

### ① **[The trap set for Jesus]**

Early in the morning, Jesus went into the temple courts. A large crowd gathered around him, so he sat down and began to teach them. Just then, 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. Moses commanded us in the Law to stone such women. Now what do you say?" (John 8:4-5) The Law of Moses refers specifically to Leviticus, which states: "If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death." (Leviticus 20:10). According to this, they should have brought the man as well, but they did not. Their purpose was not to uphold the law, but to test Jesus and find grounds to accuse him.

If Jesus had said, "Kill this woman," they could have torn the crowd away from him, declaring that Jesus was not a man of love and mercy, nor a friend of sinners. Moreover, at that time, the authority to decide and execute death sentences lay with Rome, not the Jews. Therefore, they could accuse Jesus of being a "rebel" and report him to Rome. Conversely, if he said, "Do not stone her," they could accuse him of breaking the law and spread the rumor that he condoned injustice and adultery. Thus, no matter how he answered, they could accuse him.

### ② **[The Silent Jesus]**

Jesus bent down and began writing something on the ground with His finger. What was the Lord writing? The Armenian Bible states, "He bowed His face and with His finger wrote words of condemnation on the ground. They saw some of their sins written there." The ground refers to the earth. Earth is called *adamah* in Hebrew, and since humans were formed from the earth, they came to be called Adam. Writing on the earth means writing on Adam's heart. Long ago, the Lord wrote the Ten Commandments on stone tablets with His finger; with that same finger, Christ writes conscience upon our hearts. Yet before this God who bends down and remains silent, human judgments and claims of righteousness fly thick and fast.

Why do the scribes and Pharisees always oppose Jesus? First, it is because they have lived earnestly, yet Jesus does not acknowledge them, but instead acknowledges, accepts, and loves the poor, sinners, and foreigners. In other words, it is likely jealousy. Second, when a truly righteous person like Jesus appeared, they feared their false righteousness would be exposed. Therefore, they constantly brought sinners—those they deemed less righteous than themselves—to bask in a false sense of superiority. Thus, they were not truly living before God. Those who live before God should be humble. God has compassion on them and waits in

silence even today, urging them to abandon their self-righteousness. “Consider that the Lord’s patience is salvation.” (II Peter 3:15)

### ③ **[The authority to judge has not been given to humans]**

Jesus stood up and said, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” (verse 7) The Lord said to throw stones at this woman! In other words, He declared she had sinned. However, He also said only those without sin could throw stones. No one in this world is without sin. Therefore, no one can judge another. So, beginning with the elders, one by one they left, until no one remained. The authority to judge others has not been given to humans. Only God can judge people. It is said, “Do not judge, so that you will not be judged.” (Matthew 7:1) Yet humans readily judge others.

●A 91-year-old journalist, Mr. T (Tawara...), stated on a TV program that LDP President Sanae Takaichi “should just die,” causing controversy that led to the program’s cancellation. He’s getting old and gradually losing control of himself, I suppose. As the Bible says, those who judge others will have that judgment returned upon themselves.

Some may ask why judgment is commanded in the Old Testament. Others may wonder about the nature of judgment in this world.

●Currently, damage caused by bears is abnormally increasing in Hokkaido, the Tohoku region, and even Honshu. As a result, bears are being culled, but animal welfare groups are lodging an enormous number of complaints. There are reasons why bears venture into populated areas. Humans have encroached on their habitats, forcing them deeper into the mountains. This has altered the mountain environment. This year’s heat prevented acorns from forming, leaving them no choice but to descend from the mountains in search of food. It’s not just the bears’ fault; humans are also to blame. However, to prevent further damage, culling is unavoidable. Killing bears is wrong. Yet, this wrong must be done. This is called a necessary evil.

Human trials are the same—a necessary evil. To prevent further harm, we isolate criminals and judge them by law. But the laws and judgments of this world are not perfect; they are flawed. Wrongful convictions happen. It’s better not to seek perfection. Until the perfect One judges, we must always remind ourselves that we are not qualified to judge others. Why do people judge each other so much? Ultimately, it’s because humanity expelled God from this world. Precisely because it’s a world without God, people presume to judge. Those who keep God before them at all times guard their lips.

### ④ **[I do not condemn you either]**

In the end, only Jesus and the woman remained there. Jesus asked the woman, "Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, Lord." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." (verse 11) Regarding this phrase "condemn," both the Common Translation and the Barba Translation render it as "I will not punish you either." The word "condemnation" often appears in prayers, and I believe this is what it corresponds to. In a court verdict, we often hear "not guilty," but this is not the same as "innocent." The sin exists, but the person does not become a convict; it means the sin was committed, but no punishment is imposed. That is why He said, "Go now and sin no more." Just because punishment was avoided does not mean it is okay to sin. It's not that you can do anything without punishment, nor that you can do anything you want. Even though you won't be punished for sinning, you must fight against sin, pray to God, and grow strong. Because our sins were laid upon Christ. Christ was punished and beaten in our place. I should have been executed. But Christ took my place and was executed. That is why I am set free.

Isaiah 61:1-2 states: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; The Lord has anointed me; the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." (61:1-2) This is a Messianic prophecy. The anointing refers to the Holy Spirit, and the one anointed with this Spirit is the Messiah, Christ. It says he brings "good news." In Greek, this is 'euangelion' (evangelion), translated as "gospel." It means "good news," "happy tidings." What Christ brought was the Gospel. The phrase "the year of the Lord's favor" refers to the Jubilee year. It is the year when debts that cannot be repaid no longer need to be repaid. It is the year when good deeds cannot be done, yet forgiveness is granted. Favor and reward are different. Reward is paid based on work, but favor is given even without work. Therefore, there is no need to weep over one's own weakness anymore. Even if you cannot do good works until death, you need not grieve. Judgment is over. The Gospel has begun. Therefore, take courage, fight against sin, live in a way that pleases Christ even a little, and become like Christ. Hooray for the Gospel!