Go Now and Leave Your Life of Sin

John 7:53-8:11

Key Verse: 8:11 “No one, sir,” she replied. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared, “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

I thank God who blessed our Missouri Valley Easter Bible Retreat abundantly last weekend. I appreciate Dr. Melissa, Luke West, Grace Choi who served the Lord with their message and testimonies, Kit West, Luke Yang Jr, with praise band, Missionary Luke Yang, James Lee with special song, our women missionaries with prayer, Michael and Hershey with Ivan, and so on. I also give thanks to our college students who came to the conference in the midst of their tough school schedule. We were glad to meet our family members in Missouri Valley area such as New Heart, UMKC, WIU, and Columbia. Even though the date of the conference was shorter than other years, it was full of contents and fruits. Through Luke’s gospel study, we learned how to bear fruits of repentance through confession of sins and decision of faith for new life. Personally I confessed my sin of laziness and covetousness and decided to become faithful to the Lord.

Now we are going back to John’s gospel. Today’s passage may be an extension of Luke’s gospel message which we studied at the conference. In today’s passage Jesus teaches us how to live a life worthy of God’s grace and how to follow his teaching as his disciples. Let us read key verse 11 again.

First, Jesus’ prayer life and his teaching (7:53-8:2) The Bible says that the earliest manuscripts and many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11. A few manuscripts include these verses, wholly or in part, after John 7:36, John 21:25, Luke 21:38 or Luke 24:53. Some Bible scholars said that these verses were inserted at the beginning of chapter 8 in order to explain 7:24 and 8:15. If this event happened during the Feast of Tabernacle in John 7, the story goes with 7:53. “***Then they all went home.***” People went home after celebrating the feast. Some went home filled with the living water which Jesus had provided. Others went home still thirsty and empty. What did Jesus do after the feast? Jesus went to the Mount of Olives to pray. (8:1) According to Luke 21:37 each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives. Jesus spent night at the Mount of Olives to pray. In the midst of his demanding work as Messiah, Jesus didn’t ignore his prayer life. He worked hard during daytime by teaching and healing, and at night he prayed. His personal time with God the Father was hour for his rest and source for his power. Through prayer Jesus listened to God. Through prayer Jesus received strength to continue to do the work of God the Father. After coming back from work, I am hurried to check my email and watch sports news. I relax by watching news and video. What do you do first after you come home after work and school? May God help us not to neglect our prayer life, but have regular prayer! Amen.

Jesus didn’t ignore teaching his people, either. Look at verse 2. “***At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.***” When it was still dark, Jesus came to the temple courts and taught his people. It was surprising that people came to the courts early morning to hear Jesus’ words. They were like thirsty deer who pant for water (Ps 42:1). Jesus quenched their thirsty souls with the living words of life. What do you do at dawn each day? Do you pray or teach the word or still lie down in your bed? Jesus didn’t ignore teaching his people. He was faithful and diligent in preaching and teaching as well as healing and praying. Life with diligent prayer and words of God are the most important and essential requirements for healthy and fruitful Christian life. They are two pillars which support our faith. We can develop our relationship with God based on these two pillars: prayer and words of God. We can’t ignore either one. Jesus was faithful to prayer and to the ministry of God’s word.

There was a great work of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem church after the Holy Spirit came down to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. The numbers of believers increased and the church was strengthened by the Holy Spirit. At the same time persecutions against the church increased also. In Acts 6 there arose tension and conflicts between Hellenistic Jews and Hebraic Jews because of daily food distribution. It could be a trigger which destroys unity among the believers in the church. How did the apostles deal with this problem? They prayed and chose seven deacons, and they turned their hearts to prayer and to the ministry of God’s word. They said, “*and (we) will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.*” (Acts 6:4) The apostles came back to the principle for their faith and for God’s ministry. No matter how busy we are, no matter how difficult situation we may be in, and no matter how long we have been Christians, we must not ignore our prayer life and the ministry of God’s word. Amen

Second, neither do I condemn you. (3-11) While Jesus was teaching his people in the temple court, a something unusual happened which disturbed his teaching. Look at verses 3-6a. “***The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.***” (3-6a) The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were religious leaders of Jesus’ day. They should have been shepherds for their people. But they sent their secret police to catch a woman who was in the act of adultery. We don’t know where the man who was with her, but we know that she was only the one who was brought before the group. According to Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22, if a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman are put to death. Then, why did their question become a trap to Jesus? If Jesus said, ‘yes’ to allow them to stone her, he would be blamed his by people because he taught them forgiving love. If Jesus said, ‘no’, he would be accused of violating Moses’ law.

