

July 8, 2018 The Guest Pt. 3 Luke 7:36-50

We are taking a look at a number of stories from the Gospels about Jesus. If you have learned anything about me, you know I like to work series of messages. It is important to me that you hear this. They are always stand alone messages. That means they are not dependent on your having heard, or remembering the previous parts of the series to get all that you need on a given morning. The one piece of information you need to know about this series is that they are all about Jesus, having been invited to a home for a meal. Jesus is the guest.

What I wanted for us in linking these stories together, to see, is that (to quote my daughter) Jesus enjoyed a party. HE enjoyed food and wine and fellowship. HE never missed an opportunity to teach. His empathy for the sick and the suffering means HE healed people in some of these settings. HE always ministered the mercy of God to those who crossed HIS path, while defending those who were judged harshly by the religious leaders of the day. There are lessons we can learn from reviewing the portraits of Jesus as a dinner guest.

One of the things you might be wondering about in this case is (if you were here last week) “How come we are looking at this story which sounds like the story we read last week, except that there is a whole lot more detail?” It is a good question. Here is the key insight. It is not the same story. Last week’s reading did involve a woman who anointed Jesus with

perfume. That incident took place at the home of Simon the Leper, in Jerusalem, just days before the arrest and crucifixion of our Lord. This story takes place in Galilee, at least a year before. And Luke tells us their host was a pharisee, a priest of Israel, and a Biblical scholar. It is amazing that there are two stories about Jesus being anointed by a woman. Two different women, at different times and in different places.

In reviewing my notes I found I made a mistake last week. I suggested that the text of that story referred to the woman in question as a sinner. It did not. The men involved thought she was wasteful and careless. They confronted her, and they were rude. Jesus told them to leave her alone. But there was no reference to her lifestyle or her character in the text. That is one of the significant differences between the story in Mark 14 and this one in Luke 7. And again I am getting ahead of myself.

A Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner. The meal is served in the Pharisee's home. And once again we have the portrait of Jesus reclining at the table in the eastern style. We are then told about the woman. She entered. She was recognizable. She was known for her sinful lifestyle. The implication is that she was probably a prostitute. And as we shall see, that is really significant. She carries an alabaster jar of perfume. She has heard by the grapevine that Jesus is here. And like the woman in last week's story from Mark she is on a mission.

In Jesus presence she begins to weep. She does not just shed a few tears. In Jesus presence she is quite suddenly broken. Her pain, her grief open the flood gates of her soul. She proceeds to wash Jesus' feet with her tears. She dries HIS feet with her hair. She kisses HIS feet. And finally she anoints HIS feet with this perfume. In the story in Mark 14 Jesus head was anointed. This woman is not so bold. Her actions speak of her act as an act of worship.

The Pharisee watches. And he makes a judgement. He decides if Jesus were truly a prophet, HE would know this woman is....that kind.....he can't even think the word! The Pharisee clearly expects Jesus to judge her, to reject her, to send her away. Here is the catch. Because Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lamb given into the world to save it, to save us, and all of us, HE can see in the eyes of the Pharisee his very thoughts. Jesus says to him, (and it is here we learn his name): Jesus says, "Simon, I have something to tell you." Jesus tells Simon a story.

Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed 500 denarii. In round numbers that represents more than a year and a half's salary. A significant debt. The second man owed a tenth of that amount, a much smaller debt. The due date for payment arrived and neither one had the money to pay the debt. The moneylender did not get angry or violent (this is not a story taking place in Chicago or Toronto) he forgave the two debtors. Jesus asks Simon the Pharisee a

question. Which one will love the financier more? Simon is not terribly interested but he plays the game. To him it is a game! “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt, and was forgiven.” Jesus responds in a hushed tone of voice, “Absolutely!”

And Jesus turns to this sinful woman. “See this woman? I came into your home. Simon you offered me no water for my feet, but she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You did not give me a greeting kiss. She has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil...we both know it is a common courtesy. She has anointed my feet with perfume. Her many sins, are forgiven, for she has displayed her love. Jesus turns back to Simon, the Pharisee. Their eyes lock. The eyes of the Son of God. Jesus says, “He who has been forgiven little, loves little.” And to the woman Jesus says, “Your sins are forgiven.”

It is at this point we learn that this was not a private dinner. There is a crowd present. Jesus disciples are there. Simon’s friends and colleagues are there. There are gasps and there is murmuring. Some of it is definitely loud enough to be heard by others. “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” The tone says, how dare he! The temperature has dropped about 10 degrees in the room. Jesus turns to the woman and speaks to her again. We should not be surprised. We live in her shoes, no matter what we like to think about ourselves. “Your faith has saved you, go in peace.” Dr. H. C. Woodring said this.

“When God cannot get religious leaders to appreciate Christ, HE will get harlots to do so.”

There are several things that need to be said here. First: our human nature is not quick to appreciate the grace of God. The Pharisee was sure of his virtue, and he tried in vain to pass judgement on the woman who recognized in Jesus, the One who could and would save her. He also tried to pass judgement on Jesus, and therefore was blind to the nature of his guest. That he had failed to offer common elements of hospitality, feet washing and the greeting of a friend speaks volumes. God’s grace is not something we easily value.

Secondly. We are all great sinners. The greatness or weakness of our faith is proportionate to our ability to see in real terms the nature of the debt we owe and for which we have been forgiven at the foot of Calvary’s cross. Those who have been forgiven much appreciate the depth of their lostness, their hopelessness but for the love of Jesus who came to save sinners.

Third. Faith that recognizes who Jesus is, and the saving grace HE offers, stands on the doorstep of that most elusive gift...peace. Jesus said to this woman and HE says to every person who will hear HIS voice... “Your faith has saved you...faith in Christ. Go in peace.

Let us pray;

Lord it is so tempting to think of ourselves as not in great need. And it is tempting to minimize our sinfulness, and maximize our faithfulness. Your word calls us to do what is right, but also to walk humbly before you. Open our eyes to the inestimable treasure of your grace. Forgive us, in Jesus name we pray. Amen