultery and in verse 5 they post to Jesus a trap question.

5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do You say?"

Now in those days adultery was a crime punishable by death according to Moses's Law. Now these teachers of the law they knew their Bible very well and the law of Moses they cited was from Leviticus 20:10

Leviticus 20:10 *If a man commits adultery with another man's wife — with the wife of his neighbor — both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.*

In this verse if two persons were caught into adultery, both man and woman must be punished, but here the man was missing, only the woman was caught. In all likelihood, the adulterer, the man was their accomplice. It was a setup, in which case the woman was also a victim as much as she was a partner in crime. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees, they cited this law from Moses regarding adultery but they were actually abusing it to further their malicious agenda. They were not really interesting in upholding Moses's Law as much as they were in implicating Jesus and that's why verse 6 says

6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Him.

Either way you try to answer, you will find yourself at the disadvantage. Because if Jesus had agreed that the woman be put to death then it will greatly diminish or negate the message of compassion that he was trying to teach. Then they will be able to say that Jesus was a hypocrite, he says one thing but does another thing. More critically, if Jesus has said that she should be put to death, then he will be accused of contempt for Roman laws, because the Romans did not allow the Jews to carry out or to decide death sentences. On the other hand, if Jesus had objected to punishing the woman then they would accuse Jesus of going against the Law of Moses and that is also a very serious charge. After all Jesus did say in Matthew 5:17,

Matthew 5:17 *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law... I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

So how does one get out of this entrapment, it is amazing how Jesus got out of the situation which is now famous line in verse 7

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."

So Jesus sidestep the track by not saying whether she should or should not be put to death, instead he threw the trap back to them by challenging anyone to cast the first stone if he was without sin. Obviously there was none and so one by one they started to disperse as described in verse 9.

Now briefly this was what happened in the account of Jesus and the adulterous woman. Let us now dig deeper into the text to try to uncover what is beneath the surface. There are really two big questions begging to be asked from this part of our text. You may be asking yourself. The first one is this;

What did Jesus write on the ground?

Because from verse 6 before he said the famous line, *“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”* Before that

Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger.

He did this twice

8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

Now understandably what Jesus could have possibly written has become the subject of intense debate and speculation over the centuries. Bible scholars are curious about that, you are curious and I am also curious. The straight answer is, ‘nobody knows’ since scripture is silent on this. The writer chose not to reveal what Jesus wrote, but that doesn’t stop all kinds of speculation as to what might have been written. The silliest view I heard is that, Jesus was doodling to store for time as he collected his thoughts. The more possible answer is that; Jesus wrote down their sins because bible scholars point to Revelation 20 which describes books that will be opened in which are recorded the deeds of man. Another possible answer is that, Jesus wrote an Old Testament verse, after all Jesus did quote extensively from the Old Testament 80 times throughout the four gospels. Yes, Jesus might have picked an appropriate Old Testament verse, wrote on the ground to rebuke the crowd that is a strong possibility but the best answer I have seen is that Jesus wrote down their names. The scriptural support for this is

Jeremiah 17:13 *Lord, You are the hope of Israel; all who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away from You will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water.*

Some scholars are very sure of this because of the term living water in the verse and Jesus had just mentioned living water at the end of John chapter 7, but still all these are mere speculations because no one really knows. Nevertheless, I wish to propose to you that perhaps what Jesus might have written is not nearly as important as the actual act of writing. Perhaps we should not focus so much on what might have been written but rather on the fact that he wrote. The clue is that Jesus wrote not once but twice. Throughout the Old Testament we find

that our God is a God of spoken words. God would only need to speak and things would come to pass or come into being and such is the power of the spoken words of God. We are reminded in Genesis 1:3 and God said, let there be light and there was light and throughout the Old Testament we find the prophets saying, “thus says the Lord” but are there any instances in the Old Testament where God actually wrote something. There are only two specific instances in the Old Testament where God actually wrote or inscribed something, One is in Exodus 31:18

Exodus 31:18 *When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the covenant law, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.*

The second instance is in Exodus 34:1 where God had to write the Ten Commandments again the second time, because Moses broke the first set of tablets. God was being very patient with Moses.

