

“How deep is the Father’s Love?”

June 16, 2013

Luke 7:36-8:3

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. 37 And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. 38 She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner." 40 Jesus spoke up and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Teacher," he replied, "speak." 41 "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt." And Jesus said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." 48 Then he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

1 Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, 2 as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

Today is Father’s Day; a day where we acknowledge and remember all our Fathers have done for each of us. We honor and remember them for their love of us, their caring of us as we were (or are still) growing up, the little things they have done to help make us into the people we are today. It is easy to see why God in the image of Father is familiar and comforting to many of us who have been blessed to be surrounded by wonderful men teaching us through their earthly love how amazing our God’s love is.

I know hearing our scripture today that it was probably not the expected scripture for Father’s Day. A woman is weeping at Jesus’ feet, crying tears, begging silently for forgiveness of her sins, debts being owed and forgiven, rebuking of those present for not understanding forgiveness and love and then Jesus again traveling and gathering disciples about him.

The scripture of a woman anointing Jesus is told in some variation in all the gospels and should be one we recognize even if we are not always clear on the specific details. Matthew, Mark, and John have the Woman pouring oil on Jesus from an Alabaster Jar and the Disciples commenting on the waste of such oil because it could have been sold to benefit the poor and Jesus rebuking them saying the Woman is preparing him for burial and they will always have the poor but will not always have him. This story is found towards the

end of each of these Gospels and puts the location in and around Bethany and the timing of this around the end of Jesus' ministry.

Then we have the story from today in the Gospel of Luke. Again a woman is anointing Jesus but this time the anointing is a sign of great love and respect done radically. It is also not an anointing of the head but rather of the feet. You see, in ancient Israel people wore sandals or went barefoot, a common sign of hospitality was to provide a place for or have a servant to bathe the dust off of a person's feet as they enter your home. The woman does not just bathe Jesus' feet she anoints them with ointment which would be costly out of an alabaster jar which was a much valued stone at that time.

This is some radical hospitality by someone who does not even live in the home where Jesus is eating. That however is not the only radical bit of this scripture. She is also a sinner, which to us might not seem such a big deal as we all self-acknowledge that we are sinners. In the time of this scripture to be a known sinner was the same as being a leper, you were unclean, dirty, not to be around those who were clean. Yet, we experience and see how Jesus allows her in his presence and at the same time allows her to be near him and forgives all her wrongdoing.

Forgiveness is a big part of this scripture. Not just a little bit of forgiveness but a lot of forgiveness. Jesus explains this by telling Simon, whose house he was visiting, the others, and ultimately us this in verse 47 "...Her sins which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little."

As I have reflected on today I knew there are many ways to take our scripture, many ways to look at it with new eyes but forgiveness is what we are constantly doing, what parents must constantly practice and what our Heavenly Father is constantly giving to us as we call ourselves Children of God.

We might not be sinners in the same degree as the woman who anoints Jesus feet but we all can probably remember a time when we had to tell one of our parents or guardians something we had done that they would not be entirely thrilled about. You know that feeling of dread and anticipation. The knowledge we had of some sort of lecture that was to ensue. How we messed up how we should have done something differently to avoid said consequence. We all know the one I am talking about, that you just have to take because you know you messed up and deserve it but still dread hearing it.

I will never forget the time I got my first ticket. I was almost done with college getting ready to move home. I had helped a friend move to Columbus the night before and had gotten up early to make my 11-o-clock class in Athens. I just put my car on cruise control and was zipping along. It was a foggy morning not many cars yet on the road and I must have missed the speed limit change but suddenly flashing lights and a ticket later I had to call my parents to tell them the wonderful news of my ticket that was for about 15 miles over the speed limit. I called my parents house and thought in my head oh great here it comes. My Dad answered the phone and I just said, "Dad I got a ticket." His response was "Happens to everyone. It is ok."

"It is ok." In that simple response from my earthly father I got reconciliation and forgiveness for my wrongdoing. How much greater is our God's continuing examples of this kind of forgiveness? We sin, every day in countless ways we try to be good and faithful to our Father God whom we love and adore but we mess

up and make mistakes and still God's all encompassing love forgives us. We are God's and God forgives us no matter how many times we sin, how many ways, or to what degree. We are forgiven, it is ok, and our Father's love runs deep indeed.