



Links Players

Stone Throwers

The sinless one among you, go first: Throw the stone. (John 8:7, MSG)

We are increasingly a society of tribes. Instinctively we know there is safety in numbers, so we surround ourselves with like-minded people.

The largest and most contentious tribes in the U.S. today are political. It's hard to avoid division and infighting. Even the game of professional golf has shown susceptibility to fracturing. With the creation of the LIV Tour, the world's best golfers are now branded as PGA or LIV players. And given the underlying animosity, it appears that "never the twain shall meet."

Jesus always stood outside of tribes and the systems of power. He operated on the margins, commenting that empires and governing bodies are less primary and passing away. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away," Jesus said. (Mark 13:21). And, "All this you're admiring so much—the time is coming when every stone in that building will end up in a heap of rubble" (Luke 21:6). Jesus came to overcome the world's systems and its power struggles. He was intent on making all things new through his death and resurrection.

In John 8, Jesus comes across a woman about to be killed by a ruling majority. Caught in bed with her lover, dragged into the public square, she would be stoned to death. At that moment, the Pharisees paused and asked Jesus:

"Teacher, this woman was caught red-handed in the act of adultery. Moses, in the Law, gives orders to stone such persons. What do you say?" They were trying to trap him into saying something incriminating so they could bring charges against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger in the dirt. They kept at him, badgering him. He straightened up and said, "The sinless one among you, go first: Throw the stone." Bending down again, he wrote some more in the dirt. Hearing that, they walked away, one after another, beginning with the oldest. The woman was left alone. Jesus stood up and spoke to her. "Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?" "No one, Master." "Neither do I," said Jesus. "Go on your way. From now on, don't sin."

The lessons in the story are obvious: Self-righteous human beings can execute hateful justice. Laws can be weaponized to attack one's enemy (i.e., Jesus). Only Jesus has the authority to condemn and forgive the sins of the guilty.

There is much speculation about what Jesus wrote in the dirt that day. Did he list the sins of the onlookers or name mistresses? Who knows. Whatever it was Jesus wrote, the situation became personal for

everyone involved. Notice the men didn't leave as a mob, but everyone left "one after another beginning with the oldest." Each was forced to consider Jesus' message apart from their tribe personally.

Jesus always makes things personal with people. He doesn't merely see a woman caught in the act of adultery but a person whose life was more than one bad decision. Nor did Jesus see a vengeful mob alone. He peered into the heart of each man who clinched a stone that day.

Adulterers, Pharisees, Republicans, Democrats, Gay, Straight, Binary, Non-Binary, Queer, Black, White, Brown, Catholic, Protestant, Christian, Muslim, Jew, Male, Female, Trans, Citizen, Alien, LIV, PGA...we must rise above the world's categories and work to know and love people personally as Jesus did.

We need to recognize that our sense of justice is not perfect. We must admit that we can use our moral systems against those who offend us. Finally, we must submit our lives to Jesus, the only one with the authority to condemn and forgive.

The world is passing away. We must drop our stones, go, and sin no more.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love and forgive as I have been loved and forgiven.

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Boo Arnold

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