Exodus 34:1 *The Lord said to Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.*

In Exodus God wrote the Ten Commandments with his finger twice, in John chapter 8 Jesus wrote on the ground with his finger twice. It is not difficult to see the link between the two. Jesus didn't say much to the teachers of the laws and the Pharisees but he was visually telling them, are you quoting me the law of Moses, are you telling me what the law is, hello do you know that I was there on Mount Sinai and I wrote those laws, do you know that I gave those laws to Moses. Little did they realize that right before their very eyes, was the law giver himself.

The second question is more crucial because the answer will tell us what this account is really all about and the answer will also link us to the second part of our text on Jesus as the light of the world. Now some people read this part of John 8 with a little bit of discomfort, because the passage seems to condone adultery. After the crowd disperse, Jesus led the woman off with a warning from 11

“Go now and leave your life of sin.”

This raises some very troubling questions. How could Jesus just let off, what about the law, how can you just simply set aside the law just like that. What about the punishment for crime? After all, didn't Jesus say that he came to fulfill the law. Yes, it may appear that in letting the woman off, Jesus was making light of the punishment prescribed by the law. Yes, it may appear that the lawgiver himself may seem not to be upholding the law, that he appeared to be ignoring the punishment that should be meted out to the guilty as the law demanded. Now the guilt of the woman was never in doubt, HER guilt is clear from verse 11 she was living a life of sin. So how do we address that, you cannot just let the accuse off.

Now although it is not recorded here as Jesus let the woman go as he saw her walking away, I could almost imagine Jesus whispering to himself, yes the law must be applied, yes the punishment is death but woman in a couple of months' time I will take the punishment on your behalf, I will die in your place, so that you can live. Yes, someone must pay the price for our sin, she must be punished, she was minutes away from being stoned to death but Jesus paid the price in full on the cross on her behalf. Jesus died for her so that she might live, he died so that we too might live. This is really the key to understanding this account of Jesus and the adulterous woman. Some people use this passage from John chapter 8 as a way to teach Christian compassion and mercy. Yes of course it is a beautiful story of compassion and mercy, but if that is all there is to then we are really missing out on the real lesson behind these verses. It is much-much more than the beautiful story of compassion and mercy. It is really a story of the redemptive work of Christ.

How do I know that this is actually a story of the redemptive work of Christ when it is not mentioned in these first 10 verses?

Now this is where I am going link the first part of our text to the second part. In the last 10 verses we find Jesus still in the temple after woman had already left and he was now talking to some Pharisees, a kind of debate was going on. Jesus told the Pharisees, you will die in your sins and he said it three times in verses 21 and twice in verses 24. Indeed, the Bible teaches us that the wages of sin is death from Roman 6:23.

What is a wage?

A wage is something that you receive for doing a piece of work and similarly for the work of sin in your life you will get paid and that payment is death. This is another way of saying, the penalty for sin is death. Here death means spiritual death or eternal separation from God. So Jesus was in fact echoing this spiritual truth when he told the Pharisees that they would die in their sins three times.

So from this perspective, the account of Jesus and the adulterous woman kind of serves as a backdrop to the later part of the text in a sense that the woman had committed a sin, the grave sin of adultery and she was facing imminent death, although that was physical death. So now Jesus was telling the Pharisees that you too have sinned and you too have to face death for the wages of sin is death. But that is just half the gospel message. The good news is found further down in verse 28 where Jesus said to them, when you have lifted up the son of man then you would know that I am He. Now this is actually the important part. This may sound a bit hard to understand. Lifted up here means lifted up on the cross, it is a clear reference to Jesus crucifixion. Now son of man if you do not know is a title for Jesus. When Jesus said, I am he. It really means I am he, the light of the world because we need to connect this to the earlier part, I am He, the life of the world who gives life. Hence to paraphrase verse 28, Jesus was actually telling them in my words, when you crucify me on the cross, you will know that I am the one who gives life because I have come to die on your behalf.

