

Scripture Reading:

Luke 7:36 “Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." 44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. 46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." 48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

50 Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."”

Jesus Dines With Simon the Pharisee

This morning our journey through the Gospel of Luke brings us to the house of Simon the Pharisee. We are not told in which city this dinner takes place, and very little about the characters: We have Simon who is a Pharisee and a sinful woman whose name we are not given!

There is much speculation about who she is, but nothing can be substantiated from the Scripture, nor even reliable church tradition. Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gives us yet another event with a stark contrast as he continues to lay out his orderly account for his friend Theophilus.

- **An unnamed woman with no details about her sins, is given as an example for us all, to see ourselves in her place!**

In this account, Jesus is invited to dine at the home of Simon the Pharisee. This unknown woman makes an unexpected appearance. A story is told and from this we will learn the importance of KNOWING that our sins are forgiven!

The first question to ask is why did Simon invite Jesus to dine at his home?

Certainly not in response to the gift of faith: Last week we saw with John the Baptist how one can ask an honest question and receive an honest answer: Here we do not know the exact motive that moved Simon to ask Jesus to dine with him, but we clearly see from his responses that he was not honestly seeking the truth:

- **While he may have been caught up with some of the “fame” surrounding Jesus, he was NOT open to His being the Messiah.**

The next question is why the women whose name we are not even given, came as an uninvited guest:

In stark contrast with Simon, all that she does is because she has received the gift of faith! We can only speculate as to why she was known as a public sinner, but Matthew may have provided a clue as to why she came at this time:

As we saw last week, Matthew gave more details of the discussion of John the Baptist. At the end of Matthew's account we heard the prayer of Jesus that we used for the communion meditation last week. His prayer ended with these familiar words: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Luke appears to link these two events in verse 36, so it is quite possible that this woman heard and responded to this invitation!

So let's take a moment to understand just what happened in this account:

- Hoping I can pass along the blessing it has been to study!

➤ Verse 36: Jesus went to the Pharisee's house and sat down to eat.

We must be careful not to have a modern American dinner scene in our minds at this point

[Explain the dinner & customs - reclining at the table- people coming & going]

➤ Verses 37 & 38: A woman who was a sinner comes with expensive perfume

She comes as a penitent and thankful follower: Keep this in mind as we later consider how we should respond to Jesus!

➤ Verse 39: Simon reveals his heart, attempting to put Jesus in a box: The opposite of asking honest questions or being a faithful seeker

IF Jesus does not know the woman is a sinner, He is NOT a prophet & IF He does know she is a sinner and lets her touch Him He is NOT holy!

BUT, Jesus will show He is the true Prophet by reading Simon's thoughts and show the He is not only the Holy God come in the flesh, but come to save His people from their sins and make them Holy as well!

Jesus begins with a simple story to challenge Simon and to instruct us!

➤ Verse 41: Jesus describes two men who are forgiven

One is forgiven much the other forgiven little: Five Hundred v. Fifty BUT both are FREELY forgiven!

IF we miss this important point we will learn all the wrong lessons from the actions of this forgiven woman!

- **Verse 43: Simon tries to dodge the direct question with “I suppose”, but Jesus pins him down with “You have rightly judged.”**
- **Verse 44: “Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon”**

This action by Jesus should remind us of how he placed the man with the withered hand before the religious leaders in the synagogue at Capernaum. Here Jesus shows how the thankfulness of a forgiven sinner is demonstrated: While Simon has failed to even show common courtesy to the Savior!

- **Tears instead of water**
- **Kissing His feet instead of a greeting**
- **Perfume instead of common oil**

A glorious picture of a forgiven sinner at the feet of Jesus – An example for us all!

- **Verse 47: “Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”**

This is the central teaching of this passage: But it can easily be ripped out of context: Her sins are not now forgiven here at the dinner because she loved much, or even because she responded to Jesus’ call: She responded to the call and is showing her love and thankfulness BECAUSE she has been given the gift of faith and has been forgiven:

- **This is the Good News: The Gospel, the main point of the illustration that Jesus made Simon confront: The debt was freely forgiven: ALL of Grace!**

With verse 48 we come to our important application for today:

-- Applying ‘doctrine’ to real life --

- **“Then [Jesus] said to her Your sins are forgiven.”**

As usual when we come to the heart of the Gospel, there is controversy...

- **Verse 49** Those at the table with him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins.”

Jesus ignores the skeptics, avoiding the doctrinal debate, and assures the woman once again

Verse 50: Then [Jesus] said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

We gather each week here at Church of the King for Covenant Renewal Worship. We speak often about the order of worship that has been used in whole or in part by Christian churches down through the ages. One part that has fallen on hard times in many American churches is the confession of sin and the pronouncement of forgiveness and absolution, after the call to worship. This account in Luke should remind us just how important this part of the service really is: As we have often said, whenever someone comes into the presence of God, they immediately recognize their position as sinful creatures and fall to their faces: Much like this woman who weep at the feet of Jesus.

- **Jesus lifts her up, tells her that her sins are forgiven and that she should go in peace.**

Many in the modern church are not comfortable with having a time for the confession of sin, with evangelicals thinking it is a downer, and reformed folks thinking it is too Catholic!

