

Sunday 5 July 2020

Good Morning all.

Today we would be having Holy Communion. I would ask you to celebrate it in your own homes and to remember that “*The blood of Jesus was shed for you and that His body was broken for you for the forgiveness of your sins*”.

Jesus' forgiveness.

Psalm 77; 1-2, 11-15

Luke 7:36-50

Jesus had been preaching in Galilee. The common people had received Him gladly. He had healed a leper, a paralytic and others. He had cast out demons, raised a widow's son from the dead.

The Pharisees had become disenchanted with Jesus. He had not pandered to the crowd and had said things that ruffled the Pharisee's feathers. They didn't like Him but did not know what to do with Him. Do they ignore Him or do they oppose Him.

This morning we see a woman who comes to Jesus and falls on her knees to worship Him. We are never told what her name is. There is no record of her saying anything.

Jesus is invited for a meal at the house of Simon who was a Pharisee. What prompted the invitation is not known. It does not seem that Simon believed in Jesus or loved Him, because he did not extend to Him the normal courtesies. As soon as Jesus entered the house he should have greeted Him with a kiss, washed His feet and anointed His head with oil. The lack of these might show an underlying animosity. Simon treated Jesus with cool contempt. He carefully avoided the customs that would have made Jesus feel welcome.

Then a woman entered the room. She is not the kind of woman you would want in your house -let alone at a dinner party. She was a prostitute, uninvited and unwanted. She must have heard that Jesus was at Simon's house and so decided that she would go to see Him there.

In sharp contrast to Simon, she enters the room to find Jesus who she had obviously heard was the friend of sinners. As she enters and sees Him all the other people become totally unimportant to her. She stood behind Him crying; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and then wiped them with her hair. She kissed His feet and anointed them with the perfume she had brought. She was probably very embarrassed and had nothing to dry His feet with so she used her hair.

As the fragrance of the perfume fills the room anyone who was not aware of her actions becomes so. All eyes are on Jesus -what will He do? He doesn't appear to be

either embarrassed or upset by her extravagant display of love and devotion. Her devotion came at great personal cost. It cost her the purchase of the perfume, the humility of the kiss, the washing and drying of His feet with her hair. Maybe the greatest cost was the scorn and rejection of the self righteous. The price she paid may have been high, but it was worth it.

Simon's reaction we find in verse 39 says a lot about him. "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." Simon was busy passing judgement. His reasoning went something like this.

If Jesus were a prophet, He would know people's characters

If Jesus knew this woman was a sinner, He would have nothing to do with her.

If Jesus were a true teacher He would not allow her to touch him in this way. Simon feels its a very improper action.

The conclusion Simon arrived at was entirely wrong. Since Jesus did not shun the women, he did know her character, and thus Jesus was not a prophet at all. Jesus turns to Simon and says, "Simon I have something to tell you." What He has to say is as important as it was then today still.

1. Just like the two men in the story every one is spiritually in debt.

So he says "Tell me teacher" There was a certain money lender who had two men owing him money. One owed 500 denari and the other 50 denari. When they could not pay him back he freely forgave them both. A denari was equal to about a days wage; 50 denari equalled nearly two months wages while 500 was 22 months of wages. These were very big amounts to have to repay and there was no way that either man would be able to repay them considering that the average wages were barley sufficient to live on. Jesus then poses the question to Simon - "Now which one would love him more."

Simon may have hesitated to answer the question. Yet there was only one correct answer and even Simon could see it as he says "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled." The one who was forgiven ten times as much would have the greater gratitude. The higher the debt the more forgiveness from the lender. Jesus replies "You have judged correctly." Some people that we would not touch with a ten foot pole, if they truly met Christ, would put us to shame with their display of love and devotion to Jesus. They will love more because they have forgiven more.

2. Just like the characters in the story we can never repay the debt.

The good news is that forgiveness is available to all. But forgiveness is not free it always costs someone something. It cost the lender 550 Denari. When God said "I forgive you." It cost Him the life of His son Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary. The sin debt had to be paid. Jesus paid the debt so that you would not have to. The

conclusion is clear to Simon- the “high class” sinner had the same problem as the “low class” prostitute. The woman owed the greater debt, but they both owed a debt they could not pay. How much do we owe in debt to Jesus.

