

Luke 7:36-50 How did *she* get in here? Pentecost 3 June 13, 2010

When we were kids, if we discovered that someone was staring at us, we might say, “Hey, take picture why don’t you!” I can imagine that if looks could have killed, the woman of ill-repute in our text would be a gonner. It was not uncommon for a Pharisee like Simon to invite his friends over for a meal and to invite a prominent Rabbi to be their guest of honor. In this case it was Jesus. It was also not uncommon for uninvited guests to stop by and investigate the goings on and take advantage of the host’s hospitality. But there was more to the appearance of this “sinful woman of the city” than Simon the Pharisee could really see.

You can imagine what a stir she would have made. You get upset when some sits in your pew. Just think what would happen if a woman who was known to have less than a stellar reputation were to suddenly appear in the pew right next to you one Sunday morning, and more than that, if she were to put her gift in the offering plate and stand next to you and sing God’s praises and then if she were to come to communion and kneel right beside you and then on the way out shake the pastor’s hand and give him a big hug. You wouldn’t find yourself thinking, “How did she get in here?” would you?

What if the guy with tattoos all over his body, the guy at the restaurant who clears tables and does dishes, what if he came to the Braille spaghetti luncheon and said, “Hey, I’m here to help! What do you have for me to do? My sister is blind and she really enjoys reading her Braille Bible and I just thought I might help you all out one of these times. So here I am!” You wouldn’t find yourself thinking, “How did he get in here?” would you?

Our host, Simon, might have wondered “who let her in? Simon had a vision problem. He heard her weeping and he saw this woman of the night anoint Jesus’ feet, wipe them with her hair and then kiss his feet. But he could see her only according to her reputation. With that in mind he could of only two possibilities when it came to Jesus. **“If this man were a prophet, he would have know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.”** By allowing the woman to anoint and kiss and wipe his feet, either Simon had misjudged Jesus in thinking Jesus was a prophet because a true prophet would have know what kind of woman she was and would want nothing to do with her, or if he did know what kind of woman she was and allowed her to touch him, Jesus had become unclean and lacked the holiness of a true prophet. Either way He was no prophet of God. What Jesus saw in the woman and in Jesus tells us more about Simon than it does about the woman and Jesus.

What Simon doesn’t see (understand) is how the Messiah’s holiness could be joined to His grace. And so Jesus says, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” He tells the story of the two debtors. One is in debt up to his eyeballs. The other owes much less. The amount each of them owed is not the point. Unable to repay their debt, both of them are in deep do-do. The

day to pay up was fast approaching. They both began to experience loss of appetite and sleepless nights. The one who owed the most began to say, "O God, what can I do? As far as he was concerned, life was over. His dear wife bore the burden too, holding her youngest child close, while the other children, with nothing with the butt-end of a loaf of bread to eat, went out to play, not really hungry anyway with the worries they carried. But they were fortunate that the banker was a godly, prince of a man because when he became aware of the situations of his two debtors, he was filled with pity. Maybe it was his birthday or anniversary when he said to himself, "You know self, what would really make me happy to allow those two debtors to be free of their debt. Yes, thinking of the poor man and his worried wife and their hungry children, that would be good." So he called them both in. Friends, he said, don't worry anymore. I have cancelled your debts. 100%. And their faces lit up! But the one who had owed him the most smiled the bigger smile and was ready to kiss his feet. He couldn't wait to get home to tell his wife. Imagine what his wife must have been thinking as she was waiting for him to come home. Can you imagine it when he said to her, "He cancelled the whole debt! We don't owe him a single dollar!" And they began to dance and the children joined them in the kitchen celebration. And there was not a day that went by that they did not praise the name of the man who had forgiven their debt.

Yes, the other man also went home happy. He also shared the good news with his wife but then concluded that the amount wasn't really so great after all; the creditor wouldn't miss it anyway.

Now Jesus zero's in on Simon: "Which of the men will love him more?" Simon, afraid to look up at Jesus, said, "I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the larger debt." Jesus said, "You got it, Simon! And Jesus turned and looked at the woman and said to Simon, "[Now]Do you see this woman?" This is Nathan's 'You are the man!' to King David in our Old Testament reading. You don't see that you need just as much forgiveness as she does, do you, Simon! Your self-righteousness and pride and have blinded you to what's really going on here.

She did what you were supposed to do but didn't. You didn't give me water to wash my feet. She washed my feet with her precious tears. You didn't give me the usual kiss of peace or friendship when I entered your house but she kissed my feet. You didn't anoint me my feet with the usual oil; she anointed my feet with alabaster – far more expensive than you would ever think of doing. And for a towel she wiped my feet with her beautiful hair. Look at her, Simon, do you see the love that you should have showed me?

We are not told how, but the woman had come to know Jesus as the source of forgiveness for her sins. The love, the devotion, the worship that she gave to Jesus was proof of that forgiveness. When Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven! Your faith has saved you! Go in peace," He was simply saying that her acts of devotion was proof of her faith in Him as the Messiah.

something that Simon and his fellow Pharisees would not allow. “Who is this that even forgives sins?” they asked. They did not see that they were as much in debt to God as was this woman. They did not mourn over their own sins and seek forgiveness in the whom God provided.

The woman gives us a picture of the highest form of worship of Jesus – to receive by faith what He has to offer and to acknowledge that He is the source of the forgiveness of sins. The highest form of worship is simply to believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Simon did not have faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins and so did not love him like the woman did.

This woman is an illustration of the beatitude, “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Can you imagine what it would be like if we were all more like this woman; if we all had a proper understanding of the offense of sins and then realized the greatness of God’s forgiveness of Christ? Would not we all be over-flowing with acts of love and devotion and worship?

“Your sins are forgiven?” are the same words you hear almost every Lord’s Day in the Absolution, in the Word and Sacraments. He who believes these words has what they say (Luther).

“Your faith has saved you!” Not your devotion or your good works or even your repentance, but the faith in Him who went to the cross and suffered to redeem you from sin and death and hell.

“Go in peace!” All is well between you and God.

On the last day no one will ask, “How did he or she get in here?” All will enter the same way: by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Amen!