

Luke 7:36-8:3

As a baby, Jesus would have been kissed, probably many times, by His mother, Mary. But as an adult, there are only two people who ever kissed Him...that we're told of. One of these two is the woman from our text. She came to the house of Simon the Pharisee, stood in humility behind Jesus as He was eating, and she kissed His feet as she anointed them with expensive perfume. The other time Jesus was kissed was late at night in the Garden of Gethsemane. Leading a band of soldiers, Judas boldly stepped up to Jesus and kissed Him on the cheek.

That's not a very good track record--to be kissed by the likes of these two individuals. Judas was a traitor, a disgrace. And this woman was a despicable public sinner, shunned by all decent citizens. And yet, while these two were the worst of the worst, one of them caused the angels in heaven to sing for joy by repenting and believing the word of mercy spoken to her.

I, for one, am glad that our text does not tell us what this woman's public sin was. We could take a guess, but if we do we miss the point. She could be any one of us, and in fact, she is all of us. We cannot judge this woman, as Simon did, by saying to ourselves, "Who she is, and what she has done is worse than who I am, and what I have done." We're not told what her sin was so that we can identify with her instead of distancing ourselves from her.

There were thousands of houses scattered throughout the city, but this woman sought out only one--the house where she learned Jesus was eating. She had heard of Jesus. Probably heard Him teach. Maybe even had a brief moment with Him where she confessed her sin and received His word of pardon. And now on this day she does the same thing that you are doing today--she comes to where Jesus is. She comes with her tears of repentance. She comes in humility. She comes with her thank offering. She comes for mercy.

You are here in the house of Simon the Pharisee, so to speak, just as she was. If you have come like this woman did, then you are richly blessed to have the proper attitude. And you will leave as she did, with God's eternal gifts that no one can take from you. But I suppose, whether here or in other houses of Simon the Pharisee this morning, there are sinners who have come for all the wrong reasons. They come only because it's Father's Day. They come so as not to be missed. They come because they feel they have to. It was that way also in our text. Others, besides this woman, were eating with Jesus in Simon's house that day. But they gave little, if any, respect to Jesus. They had little regard for Him. They did not come to receive anything from Him.

What is fascinating about Simon's house is that you get exactly what you expect to get. Simon and his guests got nothing from Jesus that day because they came expecting nothing. But this woman got everything because she came to receive mercy and forgiveness. Those who come to Simon's house today expecting little, will receive little. But if you are like this woman, and you prepare yourself to listen--hungering for God's gracious words to you--coming to His Supper thirsting for your Savior, you will not leave disappointed. You will leave as she did--filled and satisfied. And you are the ones who will continue to come back to Simon's house for more week after week.

It's because Jesus is here. "*Who is this, who even forgives sins?*" the guests said among themselves. This may be Simon's house, a house built by human hands, but the One who forgives sins is here. And if you have come because you, like this woman, are a sinner, then you are in the right place.

“He who is forgiven little, loves little,” says Jesus. Yet this woman who was forgiven much, loved Jesus much in return. What Jesus is saying is this--our offerings give us away. If we are stingy with what we give to the Lord, it's because we are receiving little from Him. But if we are coming to Simon's house expecting to receive much, then we are receiving much from Jesus, and our offerings to Him in return will reflect it. Simon gave nothing to Jesus. No water for His feet, no customary greeting as He entered the house, no oil for His head. Simon gave nothing to Jesus because he expected nothing from Jesus. But this woman came with expensive perfume. She brought her offering for Jesus because she knew that from Him she would receive much.

There have been, and always will be, those who say that this woman received much from Jesus because she loved Him with much. But Jesus sets the record straight. *“Your faith,”* He told her, not ‘your love,’ but *“your faith has saved you...go in peace.”* These words are also for you. It doesn't matter what you have brought here for Jesus today. The woman received forgiveness and mercy not because of what she did for Jesus, but because Jesus is forgiving and merciful. And that's why Jesus only wants one thing from you--your sins. He went to the cross for you, not to hear you sing His praises, but because He loves you. He died for you, not to receive your offerings in return, but because you need a Savior. Here in Simon's house today, Jesus reclines at His Table, and as you, the sinful woman, come in humility, come to receive, you receive much. Everything Jesus won on the cross for you is given to you here in Simon's house. *“Your sins are forgiven,”* He says to you, just as He said to the woman. *“Your faith has saved you...go in peace.”*

There was much love in Simon's house that day when Jesus came there. Love from the sinful woman for Jesus, but mostly love from Jesus both for the woman, and even for those who cared little for Him. That is still true today. Here in Simon's house there is always much love being given. Love from you toward Jesus and your neighbor. But most of all, love from Jesus for you. His great love for you more than covers over your lack of love for Him. His great offering for you on the cross is more than enough to suffice for what we lack in our offerings to Him.

Jesus loved the sinful woman even before she loved Him in return. He forgave her before she poured out her perfume and kisses on His feet. For you, too, my fellow sinners, Jesus does not count the money in your envelope and love you only that much in return. He does not count the sins you have done and forgive them only as much as you show love back to Him. Whether you come here expecting much or little, He is here with the same word for each one of you... *“You are forgiven...go in peace.”* Whether you come to His Table expecting little or much, the same Lord is given here in bread and wine to all. We are stingy with our love, but not Jesus. He loves you unconditionally. He forgives you, all of you, no matter what...no strings attached.

So sing His praises. Give Him your offering. Worship Him with your kisses. Love Him and your neighbor. But do all these things as the woman did. Not to make Him love you and forgive you, but to thank Him because He already does. Amen.