

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, WI

June 23, 24 & 27, 2018

Luke 7:36-50

I'VE COME TO POUR OUT MY PRAISE

Good morning. Is it OK that I am sitting next to you for the first moment or two of the sermon? OK. Thank you.

You know, John always sits right about here in his church. No, actually it is a bit farther back. But John always sits in the same spot, right about there. He is quiet and unassuming. In fact, people who sit near John notice that he doesn't really sing the hymns and sometimes they wonder if he is even worshiping! He IS quiet; almost timid!

But, those who have been sitting near John for years, people like you, have been able to tell that though his mouth is not singing, his heart seems to be! You see, at Christmas when we sing that hymn, "Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angels' word, I come in half belief a pilgrim strangely stirred, but there is room and welcome there for me...but there is room and welcome there for me"...John's eyes are always moist in the corners!

And some even notice the depth of John's faith when we get to verse three! "How should I not have known Isaiah would be there? His prophecies fulfilled with pounding heart I stare? A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me. A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me." THAT verse always gets to John's very German heart and the tears flow down his cheeks! He wipes them quickly...but God's people see...and they love John! And they love his God!

If John were here with us today, he would SO get and resonate with this woman with the alabaster jar of perfume! And he might even be moved to say to you, "I am here today for the same reason as this woman, for the same reason as you. **I HAVE COME TO POUR OUT MY PRAISE! I am AWARE! I am READY! I am FREE!** Pastor will explain what I mean."

1. AWARE

A. Of My Sin

Why did the woman "come to church" that day at the home of Simon the Pharisee? She MUST have known that Simon and some of his guests would judge her: **A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears...**

"Doesn't Jesus know what kind of woman she is?! The woman touching him is a sinner! If he were a prophet, he would know!"

"Simon, two people 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 forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon: "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Why do WE show up at church? Are we rather LIKE John and this sinful woman...very self-aware...knowing our sin? We probably don't have a reputation like this woman did, but someone who knows us well might say, "Man, if Bob went to church Sunday, I am surprised the

church didn't fall down! The nerve of Bob going to church as though he is better than us! But, no worries! God knows what Bob is all about!"

But isn't it what God knows and thinks that truly matters? This woman showed up at Simon's house VERY much aware that she was a sinner, but she was MORE aware of Jesus and WHO he is! "The Messiah! My Savior! He KNOWS...and he will not turn me away."

B. Of My Savior

But, my friends, didn't Isaiah the prophet have it right? When HE found himself in the Presence of the Holy God he cried out, "***Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King!***" Isaiah wasn't about to walk up to Jesus at a dinner in the home of a Pharisee as though he belonged in the Presence of God! Isaiah wanted to blend into the woodwork and avoid the sight line of the holy God!

I wonder if this sinful woman had heard of God's comfort for Isaiah! "***Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.'***"

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us? And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"

What so abruptly changed Isaiah's tune from "Woe to me!" to "Pick me! Pick me!" Well, HIS help came from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth, and it came in the form of atonement or forgiveness of sin! From the very One of whom we might be afraid comes our comfort and our confidence to come weekly into his Presence! Very aware of ourselves...but MORE aware of our Savior!

APPROPRIATION More on that in a minute, but for now just ponder how cool it will be in the pews of heaven--if we actually sit for worship—maybe we'll dance with joy!—to see John sitting next to the sinful woman sitting next to the prophet Isaiah—three once so aware of their sin but OH so aware of their Savior! WHAT will they be singing in heaven as they sit together in the Presence of the Almighty and remember? Might they teach a song to the seraphim: "How cool of God that he allowed Isaiah to see, to share a Savior come to save both you and me. So here we are...in the Presence of our God—his heart, his love—the Joy, the peace of God!"

2. READY

A. To Serve

Did you process the amazing revelation that this woman, very much AWARE of self and of Jesus, came very much READY to serve? She had an alabaster jar of perfumed oil worth about a year's wages. She was obviously ready to honor Jesus as her Messiah, her Savior, by pouring oil on him like the prophets of old. These prophets would mark a man to be God's servant, for God's purpose, with a horn of oil poured on the head so that God's people would honor the servant!

