

Thought For The Week

Articles: [What Are You Looking At? - 300 words](#), [1000 words](#)

What Are You Looking At?

Lessons from the Woman Caught in Adultery

In the Gospel of John, chapter 8, an unforgettable scene unfolds in the temple courts. Early one morning, Jesus arrives to teach, and the people gather eagerly around him as he sits down. Into this peaceful moment bursts a dramatic interruption: the scribes and Pharisees drag a woman forward and place her in the center of the crowd. She has been caught in the very act of adultery. With calculated intent, they address Jesus: “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” The Scripture notes plainly that they were testing him, seeking grounds to accuse him.

Jesus does not immediately respond. Instead, he stoops down and begins writing on the ground with his finger. The accusers persist, pressing for an answer. Finally, he stands and delivers one of the most profound statements in all of Scripture: “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” Then he stoops again. Silence falls. Convicted by their own consciences, the accusers depart one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus and the woman remain. He looks up and asks, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replies softly, “No one, Lord.” Jesus says, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

This passage, preached on a Sunday evening in early February 2026, carries layers of meaning that reach far beyond the historical event. The preacher, John, titled his message “What Are You Looking At?” to draw attention to what Scripture deliberately reveals—and what it intentionally withholds. Rather than speculate on missing details, the sermon invites listeners to focus on the truths God has chosen to emphasize.

The religious leaders in this story—the scribes and Pharisees—represent the established authorities of their day. They were meticulous in outward observance, yet Jesus repeatedly exposed their hypocrisy. In Matthew 7, he warns that not everyone who calls him “Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven—only those who do the Father’s will. Many will claim impressive works done in his name, but he will say, “I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.” The crowds marveled at Jesus because he taught with real authority, unlike the scribes who now stood before him accusing the woman.

Matthew 23 contains a blistering series of woes against these same leaders. One stands out: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” To bring this home, the preacher, John, held up a small bottle labeled “simply organic.” In ancient times, people tithed with herbs rather than money. Mint, anise, and cumin—tiny, valuable seeds from the parsley family—were carefully collected and presented as tribute. The leaders could point to these offerings and declare themselves compliant. Yet Jesus declared that they had missed the heart of God’s law.

John shared a personal note: he knew mint well and used cumin sparingly, but anise was unfamiliar. Research revealed it as a Mediterranean native with small, caraway-like seeds, prized for its sweet, licorice-like flavor in spices and candies (including black jelly beans, which he admitted he dislikes). This light aside underscored a serious point: meticulous attention to minor rules cannot substitute for justice, mercy, and faithfulness.

The backdrop to John 8 is tense. In the previous chapter, some in Jerusalem whisper, “Is this not the man they seek to kill?” The leaders’ question about the woman was no innocent inquiry; it was a trap designed to ensnare Jesus, perhaps forcing him to contradict the Law of Moses or defy Roman authority. Yet Jesus refuses to be drawn in. He ignores their demand at first, stooping low even as they bully him. This posture contrasts sharply with worldly advice to stand tall against aggressors. John connected it to Proverbs 21:30–31: no wisdom or counsel can stand against the Lord; deliverance comes from him alone. Jesus had no need to defend his position—he was already sovereign.

By pausing, Jesus gave the accusers space to reflect and the woman time to grasp the gravity of her situation. Caught in sin and facing death, she stood in a place many of us recognize spiritually: exposed, guilty, and without defense. Yet the narrative omits details we might crave. What did Jesus write on the ground? Was the woman humiliated, defiant, or broken? Where was the man involved in the adultery? Why is her husband—or any advocate—absent? Scripture is silent. Even after Jesus’ words of forgiveness, her response goes unrecorded, unlike many other Gospel encounters.

John explained this restraint with the sermon title. God provides precisely what we need to see. The withheld details are not the point; the revealed ones are. In his response, Jesus models the very qualities the Pharisees neglected: justice (no one defends her, just as no one can defend our guilt before God), mercy (he removes condemnation), and faithfulness (he commands, “Go and sin no more”).

Drawing from Romans 5:8—“God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”—John asked listeners to see themselves in the story. We have all played multiple roles: the condemning crowd, quick to judge others; the older leaders who recognize their sin and quietly withdraw; the woman caught in rebellion; and, by grace, the forgiven one who hears, “Neither do I condemn you.”

This calls believers to imitate Christ—to offer wisdom in confrontation, resist worldly pressure, and extend mercy. Romans 3:23 reminds us: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Honest self-examination, looking in the mirror, reveals our shortcomings—not for despair, but to drive us to grace.

Jesus addressed hypocrisy in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:3–5): why notice the speck in another’s eye while ignoring the log in our own? Remove the log first, then see clearly to help others. True obedience transcends superficial acts. It pursues justice, practices mercy, and lives faithfully to God’s Word.

John urged reflection on two groups: those outside Christ, who need repentance to escape eternal separation—described as outer darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth—and those in Christ, who have repented, confessed him as Lord, and been baptized, yet must continue to “go and sin no more.” Scripture provides clear guidance; without it, we would be lost. Echoing Peter, the preacher, John, expressed gratitude: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

He closed lightheartedly, glad for the cumin bottle that illustrated his point, and invited anyone with a need to come forward. In the end, the story of the woman caught in adultery is not primarily about her guilt or the leaders' hypocrisy. It is about what Jesus reveals of himself—and what he calls us to see in ourselves. What are you looking at? The answer shapes everything.

[back to top](#)

What Are You Looking At?

A Lesson from John 8

In John 8:2–11, Jesus faces a carefully laid trap in the temple courts. The scribes and Pharisees drag a woman caught in adultery before him, place her in full view of the crowd, and demand, “Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do you say?” Their question was not genuine; it was designed to ensnare him, either contradicting the Law or defying Roman authority. Jesus responds by stooping down and writing on the ground with his finger. When they persist, he stands and says, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” He stoops again. One by one, convicted by conscience, the accusers slip away, beginning with the oldest. Soon only Jesus and the woman remain. He asks, “Has no one condemned you?” She answers, “No one, Lord.” Jesus replies, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

This passage, the focus of an evening sermon titled “What Are You Looking At?,” reveals far more through what it says than through what it omits. John noted that Scripture deliberately withholds details: what Jesus wrote, the woman’s appearance or emotions, the absent man involved in the sin, her husband’s whereabouts. These silences are intentional. God gives us exactly what we need to see.

The religious leaders, meticulous about tithing tiny herbs like mint, anise, and cumin, neglected the weightier matters—justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23). Jesus models those very qualities here: justice exposes universal guilt, mercy removes condemnation, and faithfulness calls for changed living.

John urged listeners to see themselves in every role—the condemning crowd, the quietly departing elders, the guilty woman, and the forgiven one. Romans 5:8 reminds us that “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Honest self-examination (Romans 3:23; Matthew 7:3–5) leads not to despair but to grace and a call to live differently.

What are you looking at? The story invites us to stop fixating on others’ specks or missing details and instead behold the mercy and challenge of Christ.

[back to top](#)