3. Those who come to Jesus He will not turn away.

Jesus now does something interesting. He turns and faces the women giving her his full attention and acceptance as he continues to talk to Simon the Pharisee. During the meal Jesus' back had been to the women who was kissing and anointing His feet. Simon had turned his back on the women because of who she was and now Jesus uses her as an example to show Simon who he really is. “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 she entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.” (Verses 44-46) Jesus tells Simon that this woman has done for him that which Simon had refused to do. He had purposely omitted the courtesies accorded an honoured guest.

What the women does for Jesus was not merely a social nicety; they were acts of repentance and worship. She came to Jesus in faith expecting to be forgiven and she was not disappointed. She wept in repentance. I believe she could sense Jesus' forgiveness. We are so grateful when we feel forgiven and are out of debt, free of guilt and free of shame.

When God says: “I forgive you your sin,” Then it cost Him something because before forgiveness there had to be the agony of Gethsemane. Before forgiveness there had to be death on the cross, the burial and the resurrection. The price had to be paid. It has now been paid in full for all.

4. Those who come to Jesus in repentance and faith will be forgiven.

Jesus tells Simon in verse 47 “Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.” In verse 48 Jesus said the words she so badly wanted to hear, “Your sins are forgiven”, in so doing He openly says that all her past sins were forgiven. The most wonderful part of this is what was true then is still true today. Jesus forgives all those who come to Him in faith and repentance.

Those who heard were amazed. Their reaction was “Who is this who even forgives sins.” They realised that Jesus was making a claim that no man could rightfully make- that is unless He was God.

Jesus made it clear in verse 50, what had brought about her salvation when He said “Your Faith has saved you. Go in peace.” It was her faith. What was it that she believed in by faith. She believed that if she came to Jesus as a repentant sinner, that

Jesus would not send her away. He could and would save her.

Tony Campolo tells the story of where he was busy teaching a class on the New Testament. A Jewish student stood up and said that Jesus “never met a prostitute.” I jumped at the opening; here was my chance, I thought. I could show the guy a thing or two about Jesus and about the New Testament. “Yes, He did.” I responded. “I’ll show in my Bible where -” The young man interrupted me. “You didn’t hear me Doctor. I said Jesus never met a prostitute.” Once again I protested. Once again I reached for my New Testament. I started to leaf through the pages of my Bible searching for those passages which showed Jesus forgiving the “fallen women.” I searched for the place where he gave the woman at the well a chance of spiritual renewal. Once again my Jewish student spoke out, this time with a touch of anger in his raised voice. “You are not listening to me, Doctor. You aren’t listening to what I am saying. I am saying that Jesus never met a prostitute. Do you think that when He looked Mary Magdalene he saw a prostitute? Do you think He saw a whore when He looked at women like her? Doctor, listen Jesus never met a prostitute.”

When Jesus looked at such women He didn’t see them as they were. He saw them as they could be. To Jesus, sin has always been the ugly which hides the the true beauty underneath. It is filth that needs to be stripped away to reveal the image of God that has been clouded. When we humble ourselves at the feet of Jesus, when we acknowledge our sin and emptiness, He is ready to forgive us our wrong doings.

This morning, what do you think Jesus sees when He looks at you? Do you really think He sees only where you have been and what you have done? No. He does see that, but what He really looks at is the beauty of your soul and the potential that lies within. He looks at your heart and waits for you to approach Him in humbleness for Him to remove the sinfulness and emptiness from your life.

Robert Mc Cormack was a sergeant in WW1. He nearly lost his life while saving Major Henry Parkin. Luckily both men survived the war. From that day on until he died 25 years later, every April Parkin would write a letter of gratitude to Mc Cormack. The last letter he wrote said the following; “Dear Bob, I want to express to you my appreciation for another year of life which I would not have enjoyed had it not been for you and the price you were willing to pay to save my life. I want you to know I am grateful.”

When last did we say that to God for the death of Jesus upon the cross. If it was not for the great sacrifice we would not have an eternal life – the only life there is. When was the last time you thanked God for Jesus. Maybe today is the correct time to go on your knees and thank God.

Today, God's forgiveness is available. He offers it to you through Jesus Christ His Son. The price has been paid and he invites you to come. Will you come?

Amen