Was this very AWARE woman--now so READY to serve--in her humility NOT so sure about approaching the head of her Messiah? Did the emotion of his place in her life wash over her as she stood by his feet? Did the tears just roll as she stood near her God? Her tears dropped onto his feet; did she notice Simon's neglect of the Messiah?! No water for a guest to wash the dust off of his once-sandaled feet! SHE could wash his feet! SHE could show him love! She would anoint him with oil that those present would honor him too!

Overcome with emotion, she wiped his feet with her hair to clean them and to dry them. And she kissed his feet again and again! Her love for him was rich and deep and pure—different than any love she had ever known **because** his love for her was different than mankind has ever seen apart from this Son of God! **Only** giving, not seeking. **Always** selfless, not selfish. Forgiveness in the darkness, without condition!

B. As I Am Served

A year's wages wasted, I mean, poured out on the feet of the Messiah! What motivated the woman to serve Jesus that way? What did SHE see that Simon did not?

Well, I'd like to think that her spiritual friend was Isaiah and that the Spirit of God had connected the dots:

*HE would be despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
HE would be despised--held him in low esteem.
⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
⁷ ...oppressed & afflicted yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.*

The depth of her insight I cannot say, but this sinful woman believed the Spirit that this man would suffer for her sin—and that in the suffering he would NOT call her out, “Except for YOU. Your sin is too great!” She trusted Jesus to go quietly to his death so that she would go with great celebration into the halls of heaven! **He was worth a year's wages!**

APPROPRIATION Have we ever questioned the wisdom of others in their gifts to God and to his church? “\$500,000 for a pipe organ—really? How does THAT save souls?”...“Three-quarters of a million to jump start a new gym for our school? What wrong with the old one?!”...“A year's worth of wages poured on Jesus's feet? Priceless! An object lesson for God's people to the end of time.

Great service comes from hearts that have been greatly loved—and Jesus accepted the gift!

3. FREE

A. Do You Know the Cost of the Oil?

We can only imagine the guilt and the sin of this woman. (And it is wise not to imagine too much!) But obviously the guilt was big enough to cause the love and the appreciation to flow so richly and FREELY!

I can almost hear the voice of this sister in Christ saying to us softly, “You don't KNOW the cost of this oil. Selling your soul to the devil for a denarius day after day after day. And,

eventually, it was not JUST to eat. The money was good so I stashed it away in an alabaster jar of perfume—“for my future”—or for my own glamour to feel better about me!

“So far was I from my God that when my daily journey would take me past the temple, I would look away lest the LORD notice me—as if temple walls had eyes! But they do--God saw!

“I had ceased to pray to God over the problems my life-choices had caused. He knew them and their cause...and so did I...so why pray? Do you know the cost, the emptiness, the darkness when one walks away from the one true God?

“I no longer wanted the oil. My treasure had become empty to me. And then one day, Jesus found me! I heard him speak as I was walking past the temple—he spoke of forgiveness and of the new life he would give me! The oil no longer had value to me, but I could honor him! And Jesus’ forgiving was honored by this earthly treasure given up for him! Forgiveness is like that. It takes what was bad, and makes it good. It takes one who is NOT worthy and makes us to BE!

“Do you understand the cost of my oil?”

B. Do You Know the Cost of my Praise?

“Jesus did. He understood my debt & he claimed it as his own.

“And so I ask you a different question,” says our sister, do you understand the COST of our praise? Jesus “gets” OUR sin. Jesus claims our debt. And Jesus GOT what we deserved!

Hell is NOT a picnic. The anger of our just God IS terrifying. Crucifixion is beyond our capacity to comprehend without going through it ourselves—but thanks be to God we don’t have to go through it—any of it! Because Jesus did! The *cost* of our praise was great so that it flows so easily from our lips! The Messiah who did not shrink from being our friend; he did not shrink from carrying our burden; he did not flinch at the thought of bringing us home to his Father in heaven!

Do you KNOW the source of your praise for Jesus, your friend? From his heart to yours! Tears of joy! Actions from love! Sacrifice of earthly treasure because only heaven’s matter!

CONCLUSION That’s why John sits there each week! Quiet and unassuming. Almost lost in the fabric of the congregation... but NOT lost in the sight line of his God! John and God are VERY aware of each other. John and God are poised and READY to serve each in love. And John and God know the costs—exactly how Jesus balanced the books! That brings John’s tears at Christmas and causes his heart to sing week after week!

“Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angels’ word, I come in half belief a pilgrim strangely stirred, but there is room and welcome there for me...” Amen.

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