We see that beneath the verses, the gospel message cuts across our text today, although not so explicitly. We can also see that the account of Jesus and the adulterous woman actually is a buildup to this theme from death to life. So you can see underneath the verses, this idea from death to life started from the first 10 verses. The woman was condemned to die but Jesus gave her life, gave her another shot at life by dying in her place.

The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus's death. Our transition from death to life was made possible because Jesus stayed faithful to the cross. He never wavered in his journey to the cross. Jesus died so that we might live.

THE SECOND PART OF THE SERMON

The anchor of our text as I said just now, the focus of our sermon is on verse 12 where Jesus said, I am the light of the world. From verses 13 there is an exchange between Jesus and some Pharisees. Basically they were talking about witnesses in the court of law and their testimonies. Jesus was in a sense standing in the court of the opinion. Pharisees challenged him on some claims that he made.

What kind of claims did Jesus made in our text to make the Pharisees disagree?

He made the claim that he is the light of the world in verse 12, in verses 16 and 17 he declared that God the father has sent him and he repeated this twice in verses 26 and 29. The Pharisees dismissed his claims, saying in verse 13

13 The Pharisees challenged Him, "Here You are, appearing as Your own witness; Your testimony is not valid."

In the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 19:15 there is a verse that stipulates that the testimonies of two to three witnesses are required to substantiate a charge in court. It says here, a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. Now this is understandable because witnesses are not infallible because we are all sinners, and hence the testimony of a single witness must be crosschecked with testimonies from one or two other witnesses in order that there is no miscarriage of justice. Now if their testimonies do not tally then the charge cannot stand and Jesus knew this well because after all he wrote those laws and that's why he agreed.

17 In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true.

In the account of adulterous woman, even though it was not mentioned there we can be sure that there were at least two witnesses in the crowd and their testimonies were necessary to incriminate the woman, although these witnesses were probably accomplices of those who wanted to trap Jesus. So In line with this requirement for two witnesses, so Jesus proceeded to offer two witnesses to validate his claims. He made a claim then he offered two witnesses to validate him claim. The two witnesses are Jesus himself and the second God himself

18 I am One who testifies for Myself; My other witness is the Father, who sent Me."

This was hard for Pharisees to understand, because obviously in the court of law if an accuse become his own witness, it can be problematic, you cannot tell that judge, your honor I am innocent, please believe me.

So how and why was Jesus testimony valid when he testified on his own behalf?

This doesn't become a problem if we realize that Jesus is the only perfect sinless human being who has ever lived. If ever there is a person capable of truth, is Jesus. In fact, there is no need for a second witness as the soul testimony of Jesus was sufficient in terms of establishing the truth, because he is perfect. But nevertheless in order to comply with the requirement of Deuteronomy 19:15 Jesus cited God the father as the second witness whose testimony would be as strong as his.

There is a strange verse in John 5:34. Jesus said, I have no need for human witnesses. Why, because he is the embodiment of truth. He is the truth, he is not a fallible human, he is sinless and incapable of falsehood. He is the son of God, sent by God the father and that's why he kept saying again and again that the father sent me and this squares with his other statement in verse 23, I am from above, I am not of this world. Because Jesus is the embodiment of truth, meaning because he is the truth that's why we can believe him when he said I am the light of the world and this brings me to the last part of our sermon.

What is light and what is darkness?

Our text today doesn't dwell too much on this theme of light and darkness and so I have to make references to other verses in the Bible. Light can surely shine into a darkened room; the other way around is simply inconceivable. Darkness cannot un-shine into a bright place. Darkness can only come in when light decides to leave and vice versa. When we switch on the light, the darkness goes away. This is teaching us that while light and darkness are opposing entities, they are not equal. Light can overcome darkness but not the other way around. Light can dispel darkness; darkness cannot dispel light. Light is stronger than darkness, light can concur darkness but not the reverse. If you understand this, then John 1:5 becomes really profound and clear.

