

Sunday, March 5, 2023 Sermon: *Simon, Do You See This Woman?*

Scripture: Luke 7:36-39 and Luke 8:1-3 (CEB)

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After he entered the Pharisee's home, he took his place at the table. Meanwhile, a woman from the city, a sinner, discovered that Jesus was dining in the Pharisee's house. She brought perfumed oil in a vase made of alabaster. Standing behind him at his feet and crying, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured the oil on them. When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said to himself, if this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know that she is a sinner.

Jesus traveled through the cities and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom. The Twelve were with him, along with some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses. Among them were Mary Magdalene (from whom seven demons had been thrown out), Joanna (the wife of Herod's servant Chuza), Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

MONDAY 3.6.23 Praying for others **The "Sermon on the Plain" Luke 6:12-38**

Jesus chose the Twelve, then laid out his kingdom's principles. This passage in Luke is similar (but not identical) to "The Sermon on the Mount" (cf. [Matthew 5-7](#)). This was likely a different "version." Scholar William Barclay said the verb "taught" in Matthew 5:2 meant "repeated, habitual action....the Sermon on the Mount is...the essence of all that Jesus continuously...taught his disciples." *

- Like Mary's song in [Luke 1:46-55](#), this sermon offered God's favor and comfort to people we see as unfortunate, and warned those we see as particularly favored. Which parts of his sermon most challenge our culture's wisdom on how to "succeed"? Which of Jesus' promises in this sermon mean the most to you?
- The Scriptures at times reflected our natural human response to people who hurt us (e.g., [Psalm 139:21](#)). Jesus taught, very clearly (if uncomfortably), "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27). How can you recognize and deal with hurt and anger in ways that allow you to pray for, and seek the good of, people who offend or hurt you?

Prayer: King Jesus, rule over my life. Imprint the great principles of your kingdom deeply on my mind and heart and shape me into the person you want me to be. Amen.

* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew—Volume 1 Chapters 1–10 (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 87.

TUESDAY 3.7.23 What your words say about you

A Roman soldier who did what Jesus taught Luke 6:39-7:10

In *The Message* paraphrase, Jesus asked, "Why are you...always saying 'Yes, sir,' and 'That's right, sir,' but never doing a thing I tell you? These....are words to build a life on" (Luke 6:46). * We may see all Roman soldiers as personally hostile to Jesus. But like American troops in Iraq, many just did their job in a strange, hostile land. When a humble Roman officer trusted Jesus to help his valued servant, Jesus willingly did.

- From Francis of Assisi to Pope Francis, from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Mother Teresa, many of Christ's followers have stood with the oppressed. John Wesley began the Methodist movement, in part, because his day's leading church seemed to cater to the powerful and ignore the poor. How are you (and your church) building your life on Jesus' values?
- The Roman centurion sensed, as many do not, that space or time cannot limit God's power the way they do ours. How did he apply his own experience of authority to help him realize the reach of Jesus' power? Which of your experiences help you better grasp and trust God's power?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, your mission reached an amazing range of people and needs. Help me see the world more as you see it and use my gifts to play a part in your mission. Amen.

* Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message Numbered Edition* Hardback. Navpress. Kindle Edition

WEDNESDAY 3.8.23 Who needs your support?

A widow rescued; John the Baptist called to trust Luke 7:11-35

"To lose a child is among the most painful of human experiences.... [As] the woman Jesus met in Nain...walked with her community in sorrow, Jesus had compassion for her." * In prison (Luke 3:19-20), brave John the Baptist faced doubt. "Jesus' reported acts (v. 18) were praiseworthy, but differed from the expected baptizing in fire (Luke 3:16-17)." ** If Jesus was "the one," as John had said, when would he deal with evil Herod? John sent the question directly to Jesus.

