

Ash Wednesday

I stand here in need of God's mercy and grace. May I speak in the name of the God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.

We all fall short sometimes. We all have moments when we are maybe unkind, moments when we do not love our neighbours as ourselves, when we hurt someone else with our words or actions, moments maybe when we do not do what is just and right.

The woman dragged before Jesus, because she committed adultery with a man who mysteriously is not being dragged with her, finds herself in such a moment. She has fallen short, her actions and the actions of the man who was part of this act of unfaithfulness, likely caused hurt to the people affected by it. That is not nothing, our words and actions that fall short of loving God and loving our neighbours as ourselves, can at times have significant consequences and cause serious wounds to the people in our lives.

Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.

None of us are perfect. Yet so often we are quick to judge, to throw stones at those around us who fall short. And we might imagine God as the first one to throw stones at us when we fall short.

Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.

God is greater than our shortcomings, greater than our moments of sin. Jesus, the Son of God, truly would have the right to throw that first stone. But actually, this is not what God is about. God cares about sin, because God knows that the consequences of sin have negative effects on our lives and relationships. But God's love and care for us are greater than all our shortcomings. God's will is not for our condemnation, but for our flourishing, for us to live in loving relationships with one another and with God.

And so, Jesus does not condemn the woman either, but instead tells her to go on her way and to not sin again. God's love for us is greater than any and all of our shortcomings. God will again and again speak forgiveness into our lives and tell us to go on our way and try and do better next time.

As we enter into this season of Lent we are invited to reflect on where we might fall short at times, to bring it all before God and experience over and over again, that God's love for us is greater than any of our mistakes and shortcomings. As we go through this season of Lent, God is not waiting to condemn us, but ready to speak love, forgiveness and hope into our lives. Out of the ashes of our lives God will bring forth new life.

Amen.