

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
January 30, 2011**

“Love Takes Time” – Week 4

Luke 7:36-50

Our Calling: Be Committed to X!

Hymns: 471 – 481 – *Glorify Thy Name*

Distribution: 452 – 469 – 312

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. When 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, and 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.

When 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.” Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. “Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 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?” Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

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. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.” Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Luke 7:36-50

Between you and me, it was more than a little embarrassing. I might even go so far as to say that what happened around that table was downright shameful. I just can’t be....

I’m sorry. Sometimes I get so worked up telling a story that I forget to introduce myself. My name is Judah, and I’m a card-carrying Pharisee, one of the religious leaders of Israel and proud of it! Well, I used to be. I’m reconsidering that whole way of life, but we’ll get to that. Anyways, I have a very influential friend among the Pharisees by the name of Simon and a while ago he presented me with quite the invitation. He was hosting a dinner party and this wasn’t going to be your ordinary dinner party. Simon had secured an RSVP from Jesus of Nazareth. Well, I couldn’t refuse the opportunity to get up close and personal with this man who everyone was clamoring about. He especially had a lot of us Pharisees up in arms. He continually challenged the rules we made and the teachings we chose to follow. He told the common people who followed him that they should be on their guard against us. You should’ve heard how some of the Pharisees talked about this Jesus behind closed doors. They literally hated him! I’d like to say that I kept an open mind. And that is why I was so excited to get to Simon’s house that night. I was really looking forward to an opportunity to listen to what Jesus had to say and possibly ask him a few questions.

And the dinner really did not disappoint. The food was great, usual for Simon’s house. The conversation had been intriguing. I had learned a lot. I’ll say this for Jesus, he really knew his Old Testament Scriptures. Every question anyone threw his way, he was there with an answer; thought out, well-spoken, respectful. It was just a bunch of guys lounging around the table, talking about the most important things in life. If the night had only gone that far, it would’ve been memorable enough. Of course, the main event had yet to happen, the part that really got me thinking.

As I said, there we were, lounging around the table, the servants were clearing the dishes and cleaning up. All of a sudden, there was an unwelcome guest who kind of appeared out of nowhere and her behavior was a little strange, to say the least. She was standing at Jesus’ feet as he lounged with his feet away from the table and she sure seemed intent on making her presence known. She was sobbing uncontrollably, tears were flowing down her face. They were falling on Jesus’ feet and soaking them. After that went on for a while, she bent down, disgraced herself by letting her hair down in public and began to wash Jesus’ feet with her hair as if it were a towel. With all the dirt removed from his feet, she then began to kiss his feet over and over. Finally, she broke open a bottle of expensive perfume and poured it all over Jesus’ now clean feet. She rubbed it in with her hair and continued with the kisses. Very strange.

Oh, yeah! I forgot to mention who this woman was. We all recognized her, though we didn’t know her. How can I describe her??? Let’s just say that she didn’t have the

greatest reputation in the city. She was certainly out of place at this dinner party. The whole situation was very bizarre. And it created a very awkward feeling for all of us who were guests at the table. Personally, I didn't know what I should do as this was going on. Should I keep talking to Jesus? Should I pretend that I have to go to the men's room? Should I tell the woman to get a hold of herself and leave us alone? Should I laugh that a scene like this was unfolding before my very eyes. It was a very awkward situation, embarrassing even! As I sat there, I had to wonder what Jesus was thinking; and as I observed him, I have to say that his reaction was the strangest part of this story.

As all of this was going on, Jesus, himself, seemed completely unphased. He certainly was not embarrassed. He wasn't even taken aback by what was transpiring. And he didn't make the woman feel bad for what she was doing. He didn't tell her she should stop. He didn't even tell her it was unnecessary. In fact, for Jesus and this woman, what was taking place seemed perfectly normal and acceptable. Jesus even looked happy that this woman would come and create this scene and do this for him.