With Scriptural examples like the great confessions of King David in Psalm 51, the great prayers of Daniel & Nehemiah, and now this weeping woman we are on solid ground having at the beginning of the Divine Worship Service a place to confess our sins: Individually & corporately!

- **Humanly speaking, it is a downer – But it is the only place where we will find the peace that Jesus offers!**

As to the charge that it is too much like the Roman Catholic practice, nothing could be further from the truth: Just compare how Theron or I come down for the time of confession with the movie scenes of folks confessing TO the priest rather than to Christ!

The next concern is over having an Elder in Christ's Church declare that our sins are forgiven after reading a passage of Scripture that gives assurance of this truth. Many will insist that we confessed our sin when we made our decision for Christ: If someone has prayed the sinner's prayer then they are saved and their sins are forgiven! Once saved ALWAYS saved they will proclaim.

But isn't it interesting how often these folks find themselves "rededicating their lives" or searching for that special presentation or experience that reminds them of their forgiveness? They are searching everywhere for those comforting words of Christ to this woman: "Your faith has saved you, go in peace!" We need to hear these words and they come each week as the elder declares that our sins are forgiven

- **This account in Luke confirms that the Christian church has been right down through the ages to have a time of confession and absolution in the worship service:**

As was already pointed out, Jesus was not declaring that this woman's sins were forgiven BECAUSE of what she had done here at the dinner

- **She, like all of us, was saved by grace, given the gift of faith to believe and responded to the call of Jesus to come unto Him!**

Her sins are forgiven based solely on the finished work of Christ and what she did at this dinner was her heartfelt response of thankfulness!

- **This is exactly what should happen each and every week as God calls us into His presence for worship.**

We respond to God's call:

We recognize our failure as sinners and confess our sins silently as individuals and then corporately together in prayer.

The Word of God is then proclaimed affirming the truth of the Gospel & an Elder pronounces that based on God's truth and our response to His saving faith: Our sins are forgiven.

- **That is exactly what Jesus did with this unnamed woman who stands as an example for us all:**

Jesus tells her that her sins are forgiven.

His critics are shocked and she may have doubted

Jesus then assures her again by saying, “Your faith has saved you.

Go in peace.” Notice that Jesus says “your faith” when we know that saving faith is a gift from God:

- **The great gift of faith is now truly her faith:**
- **The peace that Jesus promises is not a goal which the woman is to reach, but rather the possession that she has as Christ’s child!**

As Paul says in Romans 5:1 “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

This is why confession and the absolution of sin is SO important!

- **It is not just filler at the beginning of the service or a church tradition we follow**
- **We should not be late!**

This is why we don’t want sour faces during communion!

- **God has forgiven our sins and when He invites us to feast with Him, we are all to partake and rejoice!**

To properly understand all of this we must rightly understand the account Luke has given us today:

This woman showed great love BECAUSE of the remission of many sins that she had received

She did NOT receive the remission of sins because of the love she showed!

- **In other words we are thankful because we are forgiven, we are NOT forgiven because we are thankful.**

We saw our first rain of the season this week: Imagine if someone had gone out early in the morning and said “Look, the ground is wet, surely that must have caused it to rain last night!”

- **The ground is wet because it rained, not the other way around.**

This morning we should have rejoiced when we heard Theron, as an officer in the Church, proclaim that our sins are forgiven BECAUSE Jesus HAS forgiven our sins!

Thinking we have earned forgiveness, through some legalism, thankfulness, a ‘decision’ or other any other work of our own would be as silly as thinking the water on the ground had caused it to rain!

A proper understanding of this truth will mean that we RESPOND with a true love for Jesus –

A love that would shed many tears of joy, kiss His feet and anoint Him with our most prized possessions!

JC Ryle put it well when commenting on this account: “A hearty love is needed” to rightly serve Jesus.

“The fear of punishment, Hope of reward or a sense of duty are all useful, but they are weak and powerless until a man loves Christ: That is what changes lives!”

This should be our response each and every week as we confess our sins and hear the assurance of our forgiveness: We should love the Lord who has saved us!

We should heartily sing our hymn of thanks and then approach His very throne to be instructed, boldly bringing our gifts and prayers.

We are then invited feast together with Jesus, dine with Him, at the meal that remembers His great sacrifice and then we are sent forth to serve the one we love!

Each week, we should hear those words that the Savior spoke to this sinful woman: “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!” I mentioned that Matthew gives us a clue as to why this woman came at this time having responded to the call of Jesus to come unto Him: As we come to the next chapter of Luke, I think we see that the thankfulness of this woman did not end after dinner: Another lesson for us all!

Luke 8:1 “Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, 2 and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities--Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, 3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.”

Jesus came to save His people from their sins: The challenge from Luke this morning is to act like those whose sins have been forgiven: As those who hear the voice of Jesus say: You faith has saved you, GO in peace!

Let us this week, and every week, go forth to serve our risen and reigning Savior, loving Him because He first loved us!

Communion Meditation:

Ephesians 3:14 “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”