

Minister's Message – November 2006

What Women Get

'Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act' said the Jewish leaders as they dragged a woman before Jesus. 'She should be stoned' they said 'but what do you say?' She was caught in the very act. Was she going about without a head covering? Was she dressed provocatively, revealing so much flesh that the man could not help himself? Was she like uncovered meat in the street which cats come and devour?

How tragic it is that most religions sanction the oppression of women and blame women for all sexual sin. 'She is guilty and should be stoned' demanded the Jewish leaders. Leaders of other religions would have said the same thing. 'This woman seduced the man by not wearing sufficient clothes so she is guilty of the adultery, not the man'.

If this woman brought to Jesus was caught in the very act, where was the man? Did the Jews drag him before Jesus and accuse him of adultery? No. Some religious leaders in our society say it is not the men who rape women that should be punished, but the women! Men are not guilty because they cannot control themselves. Like the cat before uncovered meat, they are poor helpless animals.

'What do you say?' they asked Jesus. What did Jesus say? He said nothing for a while. The silence made them stop and think about the situation. They kept pressing him for an answer. After some time Jesus said 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw the first stone'. The religious leaders were dumbfounded. Their guilt was exposed. They were guilty of injustice. They were guilty of discrimination against this woman. Religious leaders of today would be wise to listen to these words of Jesus before blaming women for all adultery and rape.

Jesus did not call for the woman to be stoned. In his grace he forgave the woman her sin. This does not mean he condoned her action. She had sinned but he forgave her, and told her to 'go and sin no more'. Who do you think the woman would have been eager to follow – the religious leaders or Jesus?

How wonderful it was for this woman that she met Jesus. How wonderful it is for any woman to meet Jesus and have him as their God. Jesus treats women with dignity because they are made in the image of God. God made woman to be 'a helper comparable to man' (Genesis 2:18). Husbands are to give honour to their wife as the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life' (I Peter 3:7). Let us not turn this truth on its head and call men the weaker vessel, unable to control themselves.

Praise God for the dignity that Jesus accorded women. May we all do likewise! In the beginning God created them male and female and saw that his creation was very good. Sin has corrupted men and women alike, and Jesus came to save men and women alike. 'For there is neither...male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28), 'heirs together of the grace of life'.

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