

Do you remember a few weeks ago when I read Jesus words about divorce and adultery? They are crushing words: Anyone who divorces his wife except on the grounds of unchastity causes her to commit adultery: and whoever marries a divorce woman committs adultery.

Well, today we will hear how God and Jesus deal with women who are adulterers and the men who cause them to committ adultery.

Let's start with Abraham. And Sarah, his wife. "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you and I will make of you a great nation." The Lord spoke, Abraham went.

What a man of faith, we say. But let's read on a little more.

First Abraham and Sarah wander here and there, nomads, build an altar or two, worshiped God, and wandered around some more. That's where our first lesson ^{stops} ~~stops~~.

But keep reading and you'll find the very next thing that happened was this: There was a famine in the land, and Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt where there was food. But when he was about to enter Egypt he said to Sarah: I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance and when the Egyptians see you, they will kill me but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me and that my life may be spared on your account.

So that's what ~~they~~ ^{they} did. ~~They~~ ^{They} passed Sarah off as ~~Abraham's~~ ^{Abraham} sister to save Abraham's skin. And Pharoah took Sarah as his wife, and to Abraham he gave all sorts of livestock.

But the Lord afflicted Pharoah with great plagues because of Sarah. And Pharoah was angry with Abraham saying, "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?" And they sent him on his way with his wife and all that he had.

What did God do with Abraham who had caused the mother of God's chosen people to be dishonored? God renewed the promise to Abraham that God would make of him a great nation.

That is how God deals with women who commit adultery and the men who cause them to commit adultery.

Or consider Jesus. Whom did he ask for the drink of water in the gospel for today? A woman who had had five husbands and was living with a sixth man to whom she was not married. An adultress. Of course she didn't know he knew when he first asked. So her first response to his request was, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Jews did not think very highly of Samaritans. But Jesus told her that if she knew who was asking for the drink she would have asked him for living water. Before the conversation was over she was asking for the living water and Jesus was telling her that he was the Messiah.

But not before he made something else clear, that he knew all about her, about the five husbands, about the living with the man to whom she was not married. Then he told her he was the Messiah.

Of all the people he could have chosen that day he chose her. And she went into the village and told them that she had met a man who had told her everything she had ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he? Not a very bold witness.

But the people came to see Jesus. And Jesus stayed with them two days, and they said to the woman, It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.

Abraham and Sarah and this ^{Samaritan} woman and you. How does it feel to be in that company? Adulterers and liars but chosen by God for great things.

But how often I think

~~And I think~~. If I could only change then God could use me. If I could get control of myself, have more courage, always know the right thing to do then I would be some use to God.

Let me assure you: God wants to use you and me and it has nothing to do with our being good enough for that. Jesus is using the flawed people we are for his purposes. ^{Jesus says,} Here, I forgive you, now let's get to work. No more sitting in a closet worrying about yourself. I know all about you just like I knew Abraham and Sarah and the woman at the well. You did not choose me, I chose you. Time to get to work.

There are hungry people to be fed, and lonely people to be listened to. The naked need clothing, and those who haven't laughed in a long time need to hear a joke or two.

Jesus promises, "I'll never be ashamed of you. Please, never be ashamed of me or any of those who I have called to work with you. Amen.