How did Jesus respond to their question? He did not answer them right away. Instead he bent down and started to write something on the ground with his finger. (6b) Someone said that Jesus wrote the Ten Commandments. Others said that he wrote all the sins of the crowd. The eyes of all the religious leaders moved from the woman to Jesus. Jesus drew their attention. This reminds us of Jesus who took all our sins in his own body. When we stand before God, he does not look at our sins, but Jesus’ sacrificial favor which covered all our sins through his death. Look at verse 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.***” Jesus didn’t answer them with ‘yes ‘or ‘no’ because he did not need to answer them. Jesus answered them that there is no one who is perfect before God and that there is no one righteous in the world not even one. (Ro 3:11) According to Deuteronomy 13:9 the witness of the crime must be the first to throw the stones, and they must not be participants in the crime itself. But there is no one who is free from the sin of adultery in the view of Jesus. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Ro 3:23) Also there is no one who deserves to condemn and who is qualified to judge others because we are all sinners who need only God’s mercy of forgiveness. After saying this, Jesus again stooped down and wrote on the ground. (8)

How did the crowd respond to Jesus’ words? Look at verse 9. “***At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.”*** The accusers were convicted by their own conscience. They began to disappear one at a time, the older ones first. Why did the older ones first? Someone said that the older ones were more mature than the younger ones. Still, others said that the older ones had sinned more than the younger ones. Now only Jesus and the woman were left. What did Jesus say to her? Jesus straightened up and asked her, “***Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?***” (10) Jesus didn’t condone her sin. He did not send her away with the license for sin. Rather Jesus helped her to realize that she deserved to be condemned because of her sin. Repentance starts from admission of our wrongdoings followed by painful conviction. The woman answered, “No one, sir” (11a)

How did Jesus say to her? Jesus said, “***Then neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin.”*** (11b) Jesus is the only one who deserves to condemn the woman because he is the Holy Son of God who has authority to judge the world. Jesus is the one who can condemn the sinful world including this woman. But Jesus did not condemn the woman. Instead, he forgave her and gave her a direction for new life. What Jesus said proves John 3:17, which says, “*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him*.” When Jesus said, “Go now”, he meant, “Do not be afraid, I forgave you. I did not condemn you. Go in peace!” Jesus also urged her to repent of her sinful life and start for new life. As Dr. Melissa said last weekend in her message, repentance is to experience an internal change of mind and heart. It is also to change a course of action and direction from rebellion against God, and turning to God, a complete about-turn.

The words “*Leave your life of sin*”, requires her firm decision for new life. She must leave from her life of sin and pursue her new life, godly life. It reminds us of Paul who said in 1 Corinthians 6:18 and in 1 Timothy 6:11, “*Flee from sexual immorality,…and pursue righteousness…*” We must leave our sinful life. We must say goodbye to our old friends such as pride, anger, covetousness, hatred, jealousy, selfishness and so on. We must walk by the Spirit and live by the Spirit. Paul said in Galatians 5:16, “*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will no gratify the desires of the flesh*.” John the Baptist said earlier, “*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance*.” (Lk 3:8)

The woman in today’s passage lived a sinful life. She followed her fleshly desire which trapped her and made her a slave. She knew that she would be condemned and be stoned to death if she was caught in the act of adultery. Still, she couldn’t control herself and committed sins. The nature of sin is deceptive and destructive. We don’t realize the price of sin until we are condemned to death. The woman did not realize that her destiny was at the hand of the religious leaders if she was caught. She was like a mouse which was caught in a mouth trap, filled with fear and shame. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees saw her as a condemned woman who deserved death. But Jesus saw her as a lost sheep who needed the Messiah’s help. To the eyes of Jesus she was a wounded soul who was crushed by the power of sin and Satan. Now Jesus proclaimed freedom for her. *“Neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin*.” Jesus proclaimed the message of freedom for the woman. The prophet Isaiah prophesied about this, “*He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,” to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor…*” (Is 61:1b-2a)

Paul was a murderer and blasphemer. He persecuted the church of God by ignorance and unbelief. After he met the Risen Christ on the way to Damascus, he was converted. He came to realize how wretched sinner he was before God! He also came to realize how great the love of God who forgave his sins and how precious the grace of Jesus who died on the cross to pay the penalty of his sin. After he came to know Christ Jesus and his grace, he experienced peace, joy, love, and freedom every day. He said in Romans 8:1-2. “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life set you free from the law of sin and death*.” Because of this grace of Jesus, Paul did not suffer from condemnation because of his past sin. Rather he worked harder than any other believers for Jesus. He said that it was not he, but the grace of God that was with him. (1Co 15:9-10)

Luke West shared his freedom and resurrection power in his testimony when he confessed his sins. He thought that confessing to someone meant changing their view of him forever. But it was not true. When he confessed his sins before his friend, his friend was not aghast, but appreciated Luke for his opening up. Rather his friend apologized that he did not help Luke to stop. According to Luke, it was the most freeing experience, certainly the freest in his Christian life, and for the first time there was a new dynamic in his walk with God: Resurrection Power. The woman in today’s passage must have experienced the same joy and freedom when she heard Jesus’ word, “*Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin*!”

Confessing our sins is a blessing to sinners and privilege for Christians. This is because when we confess our sins, we experience real freedom and joy of salvation more than sense of guilt and shame. We experience real freedom and joy because Jesus was condemned in our place and died for our sins on the cross. He took over our guilt and shame to set us free from sin and death. Praise Jesus! There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. I pray that we all may experience freedom, joy, and resurrection power through Jesus and in Jesus. Amen.