

*Let he who is without sin cast the first stone*

Unlike last Sunday (the Prodigal Son), this episode is all about sin and forgiveness: who requires forgiveness, and who can forgive. It is also about our human tendency to judge others when we ourselves are less than perfect.

The first key role in this scene is that of the crowd who come to Jesus with an overwhelming sense of self-righteousness: a woman has been caught breaking the law of Moses, which allows them to put her to death.

They are filled with the confidence and courage of the group, believing they stand on the side of right. They claim the moral high ground until Jesus puts things in a different perspective: they cannot hide behind the Law, they each must take responsibility for their intended action, for only those who have not sinned themselves can presume to pass judgment on another.

Jesus points out that to throw a stone is to proclaim oneself sinless, which is itself a grave offence against the law of Moses because in the Jewish understanding only God is sinless.

Secondly there is the woman herself, in a totally different position. Fragile, frightened, alone and exposed, she hasn't a leg to stand on and no real hope of surviving – until Jesus leads the crowd to that new perspective.

This leaves Jesus alone with the woman. He refuses to condemn her, but rather forgives and heals.

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In one and the same moment Jesus deflates the overconfidence of the crowd and lifts up the fragile woman: “he has cast down the mighty from their thrones and raised up the lowly” (Luke 1:52).

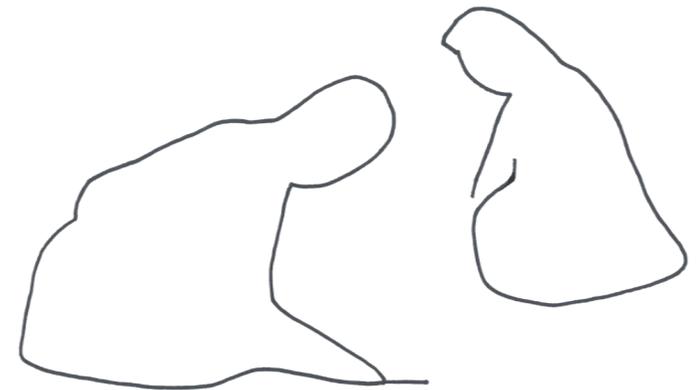
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If we claim to be able to judge other people, we effectively place ourselves on the same level as God, for only God can see the deepest truth of anyone's heart and soul.

Human perspective is always flawed because we always work within our own personal preferences and biases. Only God can see the whole, objectively and free from prejudice. God is the one truly just judge.

We may hold strong views about the decisions

other people make or the ways they choose to behave, but in the end we should not judge the persons themselves.



*... neither do I condemn you ...*

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## Reflection

Good people sometimes make bad choices, but that doesn't make them bad people.

Can I discern between the person and their choice of action that I believe is simply wrong?

Do I let those wrong decisions influence my respect for that person?

*This reflection is edited from a text by Rachel Hurst, from the International Disability and Human Rights Network.*

Read the original at [www.careforlife.org.au](http://www.careforlife.org.au)

Our society today is increasingly seeing impairment, disability and aging as facets of life to be avoided at all costs.

We are also a society that, because of medical advances, have grown less and less used to pain and suffering. We expect the medical profession to find a solution to any health problem we may have.

However, the medical profession is not infallible and many people – including aged and disabled people – do not receive the treatment that they should, and they do suffer pain and indignity.

People with disabilities or physical challenges do not have enough support, either financial or personal, and many live highly restricted, solitary and poverty-stricken lives.

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One of the greatest messages that comes from our society today is that if you are a disabled person, or a sick person or an older person - you have lost your autonomy - you can no longer have control over your own life.

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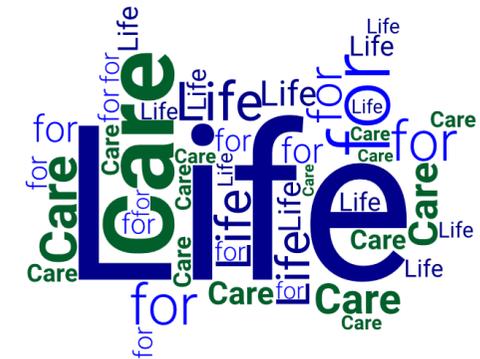
However, the solution to the fear and repulsion that aging and disability trigger in some people is not to eliminate aging and disability but to build a society which sees the benefits that these experiences bring to the individual, their friends and family and to the wider society, and ensure that society gives all the support to and protection of the rights of each and every individual, without discrimination.

In the situation of someone wishing to commit suicide because of pain and suffering, it is the duty of society not to help them to die but to alleviate that pain and suffering.

Legislation allowing assisted suicide, however tight the controls, inevitably reinforces negative attitudes on the quality of life of people with disabilities.

And in countries where assisted suicide has been in place for some time, there have been reports of considerable abuse of the legislation, particularly in regard to people with learning difficulties or other conditions where the individual is unable to communicate their wishes.

Even people with non-life-threatening conditions are being assisted in their suicides in Switzerland.



## Call to Action

Bad laws are passed only when good people say nothing. Let your MPs know what you think.

To find out how contact *Care for Life*

Email: [care@careforlife.net.au](mailto:care@careforlife.net.au)

Telephone : 9242 4066

Visit our website [www.careforlife.net.au](http://www.careforlife.net.au)