

“Teachers Become Students”

Luke 7:36-8:3

June 13, 2010 ❖ 3rd Sunday after Pentecost ❖ Year C

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Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever hosted a party and an uninvited guest showed up? It is a rather terrible predicament to be in, especially if the guest is rather shady. Then to make matters worse, imagine that one of guests you invited has compassion on the uninvited person making them the center of attention. Well, In the Gospel lesson we heard just a few moments ago, this is precisely the scene we encounter; a serious case of party crashing. You see, Simon was a wise Pharisee; a well educated man who knew the Old Testament and the Hebrew law. He was well kept and mingled with the right kind of people. And so, when Simon hosted a party it was top notch and it was an honor for a person to be invited.

Now, as we already heard, Jesus was an invited guest, and perhaps it may have simply been out of curiosity. After, all Simon didn't really go "all out" to welcome Jesus; no water for his feet, no kiss of peace, no oil for anointing. Sure, Jesus was a requested guest but assumedly not the kind of visitor who received extraordinary hospitality or extravagant love. Well, then enters the scene a sinful woman who by no means would ever have company with Simon and her entry into his house really throws him overboard. This woman was everything Simon despised and to make matters worse her presence could really taint his reputation. And yet, there she was a sinful woman in his house among teachers. And best of all, Jesus, the guest of curiosity, welcomed her company and ultimately turns her into the greatest teachers at the party.

Nevertheless, despite Jesus' to demonstrate the value of the woman and her actions, Simon had his mind made up; He was hosting that party of rabbis and she ruined it. Moreover, from Simon's perspective, what kind of teacher was this Jesus? No good teacher who knew the law would up such a woman as a role model to all the others. To no surprise as a result, Simon's curiosity about Jesus is turned to doubt. As far as Simon was concerned, Jesus should have been recognizing his status, his custom, and his good intentions, but instead he elevated the sinful, rude, and unclean party crasher.

Truth be told though, the sinful unclean woman was REALLY on to something. You see, she didn't hide her true identity and she recognized Jesus for who he was. She saw that her Good works of washing, kissing and anointing didn't make up for her mistakes, but in faith she believed that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God to accomplish and fulfill His promises. This new found teacher knew that Jesus was the one who could rescue her from bondage, not bondage of national or political power, but the bondage of sin.

While the Pharisees at the party are skeptical and upset that they weren't center of attention, the party crashing sinner got out of the way and clung to Jesus in faith! While the Pharisees are upset with the woman for her uncleanliness, Jesus saw her need for forgiveness and how she mustered up enough courage to confess and go to him; the one where salvation could be found. In the end, because the sinner's sins are forgiven and she is empowered to love much and have true peace. What a wonderful lesson, for the Pharisees and us alike- from such a sinful woman.

As we consider this Gospel lesson, there is a lot that we can take and learn. Aren't we like the Pharisees sometimes? Don't we get caught in the trap of believing that status and our accomplishment mean the most? Don't we sometimes find ourselves looking down on those less than us, when in reality we're all the same; at least in God's sight? Don't we from time to time think that we can solve it all- we can look deep inside ourselves to resolve our problems and remedy or sin, if and when we acknowledge it? And don't we think that we can win God's favor by doing, rather than having enough courage to recognize our faults humbling ourselves before him.

At yet, don't we too, like the sinful woman in our text, have those moments when we are so aware of our shortcomings that it is hard to look at our image in the mirror. Those times when we fail as a husband or a father wife or mother. Times when our priorities get confused, and when we spend far too much energy on matters that are unimportant. In those moments, my friends it is the Lord's urging, that presses us forward ... Indeed, when we we look to him and him alone, he heals our past, points us again into the future, and strengthens us for service.

The sinful woman in the Gospel knew this; through his mercy we who repent and trust in Christ are spared punishment and it is by God's grace through the cross and the grave that we receive forgiveness. But, it is only by faith that we receive it... and faith isn't of ourselves! And so, by faith, when we recognize Jesus for who he is and trust that his deliverance is the only way to salvation and rescue from those deep burdens that haunt us, we encounter the same hopeful words as the sinful woman.... Your sins are forgiven, your faith has saved you! Fiends, what we learn from the sinful woman in the Gospel is that, it is only through Jesus that we are forgiven not by status, works, or presumed inward power or ability. Quite frankly, when it comes to our status and relationship with God, by way of self, we are lost-outcasts. But when we work up enough courage to put our pride aside and show Jesus how much we love him with tears of repentance and a willingness serve, we are counted among the redeemed and can then love as he loves.

Yes, Faith grabs hold of the forgiveness, life and salvation that our Lord offers. Each and every day, by way of our baptism, Jesus corners us just as he did Simon in the text, so that we be forgiven and love much like the woman in our text. That what happens each time you come here, within these walls, Jesus comes to you and me through the water and word of Holy Baptism, through absolution, through his body and blood given and shed. The good news for us today is, that because of Jesus, our God forgives us when we freely come to him in faith... Indeed, faith has saved us, and because of that we can go in peace.

Isn't that how we always depart? Go in peace serve the Lord? Thanks be to God. Indeed, we gather in this place to hear the announcement of God's peace and life giving forgiveness. We gather to be fed by the presence of Jesus, we gather to be led into our future by God's word, and what more can we do, but leave a thankful people, forgiven for much, grateful for much, and committed to serve... Friends, your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.