

26-0201p - Detailed Summary

26-0201p - *What Are You Looking At?*, John Nousek

Bible Reader: Tom Freed

This detailed summary by Grok, xAI, (Transcription by TurboScribe.ai)

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What Are You Looking At?

Scripture Reading

Scripture Reading (0:05 - 0:53): Tom Freed

John 8:2-6: The service begins with Tom reading from John 8:2-6. He describes how Jesus returned to the temple early in the morning, where crowds gathered around him. Jesus sat down and began teaching the people. At that point, the scribes and Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They placed her in the center of

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the court and addressed Jesus directly: "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do you say?" The text notes that they asked this question to test him, hoping to find grounds to accuse him. Jesus responded by stooping down and writing on the ground with his finger.

Summary of Transcript (0:05 - 29:32), Preacher: John Nousek

(0:58 - 3:37) Sermon Introduction

Preacher John then greets the evening congregation warmly and explains that he wants to set the historical and spiritual stage for this well-known passage in John 8. He points out that the ones pressing Jesus with this question—the Pharisees, the scribes, and the surrounding crowd—represent the religious establishment of the day, the recognized authorities and leaders.

To illustrate their mindset toward Jesus, he turns to Matthew 7:21-23, where Jesus warns that not everyone who calls him "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven—only those who do the will of his Father. On judgment day, many will point to the miracles, prophecies, and mighty works they performed in his name, yet Jesus will reply, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness." John notes that the crowds were astonished at Jesus' teaching because he spoke with genuine authority, unlike the scribes. These are, of course, the very same scribes who now drag the woman before him.

(3:38 - 8:41) Jesus' Rebuke of Religious Hypocrisy

Jesus was clearly not winning favor with the religious elite. In fact, he openly challenged them. John directs attention to the entire twenty-third chapter of Matthew, which contains a series of sharp "woes" directed at the scribes and Pharisees. One particularly pointed example comes in verse 23: "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 make the point vivid, John brings a small prop—a bottle labeled “simply organic.” He explains that in Jesus’ day people did not use paper currency; instead, valuable herbs served as a form of wealth and tribute. The scribes and Pharisees meticulously tithed even the smallest garden herbs—mint (a wild, parsley-like plant), anise, and cumin—all members of the same family. They would carefully collect these tiny seeds, present them as their tithe, and consider themselves fully compliant.

Yet Jesus declares that while they were careful about these minor details, they had completely overlooked the heart of the law: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. John admits he is quite familiar with mint and has used cumin occasionally, though rarely. Anise, however, was new to him, so he looked it up. He learned that anise (also called aniseed) is native to the Mediterranean region, produces very small seeds similar to caraway, and is ground into a spice or used medicinally. Its distinctive sweet, licorice-like flavor appears in candies and regional confections, including black jelly beans—which, he adds with a smile, he personally does not enjoy. He calls this explanation a brief but helpful sidebar.

(8:44 - 14:53) The Hostile Backdrop and Jesus’ Response

John then connects the passage to John 7:25, where some people in Jerusalem whisper, “Is this not the man they seek to kill?” That tense atmosphere carries directly into chapter 8. The religious leaders were not merely curious; they wanted Jesus removed—even if it meant murder. The question about the adulterous woman was carefully crafted as a trap.

He rereads verses 2–11 for clarity: Jesus is teaching in the temple when the scribes and Pharisees interrupt, placing the woman in full view and demanding his ruling on stoning. Jesus stoops down and writes on the ground, seemingly ignoring them. 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 their own consciences, the accusers depart, beginning with the oldest. Eventually Jesus is left alone with the woman. He asks, “Woman, where are they? 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.”

John highlights the many layers in this account. The religious leaders set a deliberate trap, yet Jesus simply ignores their demand even though they want him dead. Despite being persecuted and bullied, he stoops low—exposing himself rather than standing tall to confront them aggressively, which runs counter to the usual advice about dealing with bullies. He notes that this morning the congregation heard Proverbs 21:30–31: there is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord; deliverance belongs to him. Jesus does not need to “stand up” because he is already sovereign and supreme.

(14:54 - 20:08) What the Text Leaves Unsaid

Jesus appears to give the accusers a moment to reflect and cool down, while simultaneously allowing the woman time to feel the full weight of her situation. She stands before the crowd, caught in the act, facing certain death under the law—much like the desperate spiritual condition every person faces before encountering Christ.

Yet the narrative is strikingly restrained. It offers none of the details a modern reader might expect: Was the woman humiliated? We do not know her thoughts. Perhaps she resembled the adulteress

in Proverbs 30:20 who “eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” The text is silent about the man involved in the adultery—why is he absent? Where is the woman’s husband, if she had one? Nothing is said about what Jesus wrote on the ground, though many have speculated. John imagines she may have been young and attractive, as such descriptions sometimes come to mind, but Scripture gives no such portrait. After Jesus speaks the words of forgiveness and instruction—“go and sin no more”—the story simply ends. Unlike many other Gospel accounts that describe the person’s response or subsequent actions, here the woman’s future is left untold.

That restraint is intentional, John explains. He chose the sermon title “What Are You Looking At?” precisely because God has given us exactly the information he wants us to focus on, and he has withheld the rest.

(20:10 - 25:32) Christ’s Modeling of Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness

By pausing before he answers and then responding as he does, Jesus beautifully demonstrates the very weightier matters he earlier accused the Pharisees of neglecting: justice, mercy, and faithfulness. No one in the crowd steps forward to defend the woman or show mercy—her guilt stands plain, just as our own guilt stands before God. Yet Jesus declares, “Neither do I condemn you,” extending mercy that removes condemnation. Then he calls her to faithfulness: “Go, and from now on sin no more.”

John points to Romans 5:8—“God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”—and asks whether each listener can see themselves somewhere in this scene. If we are honest, he says, we can identify with almost every role. We have stood in the crowd, quick to condemn others for their faults. We have been among the older leaders who, confronted with their own sin, quietly walk away. We have known the rebellion of the woman caught in sin. And, praise God, we have also known the breathtaking relief of forgiveness—the moment the accusing crowd disappears and we hear the Savior say, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

We are called to pursue that same path of faithfulness, striving to live out Christ’s words even though we do not succeed perfectly every time. In a sense we are invited to imitate him—to be “little Christs”—offering wisdom in tense moments, refusing to bow to worldly pressure, and extending mercy to other sinners. The elders in the story recognized their condition immediately and left; we too should remember Romans 3:23: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” When we look honestly in the mirror, we see that we fall short of God’s standard—not so we can wallow in guilt, but so we can recognize our need for grace.

(25:34 - 29:32) A Call to Self-Examination and Faithful Living

Jesus addresses this very issue in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 7:3–5 he asks, “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ... You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” Once we have dealt with our own shortcomings and received God’s forgiveness in Christ, we gain the clarity to help others.

True obedience is never about superficial religious performance—tithing a few herbs or dropping a small offering and calling it done. It is about the weightier matters: pursuing justice rightly, showing genuine mercy to others, and living faithfully according to God’s Word.

John reminds the congregation that those outside the church need to hear this message and repent so they can escape the eternal separation from God—described in Scripture as outer darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth—that lasts forever. Those already in Christ, who have heard the gospel, repented of their sins, confessed Jesus as Lord, and been baptized by immersion, are called to the same ongoing commitment: go and sin no more.

Thankfully, God has given clear instructions in Scripture. Without them we would be utterly lost. John recalls Peter's words: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." For that gift he is deeply grateful. He closes by joking that he is glad he brought the cumin bottle to illustrate his point, then gently invites anyone who has a need to come forward.