

Sermon for June 16, 2013

Forth Sunday of Pentecost, Luke 7:36-8:3

BLESSINGS TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD THE FATHER, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Ever since the Garden of Eden and the eating of the apple by Adam and Eve **sin** has been a part of our **human** existence. That is an **uplifting way** to being a sermon. RIGHT???

Unexpected happenings. Throughout the bible there are examples of our sinful human nature being revealed and **God's response** to it has been shown—whether the sin is **forgiven or not**. Take for example in our 1st reading for this morning. The **powerful** King David had fallen in love with Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, a soldier. Because David wanted to be with Bathsheba he had Uriah sent to the most dangerous place where there was **fierce fighting** knowing that Uriah would **most likely** be killed, then he, David, could take Bathsheba for his own wife. This **displeased** the Lord—hence the son that David and Bathsheba had together—died; yet, through God's **love and mercy** David continued to be king and through his lineage **Jesus, our Savior**, was born.

Sinfulness is a part of our lives each and every day. So each week when we come to worship **right after** the welcome and announcements, before we do anything else, we have the *Confession and Forgiveness of sin*. The call and

response is: “**Blessed** be the holy Trinity—**one** God—who forgives **all** our sin, whose **mercy** endures forever. We pray—God of **all** mercy and consolation **come** to our help, **turn us** from sin, **give us** power to confess our sin, **receive** your forgiveness, and **grow** into the fullness of Jesus Christ.” We **confess** our sin—I turn toward the altar because I too have my own sins to confess. Once again we pray, “**Gracious** God, have **mercy** on us. WE CONFESS we have given into the **power** of sin. We are **truly** sorry and **humbly** repent—humble repentance—like the woman wiping Jesus’ feet in our gospel reading for today. In your **compassion**, in your **love**, in your **mercy**, for the things we have **done** and for the things we have **failed** to do—FORGIVE US. **Turn us** again to you, **uphold us** this week that we may **live and serve** YOU.” Then in the words that **I feel** each of us need to hear each and every week I am **humbled** to say—“As a *called and ordained* minister of the *church of Christ*, and by **his** authority, I THEREFORE DECLARE TO YOU THE ENTIRE FORGIVENESS OF ALL YOUR SINS, IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.” What **powerful words** we confess and hear—each and every week. We **know** we receive this forgiveness of sin because we have a merciful and forgiving God who loves us.

Once again, we heard of the presence of sin in our human lives in our **gospel** lesson for today. I think it is **very interesting** that it seems as though it has been

believed throughout history that there are **varying degrees** of sin. It does not appear as though the Pharisee, whose name was **Simon**, saw himself as sinful because it was **only when** the woman from the city—who had a questionable reputation—did we hear the word “**sin**” or “**sinner**” mentioned at all in our reading. In this story someone who was considered to be a **great sinner**, by **others** as well as by **herself**, is contrasted with people who are considered to be genuinely righteous.

First, I would like to tell you a **bit more** about the culture of the time so this reading could be more fully understood. It was a custom of the time for important people to entertain other important people—much like we continue to do today. Simon, the **Pharisee and leader** of the Jewish people, **invited** Jesus to his house to learn more about this **new** rabbi. Also, at that time there were **no** paved roads, **no** socks for your feet, and **no** running water. Holding to customary marks of hospitality and good manners there was an expectation that the host would provide their guests with a **servant** to wash the guest’s feet when they arrived and to provide some **scented ointment** for their hair as it may have been a long, dusty, and hot journey. Traditionally, the **host** would place his hand on the shoulder of the guest as he came into the residence and give the guest a kiss at the same time. Simon did none of these things when Jesus came to his house. Also, the men would lie on sofas at a **low** table, **propped** up on their left side, **taking and eating**

food from servicing dishes with their right hands. Only the men would eat together. The only time women would enter the room would be to serve food. The women would not talk to the men, and a woman would always have her hair pulled up and covered. She would never directly speak to or touch a man in public.

Unexpected happenings. A woman **comes** into the room—a woman whose **reputation** was known to all—this was **not her place** to be—she poured out **fine** ointment from an alabaster jar, she **touched** Jesus’ feet, she **wiped them** with her tears, she **dried them** with her hair, and she even **kissed** his feet as she anointed them with the ointment. Simon, especially, was **scandalized** by her presence because he said to himself—something Jesus obviously knew—‘if this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is—that she is a **sinner.**’ As far as **Simon** is concerned Jesus’ reaction to this event, as the **host** of the meal, **he** has been dishonored. Here in lies the crux of the story as Jesus continued with a parable about the cancellation of debts. **Who will love God more when their debts are forgiven?**

Let’s look at this idea of sin, debts, and the radical love and forgiveness of God a bit closer because Simon is **shocked** at Jesus’ attitude toward the woman. Simon understands Jesus’ parable that sinners have a greater love than the righteous ones because **more** is forgiven of them. **Of course.** But it was *not* the love of the woman that brought her forgiveness, but it was the *forgiveness* she had

received which **created love** within her. By her love she **showed** that much had been forgiven of her, while the lack of love in Simon showed that little had been forgiven of him.

Unexpected happenings. That folks is what the woman who came to Jesus that day was looking for-forgiveness. She needed to be forgiven, and she needed to show great love for that forgiveness. The forgiveness shown to all of us by God cancel the debt and opens up possibility for the future. **Did you hear it?** Jesus did **not** forgive her actions but **two times** he declared to her that her **sins** were forgiven. He said “Your sins have been forgiven” so that the words could sink deep into her **broken** and now **renewed** heart. So now I say those words to you **all again**, “I THEREFORE DECLARE TO YOU THE ENTIRE FORGIVENESS OF ALL YOUR SINS, IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.” How awesome is that. God, the **maker and redeemer** of the world, forgives our sins no matter what sin we have committed.

This is a **story** about forgiveness. It is about the **love and gratitude** that forgiveness creates. It is about **Jesus’ power** to forgive sins, to **pronounce** salvation, and it is about the **extravagant acts of love and devotion** that gratitude brings about.

Unexpected happenings. I would be remiss though if I **did not speak** of the flip side of this radical forgiveness which Jesus bestowed upon this woman.

Because Jesus, in this parable, **changed his focus** from her devotion to Simon's neglect. Her extravagance **only magnifies** Simon's lack of hospitality because Jesus' point cuts both ways. The one who has been forgiven much loves from gratitude, but the one who is forgiven little loves little. Possibly could it be that some people do not notice or do not know how to accept the forgiveness? Perhaps they think that they do not need to be forgiven for anything. If we *cannot* and *do not* admit our need for forgiveness, how we will ever know the joy of receiving the blessing?

Forgiveness is a **powerful** word. This parable draws us into the **two fold truth** of this gospel lesson—that Jesus comes to **forgive sin** and that is **only good news** to those of us who recognize the need and accept that forgiveness.

As church we cannot just talk about forgiving—we need to **extend it** to others, we cannot just talk about what Jesus does for us—we need to be **inviting** people to know Him and to know God who sent Him, and it is not just talking about the **grace and love of God**—it is showing others what it is all about. Our God is a **forgiving God** who **loves us** more than we could ever know. It is about **forgiveness extended and forgiveness received.** All thanks be to God. **AMEN**