- In Jesus' day, losing an only son was an utter disaster for a widow. Only through a male relative could she legally own property or funds. Jesus saved the widow, not just from emotional loss, but likely from poverty and marginalization. What has Jesus saved you from? In what ways can trusting his loving power give you strength and comfort for each day?
- John the Baptist wished Jesus would free him from Herod's prison and wipe out that corrupt line. He saw no signs that Jesus intended such an assault. So, he asked. How does John's story show you that it's okay to ask God any questions you have? How did Jesus' caring answer echo his quote of Isaiah in Luke 4:18-21 to show that he was "the one," but with God's timing and means?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you that whether I'm full of thanks like the widow or filled with questions like John, I always find in you the loving person who truly was "the one." Amen.

* Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, "Portrait" note on "Widow from Nain" in *The CEB Women's Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2016, p. 1300.

** HarperCollins Christian Publishing. *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Kindle Locations 232935-232936). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

THURSDAY 3.9.23 Plant something Receptive and unreceptive hearts Luke 7:36-8:15

The woman who "crashed" Simon's feast had already met Jesus, and he'd forgiven her "many sins" (Luke 7:47). Self-righteous Simon (who felt no need for mercy) was in greater spiritual danger than the grateful woman. Jesus (maybe seeing a farmer hand-tossing seeds) told a parable about four types of soil. It asked his hearers (and us) to ponder what kind of soil heaven's seed finds in our hearts.

- Jesus asked Simon a pointed question: "Do you see this woman?" "Simon only saw sin, but Jesus saw the woman and her lavish display of humility, nurture, generosity and love." * How did Jesus' pointed contrast in verses 41-47 show the spiritual emptiness of Simon's pious front, fed in part by his culture's beliefs in male superiority?
- What kind of soil are you, how receptive to God's transforming grace? Maybe it's better to ask: as you read Jesus' description of the four kinds of soil, which aspects of each type can you identify in yourself? In what ways does Jesus' story challenge you to become more open to God's work in and through you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you keep sowing the seed of your kingdom even though I don't always respond to it. Help me always keep the soil of my heart receptive to you. Amen.

* Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, "Portrait" note on "Woman Who Washed Jesus' Feet" in *The CEB Women's Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2016, p. 1301.

FRIDAY 3.10.23 Wonder at God's greatness Jesus calmed outer and inner storms Luke 8:16-39

The Sea of Galilee sat in a geologic "bowl," and was subject to sudden, severe storms. You can see the kind of boat Jesus was in, found in the Sea of Galilee (www.jesusboat.com/boat.php). Jesus calmed a storm and amazed his disciples. Yet he showed a different, even greater type of power as he calmed the inner demons tormenting a frightening, disturbing man.

- The small wooden boats used in Jesus' day, powered only by a sail or oars, must have seemed terribly inadequate in a violent storm. Do your human resources

seem insufficient to deal with any “storms” you face? How can you open yourself to Jesus' loving power, letting him give you peace as you face those storms?

- The man Jesus met was clearly a danger to himself and others. Yet Jesus didn't try to isolate or avoid him, but to help and restore. What may have looked hopeless at first led to a beautifully healing result. In Bible times, “mental illness” or the influence of evil beings were all called “demon possession.” How did Jesus' focus on healing and helping lead to restoring the man's life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, in this troubled world, storms come in so many different forms and intensities. I thank you that you've promised that I don't ever have to face any of them on my own. Amen.

SATURDAY 3.11.23 Affirm the gift of your body Heaven's power at work on earth Luke 8:40-9:9

Synagogue leaders often opposed Jesus (cf. [Luke 6:6-11](#), [13:10-14](#)). But he didn't hesitate to serve a synagogue leader who begged him to help his gravely ill daughter. He also served a woman who had suffered for 12 years. His power healed her when, hoping he wouldn't notice, she stealthily touched his robe. And he sent his followers out to carry out the same core principle of his kingdom: serve and heal by sharing God's love.

- To the trembling woman, who'd spent 12 years hearing that her health problem meant God had cursed her, Jesus said “Go in peace” (8:48). To Jairus, the pleading, anguished father, he said “Don't be afraid; just keep trusting” (8:50). Are there experiences or attitudes that make it harder for you to trust in Jesus's love and care? In which parts of your life today do you need to accept Jesus' invitation to “just keep trusting”?

Prayer: Compassionate Jesus, help my fearful, skeptical heart to be able to take in, and then to share with others, your calming, healing presence. Amen.