John 1:5 (NLT) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.

That's why I said that the suicide attacks in Surabaya last month cannot and will not dampen the spirit of our brethren in that city, because darkness cannot overcome light. No to go deeper, let us know try to understand the nature of darkness. Generally, there are two kinds of spiritual darkness around us today, mental and moral.

Mental darkness is a condition where we are not able to differentiate between what is real and what is illusionary. Whereas moral darkness is when people are not able to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong.

We live in an age of unprecedented prosperity and unparalleled technological advances. We have devised this economic system that allows people to seek and acquire much material wealth and people are busy either pursuing a career or running a business. In this system money has lend us a new kind of meaning. Materialism has become an end in itself. But it is all an illusion because the material cannot provide us the real meaning of life, it can never satisfy the deepest yearnings of our soul, only God can, but God has been pushed to a corner as priorities start to shift. So in this world of mental darkness what is illusionary is taken as real and what is real has become an illusion and secondly what is even troubling, trapped in the world of moral darkness, people can no longer differentiate between what is right and what is wrong and again citing the example of the Surabaya suicide attacks. Now we condemned these acts as evil but the perpetrators think that their actions are right.

What is clearly wrong in our eyes was perfectly justified in other's eye. So living in an increasingly godless society, morality is no longer an absolute entity, it has become reality, they say it relative morality. For example, homosexuality and abortion are now openly tolerated. Indeed, the line between right and wrong, good and bad is becoming more and more blur. We live in an increasingly dark world, mentally and morally. The world is not becoming a better place; it is getting worse. People are more confused and lost as ever and if you wonder why God isn't doing anything about it, you only need to look to Jesus, the light of the world. He has come to shine his light in a darkened world and John announced it in John 1:9

John 1:9 *The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*

There are two ways to understand it. First, as light of the world Jesus exposes sin and wrongdoing. John further explains in John 3:20

John 3:20 *Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.*

The idea is very simple, if your hands are dirty, you cannot see the dirt in the dark but in the room that is bright, the dirt becomes visible. That's why in the account of Jesus and adulterous woman, when her accuses came in contact with the light of the world, their sins were exposed. That's why when you walk in the light of Jesus, you will become more and more conscious of our own sins, because the light exposes them. That's how we get more and more sanctified as we progress in our faith because Jesus is so saying to us, go now and sin no more.

On the other hand, if you are struggling with some sins, you are trying to break free of some bondage to sin then open up the window of your heart a little bit. Let some light come in, let the light of Jesus come in.

Secondly, as light of the world, Jesus offers life to anyone who will believe and there is very close association between light and life.

John 1:4 *In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.*

Where there is light there is life, the light of the world has a power to give life, after all he created life in Genesis. In account of Jesus and the adulterous woman, Jesus gave life to her when she was facing death Jesus declared

John 10:10 (NKJV) *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

Abundantly here doesn't mean materially abundant, it means fully, meaningfully, purposefully and hence if you feel a bit lost, you seem to have lacking purpose in life open up the window of your heart, let some light in, let the light of Jesus come in.

CONCLUSION:

How can the light of the world impact our lives as people of God?

Jesus said,

Matthew 5:14~15 *You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

As lights of the world, he doesn't mean that you and I have the capacity to produce light, rather it means that by being followers of Jesus we reflect his light, he is the Light of the world and we are lights of the world, we are like little mirrors reflecting the light of Jesus in the place where God has put us.

Light exposes sin and light gives life. We cannot be secret Christians. Either the secrecy will destroy your faith or your faith will kill the secrecy. If you are a true Christian, people must know about that through your words, your deeds and indeed through your life. Lamps are put on lampstands and therefore we are to be a kind of lighthouse for others. Our light is to be seen by all to be visible and as a result Christians must have a positive influence in society. Jesus continued in Matthew 5:16

Matthew 5:16 *...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*