

The Fifth Sunday of Lent
April 7, 2019

“If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death.” (Leviticus 20:10)

“If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall purge the evil from Israel.” (Deuteronomy 22:22)

No matter how many times I either read or listen to this moment, I am always left questioning: “Where is the guy?” There is an old saying: It takes two to tango. So where is her dance partner? Have they dealt with him already as the laws found in both Leviticus and Deuteronomy state? Have they, the first witnesses to this event, mysteriously allowed him to flee, remaining an anonymous figure even to our present day? Or, was this poor, very guilty woman just a pathetic pawn used as a means to trap Jesus; a cunning way to finally denounce him before the gathered spectators? Honestly, we will never know. We can only speculate an answer for these questions. But, what is it that we can still learn today from this very intense moment?

I imagine myself standing there in the midst of the crowd watching this scene unfold. I focus my gaze upon this woman. What must she be thinking and feeling? She is guilty. No trial is needed to prove this. Her sentence of death has already been handed down by Moses himself many years prior. I imagine she has been led there, pushed and prodded along the way. Now she stands there trembling like a caged animal. She stands there overloaded with guilt and shame. They weigh her down like invisible manacles; she has absolutely nowhere to run. I view her staring at the ground, how could she ever think of lifting her head at this moment. A man is before her kneeling upon the ground. He stands, speaks a few words, and proceeds to kneel again. After what seems like an eternity the man stands again. He asks her a question which begins to clear the shock, horror, and confusion of the moment: “Woman, where are the people who seek to condemn you?” Slowly coming to her senses, she realizes that she is alone. Everyone is gone. His next words would leave her more confused than before: “Neither do I condemn you; go and do not commit this sin again.” He proceeds to leave. She must have wondered who he was who had given her back her life, which she forfeited through her actions.

In my prayer, I needed to replay this gospel passage in my mind. I had to see her face the moment she realized she was spared. I needed to see this moment of freedom. Because, I am her. I stand accused by my choices before Jesus. My verdict is similar to hers - death. Yet, mine is not a quick, pain-filled death by flying rocks. Rather, mine is a slow, painless death; the death of my love for Jesus. An unrealized death, an apathy toward Him which developed through my love of so many other things. Jesus stands before me wanting to be merciful, waiting to forgive. The question I must ultimately ask myself, we must ask ourselves: “Do I (we) really want to be forgiven?” For to be forgiven means: I (we) **MUST** repent, to the very best of our ability, of whatever leads away from Jesus. Do we really **WANT** to be forgiven?