



February 3, 2021

The crowd wanted to hear a strong word against sin. They did not know that Jesus did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world (John 3:17).

A crowd of people brought to Jesus a woman, saying that she was guilty of a sin that deserved death by stoning. Memorably, Jesus began to draw in the dirt, drawing attention away from the accused and toward himself. Then he said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone."

When they had all put down their stones and walked away, Jesus said to the woman, "neither do I condemn you" (John 8:1-11).

Jesus knew that no one is perfect, and no one becomes better by being told how bad they are.

Bryan Stevenson, the lawyer who founded the Equal Justice Initiative, and began his legal career by working with prisoners on death row in Alabama, writes in his excellent book *Just Mercy* that "each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done."

The world needs to be a better place, but we don't get there by condemnation and punishment. We get there by the application of a just mercy. We get there by remembering that what God creates is good, and made for goodness. It is God's goodness that we celebrate, strive for, and trust.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Rev. Matthew Wooster  
Senior Minister

Note: Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy*, 2015, page 17.