

He began to write...

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him: “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do you say?” They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. In response they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She replied, “No one, sir.”

Hands that grasp

to kill, fingers that crush to wound, the furor of wrath and judgment. And then there is Jesus, who bends down and with his finger writes on the ground, without accusation. In the middle stands the culprit: a woman guilty according to the Law, rigid in her shame, steeling herself for an infamous death. But Jesus reveals a new possibility: the option of mercy and truth. “Neither do I condemn you,” he says. “Go, and do not sin anymore.” It is the mercy of God that gives a person the power to stop sinning because it is love that changes us, not the law.

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*I bless
you,
Jesus,*

*for distinguishing
sinner from sin,
wrongdoer from wrongdoing.*

*I bless you
for never pointing
an accusatory finger at me.*

*I bless you, Jesus,
for your overflowing riches
of mercy and truth. Amen.*