

**Luke 7:36-50**June 24, 2007 – 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**Repentant Faith Saves**✠ **Sorrowing over sin (vv.36-39)**✠ **Peaceful in forgiven love (vv.40-50)**

In the name of Jesus, Friend of sinners, dearly redeemed believers:

Did you ever notice how sometimes your eyes just believe whatever they want? Nearing home, my bicycle speedometer read: “15.5.” “That’s great!” I thought. “I’ll take the long way around and get a sixteen-mile-ride when I thought it would barely be fourteen.” But the next time I looked the number read “14.4.” “How could the miles be going down?” my heat addled brain demanded. Then I realized what I already knew, but did not want to believe. The big number was miles per hour – which goes down at slower speeds. The smaller odometer number read less than fourteen miles.

Our minds and hearts play tricks on us even when the evidence is clearly in sight. That’s how it was for a self-righteous Pharisee who invited Jesus to dinner. He was about to get God’s lesson of the ages, the same thing David learned in our Old Testament Lesson (2 Samuel 11:26 – 12:15), and which Paul had to review quite pointedly for Peter in today’s Second Lesson (Galatians 2:11-21). **Repentant Faith Saves**, but we could never see this for ourselves because first it requires humble honesty...

✠ **Sorrowing over sin (vv.36-39)**

It’s easy to see why the Pharisee thought so highly of himself. Simon was a member of the religious elite, the most righteous of the righteous. People looked up to Pharisees more than our American idols. They could do no wrong especially in their own eyes. What a good work Simon the Pharisee must be doing to invite a poor but popular rabbi over for dinner. Since Jesus seemed to be a man of God, maybe God would be extra pleased with Simon. Couldn’t hurt, could it?

It’s hard to imagine how the woman got in there. Remember that everywhere Jesus went, a crowd followed Him. Some were disciples and some were looked down upon “sinners” like this woman. Simon was not impressed by her expensive purchase of perfume to pour on Jesus’ feet. All her crying and carrying on was more than a little disconcerting at his house. In a way Simon seemed embarrassed for Jesus who was supposed to be a rising prophet. Things got tense for Simon the Pharisee because Jesus didn’t seem to have a clue. Not out loud but inside Simon’s hollow head and self-righteous heart the thought kept bouncing around: *“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.”*

We would all like to think we could never be so coldhearted. But why then do we need to keep singing in our liturgy that prayer of David from Psalm 51? *“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”* (Psalm 51:10 KJV) Why did David need to pray that prayer? Didn’t he realize he was a murderer? Besides committing adultery with Bathsheba, he murdered her husband Uriah the Hittite and his fellow soldiers by ordering their suicide attack. David must have tried for several weeks or months to cover up his sin. Yet deep inside, he could not hide even from himself. In today’s penitential psalm he finally admitted the physical and spiritual anguish tearing up his sin-sick soul: *“When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.”* (Psalm 32:3f NIV) Sin slips under your skin like a sharp sliver. Ignore it, and infection will finally kill you.

Every time we look at another human being as less deserving than we are, we need to relearn what David finally discovered from Nathan, his pastor, what Simon the Pharisee was about to learn from Jesus the Prophet of the Lord. God wants us to see clearly how much we need healthy **Sorrowing over sin**.

Some run scared of this, but through His Apostle Paul the Lord says: ***“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”*** (2 Corinthians 7:10 NIV) You might try to avoid sorrow over sin like the realization your bike ride wasn’t long enough, or your efforts at being a Good Samaritan did not turn out well, that your marriage is sick and your family dysfunctional. Doesn’t admitting a problem mean defeat? Not at all! Listen again: ***“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”*** There’s ***“no regret”*** **Sorrowing over sin** because **Repentant Faith Saves**, leaving you calm and...

### ✠ **Peaceful in forgiven love (vv.40-50)**

Don’t you love how Jesus reads his mind, but Simon doesn’t seem to notice? He said those bad things about the sinful woman and Jesus in his head. But Jesus does not suffer from sweat in His eyes or need for bifocals. He goes right to the lesson of the day and leads Simon along to a healthy spot for his soul. Somehow Jesus, the Master Teacher, could always come up with an emotional word-picture to capture the mind and heart. And here’s a technique I first learned from a janitor many years before I realized Jesus liked to do this. Old Ed would say, “Mark, I’m going to tell you something,” then wait until I looked and listened. Jesus said, ***“Simon, I have something to tell you.”*** But this was not about repairing doors, beds and windows. Jesus was healing Simon way down deep in his soul.

***“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.

Jesus’ lesson sticks in our minds without knowing the value of a denarius or adjusting for inflation. His point is clear. Two men both owed more than they could repay, but the one with the bigger debt would obviously be far more appreciative than the barely borrowed one. Maybe you can see a puzzled look on Simon’s face. “What’s this about?” wouldn’t he wonder? You don’t have to wait long for Jesus’ punch line. Simon, look at this woman you condemned in your heart. All the hospitality and warm greetings for me you left out, Simon. The evidence is right in front of you, but you don’t realize the debt you owe to God,. She does. In fact, she sees a far bigger debt of sin has been forgiven her and that’s why she loves so much. Her great love shows faith in forgiveness full and free.

Some churches and theologians have tried to rip this passage out of context and say, “See, that proves you need works to be saved.” They hear Jesus say, ***“Her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much.”*** But they ignore the rest of what Jesus said: ***“He who has been forgiven little loves little.”*** That’s evidence, not cause. For example, what do we mean by saying, “It rained because the sidewalk is wet”? Were the clouds talking it over? “Hey, Cumulo!” “Yea, Nimbus?” “Look the sidewalk is wet. Come on! Let’s rain!” Of course not! Everyone knows that the wet sidewalk is evidence of rain, not the cause of it. Her deep love is evidence of forgiveness, not the cause of it. Listen to Jesus: ***“Your sins have been forgiven.”*** Not your love, but, ***“your faith has saved you; go in peace.”***

Sadly, it’s true. Christians steal, cheat, gossip, commit adultery and murder like David – if not in deed, at least in thought. Bible-believing pastors these days are glad to find a couple that did not live together before they were married. One Christian girl heard her friends making fun of another for the purity of her life and bluntly told them, “You know, I’m a virgin too.” They were shocked. But our hearts slip into self-righteousness like tires in a rutted road. We need to keep praying, ***“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”*** Then brace yourself. It’s not a pretty sight to see your sins and find yourself sorrowing over them. But **Repentant Faith Saves**. That healthy **Sorrowing over sin** God turns into a heart and life that is **Peaceful in forgiven love**. As Jesus says to us along with this sinful woman: ***“Your sins have been forgiven....Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*** And that’s better than a sliver pulled or a full bike ride. That’s peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now let your love show for your Savior. And don’t worry what anyone thinks. “Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me....” (CW 385:1) That’s all that really counts. Amen.