

Luke 7:36-50
5th Sunday after Pentecost
June 20, 2010

Luke 7:36-50 (New International Version)

Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman

³⁶Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, ³⁸and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."
"Tell me, teacher," he said.

⁴¹"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^[a] and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

⁴³Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."
"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

⁴⁴Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

⁴⁵You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

⁴⁸Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

⁴⁹The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

⁵⁰Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Remember the Three R's of Christianity!

I. Recognize the debt of sin

II. Receive by faith forgiveness

III. Respond in love

Last week summer school began here in Lake Mills and in other cities across our state. Did you ever attend summer school? A lot more children do that today than years before. Although more enrichment classes are now offered, summer school really began as a program

to help struggling students review and remember over the summer months the basics of reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic.

The reason I mention this is because our sermon text is really like a "summer school" class. What I mean by that is this: From Christmas till Pentecost we get to learn again the basics of the most important "R" of all--our Redemption by the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Lest we forget about the basics of what Christianity is all about during these summer months, the gospel lesson for today helps us remember. What is Christianity all about? The basics have to do with three "R's" too:

- I. Recognize the debt of sin,**
- II. Receiving forgiveness,**
- III. Responding with love.**

The account before is rather straight-forward and easy to understand. The Pharisees had already marked Jesus as their enemy. They were looking for ways to entrap him with some trick question so as to discredit him in front of the people. One of the Pharisees named Simon invited Jesus to his home for a meal. That the invitation wasn't offered in love and friendship is quite evident by the fact that Simon did none of the things that a gracious host would do for guests, like washing the feet, greeting with a kiss, and anointing with oil. Perhaps Simon was in on the conspiracy to try and trap Jesus at that dinner rather than make him feel welcome.

Regardless of Simon's motivation, we learn that while Jesus was eating a woman who had a sinful reputation in town heard that Jesus was there. So, she went to Simon's home washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Then she lovingly kissed Jesus' feet and poured expensive perfume on him rather than just the ordinary oil. While she was doing this, Simon was thinking to himself, 'If Jesus were really a prophet, he would know what kind of woman this was and he wouldn't allow her to do that.'

But Jesus was more than just a prophet. He is the almighty Son of God who could see the evil thoughts in Simon's heart. His evil thoughts weren't just about this woman. The evil had to do with Simon's pride of not recognizing that he was a sinner too. Listen again how Jesus taught this basic truth. "'Simon, I have something to tell you.' 'Tell me, teacher,' he said. **41**Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii and the other fifty. **42**Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?' **43**Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.' 'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said. **44**Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. **45**You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. **46**You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. **47**Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.' **48**Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'"

Do we get the point? The woman was willing to do all those things for Jesus because she recognized who he was and she recognized who she was. He was the Savior. She was a sinner who had a great debt that she could never pay--the debt of her sin. Simon recognized neither truth. He didn't see himself for who he was--someone who also had debt that had to be paid. Since he didn't recognize that truth, he didn't recognize the need for Jesus, the only one who could pay the debt.

That's the first important thing to remember about Christianity. It starts with recognizing whom we are by nature and practice--sinners who couldn't pay the debt of sin. And we need that reminder because, like Simon the Pharisee, we so easily and so quickly are ready to judge other people for their sin, but seldom do we recognize just how sinful and wicked we ourselves are. The fact we don't often think about this shows just how blinded we are by our pride. If we don't recognize the truth that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, if we are unwilling to stand with the tax collector and beat our breast crying out "God be merciful to me a sinner," our religion is just as worthless as Simon the Pharisee and we won't see the need for Jesus either.

But dear friends, the fact that we are here today and that we did join together to confess that in countless ways we have sinned against God and do not deserve to be called

God's child is evidence that the Holy Spirit, working through the holy Law of God, has brought us to recognize the truth that we do have a debt of sin that we could not pay.

II.

But Christianity doesn't stop there. It doesn't do any good to recognize the debt of sin if we don't also receive what we need most--the forgiveness of sins. Without forgiveness there is no Christianity, there is no hope, there is no life, just debt and death. So how do we receive forgiveness?

Let's go back to the gospel lesson and learn the lesson again. After Jesus explained to Simon that the sinful woman showed Jesus such love because of her debt of sin had been forgiven, he said, "'47Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.' 48Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' 49The other guests began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' 50Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

The phrase that perhaps catches our attention is what Jesus said about this woman. "Her many sins have been forgiven because she loved much." That translation sounds like she earned forgiveness by her actions. The Greek construction however is clear that her love gave evidence of her forgiveness and did not cause it. Let's put it this way, How do you know it rained on Friday night? Because the sidewalks were wet. The sidewalks didn't cause the rain. The wet sidewalks are the visible evidence that it did rain. That's the point of Jesus' statement. Her love was evidence that she had received forgiveness. And how did she receive it? She received it by faith.

That's the second "R" of the Christian religion. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life are received by faith in Jesus and what he did. And you know what Jesus did. Jesus was the one who paid the debt of our sin. The empty cross and empty tomb proclaim to us the heart of what Christianity is all about--sins are gone for Jesus' sake. That forgiveness of sins is offered freely, completely, with no strings attached. Isn't that the greatest news we could ever hear? "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Do you believe that? By the power of the Holy Spirit working in your heart I pray that you do. By faith alone you receive forgiveness. Having been forgiven you are at peace with God and you will go to heaven when you die!

III.

What shall we do in response to this great news? That takes to the final "R" of Christianity. Christian faith responds in love.

There's not a lot we have to say about that woman whom Christ forgave. She was willing to do what Simon was not. Motivated by that good news of salvation, her faith had to respond. And it did. She loved Jesus.

Do you love Jesus? If so, would you be willing to wash the feet of him who died for you so that you could walk the streets of heaven? Would you be willing to anoint with lavish perfume the head that was crowned with thorns that yours might be crowned with everlasting life? Would you be willing to lavish with kisses the one whose mouth cried out in agony "It is finished," so that you could cry out in heaven the victory song of the redeemed? I believe that we all would! But how? Jesus isn't here with his visible presence. So how can we pour out our love on him like that sinful woman?

Remember what Jesus will say to his believers on Judgment Day when they ask, "Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? Lord when did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The king will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

In our spouse, in our children, in our parents, in our neighbor, in our coworkers, among our relatives, in our friends, in our fellow believers, in those who yet don't know Jesus, and yes, even in our enemy we have opportunity to kiss, to wash, to thank, to love Jesus. For when we show such love to others, we show love to Jesus.

The basic "R's" of Christianity are quite simple and clear. They are recognizing the debt of sin, receiving by faith the forgiveness Jesus won and offers, and responding in love and thankfulness for the gift of salvation. I hope this "summer school" lesson will be a blessing to you in the coming week and throughout the summer. Amen.