

## Love Does Not Throw Stones A Gospel Reflection by Brian Wigger

The religious leaders were trying to test Jesus, to catch Him in a dilemma. They wanted to see if He would agree with the stoning of the woman at the well, as was prescribed by the Law of Moses, or He would go against it and undermine His own teachings. Either way, they were out to trap Him. But instead of getting caught in their trap, Jesus does something profound.

He bends down and starts writing on the ground with His finger. Although we are not told what He wrote, but whatever it was, it caused those accusers to leave, one by one, starting with the older ones. Perhaps it was a reminder of their own sins, their own imperfections, prompting them to drop their stones and walk away?

Then Jesus, in His infinite wisdom and compassion, turns to the woman and asks her. *"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"* She responds, *"No, Lord."* And Jesus says to her, *"Neither do I condemn you, go and from now on sin no more."*

What a powerful moment of grace and mercy! In a culture where this woman could have been condemned to death by stoning, Jesus offers her forgiveness and a fresh start. He doesn't excuse her sin, but He extends His love and gives her the opportunity to turn away from her past and live a new life.

My personal takeaways from this Gospel are several.

First, the importance of NOT judging others.

The religious leaders were quick to condemn the woman, but Jesus reminds us that none of us are without sin. Before I point my finger at others, I must examine my own heart and need for grace.

Secondly, the power of forgiveness.

I noticed that Jesus didn't just forgive the woman; He empowered her to change her ways. He didn't say, "It's okay, keep doing what you're doing." He said, *"go and sin no more"*. True forgiveness leads to transformation.

Finally, I (we) see the unconditional love of Jesus.

I am reminded that Jesus didn't wait for the woman to clean up her act before He offered her forgiveness. He met her right where she was, in the midst of her sin and shame, her embarrassment and shock, and offered her grace.

I hope we will take this lesson to heart. As I see it done so often at St. Stephen Parish, being quick to show love and compassion to those around us is what the message is about, and knowing that we ourselves have been forgiven much. May we continue to live lives that honor God, turning away from sin, empowering each other and walk in the light of His truth.