And all I could think was, "How are they not as embarrassed as I am watching this?" And Simon, our host, must've been thinking something very similar, because all of the sudden Jesus broke the silence with a message for him. He said, **"Simon, I have something to tell you. Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him 500 denarii, and the other 50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both."** Now, the first thing I thought when I heard this story was how unrealistic. One denarius was worth about a day's wages. This moneylender would have to be the most forgiving person alive to cancel either of these outstanding debts. Anyways, that didn't seem to be Jesus' main point, because he focused on the reaction of the borrowers as he continued speaking to Simon. **"Now which of them will love him (the moneylender) more?"** Well, even though I think both of those men would have to be grateful, Simon answered with the only possible answer, **"I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."** Of course, we were all trying to figure out where Jesus was going with this story. He had trapped us Pharisees so often, we had learned to be very guarded with our answers to him. Besides, what did this have to do with the awkward scene we had just witnessed?

Not surprisingly, Jesus connected the dots. The woman was the person with the giant debt. From what we all knew about her, I should've been able to figure that much out. Her actions that night at Simon's house, the weeping, the washing with the hair, the kissing, the perfume, they were all done out of love! This woman, though uneducated, had heard about Jesus. She had heard his message of forgiveness that he had been preaching to all the common people, the message that had gotten us Pharisees so up in arms. She knew what

Jesus would say to her, **"Your sins are forgiven."** She had faith that Jesus was who he said he was. And that is what brought her to that dinner party. There was no doubt. There was no desire for her to question him or test him. There was no need for him to prove that to her that he was the prophesied Messiah. There was just faith. And there was faith working. There was just love. And there was love serving, all of it flowing freely out of a thankful heart. The unconditional love that she received from Jesus was filling her heart and there was no way that it couldn't overflow and come out in her actions. This woman didn't care what Simon, the owner of the house, thought. She didn't care if all of us, the other guests, were embarrassed by her display of affection. She didn't care if people would laugh at her or make fun of her for her seemingly over the top service.

Thanking him was all that was on her mind. All she could think about was Jesus and what she was sure he had given to her; and Jesus' reaction? He didn't ignore her. He didn't treat her as a second class citizen like the rest of us in that city. He accepted what she had to offer. He thanked her. He forgave her sins. He even commended her faith. Think about that? Here he was at a dinner with a bunch of men who devoted their lives to God, and this woman was the one who had her faith pointed out! And I have to say, that really got me thinking. It got me thinking about Jesus. It got me thinking about the whole purpose of God's Word. It got me thinking about myself. Here I was, spending my life trying to figure out what I could do for God, trying to obey what the Bible said, trying to be better than everyone else. Was I missing the point? Here I had Jesus at my table, a man who said powerfully that he was the promised Messiah, a man who did miracles and forgave sins, and what was my reaction? Instead of showering him with my love and soaking in his teaching, I tried to prove him wrong. I questioned him. I doubted him. I know now I missed out. I had the Savior at my table and I was embarrassed that someone would show her thankful love to him. How embarrassing for me? How shameful that I would miss out; that I would not show my love for my Savior when I had the opportunity.

But you know what. I'm thankful for that dinner party. I'm thankful that I had my eyes opened by that forgiven woman. I'm thankful that I found out before all my time was gone. I'm thankful I still have time to love unashamedly. I have time to love Jesus no matter what anyone else thinks. I can't wait to go out into the world and show my Savior the love that he first showed to me! You know, I heard you here at Holy Trinity have been focusing on Christ's love the last few weeks. I heard you have been looking at your time. Can I offer you some advice? Don't make the same mistake I did. Don't be embarrassed to love Christ in unabashed ways! Make your love for him known at work and at school. Don't worry about what others might think if they see you praying in a restaurant! Don't be ashamed to bring up Jesus in your conversations with friends! Don't be afraid to make Christ's love known, whether it be in big or small ways! I know that service to Christ will often make you

stand out. I know that it will open you up to ridicule. But who cares?

Remember, Jesus didn't consider it shameful to come down from his throne in heaven to live humbly under the law for you. He wasn't too proud to come and make his love known for sinners like the one I saw. He wasn't embarrassed to suffer and die on the cross. He wasn't ashamed to make his love known to all people. If the Son of God Almighty was happy to do all of that for us, we certainly can use our time to live for him. Let your thankful service show how much you think of Christ in everything you do. May his love come out in you, unashamed in service to God!