



A MATTER OF FAITH

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It did not take me long to realize that golf was not my sport.

A friend invited me to his dad's country club for a golf tournament. I had played a couple of times so I thought I would be able to muddle my way through it. When it was our group's turn to start, his dad tapped me to go first.

There were other players lined up on either side of the fairway. The first tee was also close to the clubhouse. There were a lot of spectators watching me as I took the ball, set it up on the tee. I did not want to embarrass myself with a weak shot so I swung with all the gusto I

could muster. The ball took off the tee with great force and distance. It also seemed to defy physics as it made an almost ninety degree path from where I was aiming.

Fortunately, people all



Mulligan

hollered, "FOUR!" at the same time so that those in the direct flight of my ball could dive out of the way.

I wisely donated my clubs to Goodwill for the safety of the other players.

While I find the game to be incredibly frustrating, one of the aspects that I like is the idea of a

"mulligan." This is basically a "do over." With my golf skills, mulligans are as plentiful as strokes.

As we try to grow accustomed to using the year 2010, we get to start a new year. It is a new beginning. It is a fresh start. 2009 is gone. We get our annual mulligan.

Jesus was tested constantly by the religious leaders of his day. They were constantly looking for ways to discredit him.

They would brainstorm for hours trying to set a trap that they could catch him in and make those who were following him turn on him.

They brought a woman before him. They had caught her sleeping with someone that was not her husband. She was without defense. She was guilty of the sin that they were accusing her of.

What was odd was that the man was not to be

found. She alone was shoved down at Jesus' feet.

The crowd wanted Jesus to pass judgment. They had him trapped. If he followed the Jewish law that he came to fulfill, he would have to damn her to death. If he did this, he would be just like them. He would also be in big trouble with the Roman occupiers. Jews were not allowed to sentence anyone to death.

Jesus paused. He bent over and began to draw in the dirt. After some time had passed, he stated "Let he who is sinless cast the first stone."

The crowd slowly dispersed. They had fallen into the political and religious pit that they had dug for Jesus. They were left defenseless and without excuse. All they could do was to turn and sneak away in their own shame.

After they had all gone,

Jesus asked the woman "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir," she said.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Jesus gave her a fresh start. She got a mulligan. She was shown grace and her slate was clean.

In a matter of a moment,

hope was birthed from hopelessness. Love broke through hate and condemnation and what was soon to be death for her became a new life.

This is who Jesus is.

He is the one who comes between the accuser and the accused.

He is the granter of all grace.

He is the one who can give you a new start.

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