

#17  
March 11, 2018  
Fourth Sunday of Lent

Life Giving Table.

**Food from Table or Food from Jesus?**

Luke 7:36-50

<sup>36</sup> One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to eat with him. After he entered the Pharisee's home, he took his place at the table. <sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, a woman from the city, a sinner, discovered that Jesus was dining in the Pharisee's house. She brought perfumed oil in a vase made of alabaster. <sup>38</sup> Standing behind him at his feet and crying, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured the oil on them. <sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know that she is a sinner.

<sup>40</sup> Jesus replied, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Teacher, speak," he said.

<sup>41</sup> "A certain lender had two debtors. One owed enough money to pay five hundred people for a day's work. <sup>42</sup> The other owed enough money for fifty. <sup>43</sup> When they couldn't pay, the lender forgave the debts of them both. Which of them will love him more?"

<sup>43</sup> Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the largest debt canceled."

Jesus said, "You have judged correctly."

<sup>44</sup> Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn't give me water for my feet, but she wet my feet with tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You didn't greet me with a kiss, but she hasn't stopped kissing my feet since I came in. <sup>46</sup> You didn't anoint my head with oil, but she has poured perfumed oil on my feet. <sup>47</sup> This is why I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven; so she has shown great love. The one who is forgiven little loves little."

<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

<sup>49</sup> The other table guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this person that even forgives sins?"

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

We are in the fourth Sunday of Lent. If I am right, only two Sundays are left before Easter. It is just on the other side of the hill and we will soon be meeting the risen Jesus. But before that we need to go through the preparation and even death. So what

did we learn during the Lent? Have we been challenged? Are we more spiritually aware of our deepest hunger?

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Our theme is Life giving table. I encouraged you. Maybe I made you question. Maybe you totally disagreed with me. That is good. I praise you for you are not neutral. I love this congregation because it is a church filled with life and love. I love the people because they have a living faith. I love the people of this church because you give time and your gifts. You are seeking to follow God deeper. I love the you because they are encouraging and helping me. I am certain we will grow and mature, I am certain God's Spirit is in you all and will help us to be better servants for His kingdom in this church.

When we come to the table, to the Lord 's Table to which God invites, are you hunger for bread and juice? Do you hunger for forgiveness? Do you hunger for acceptance, eternal life, salvation, Jesus in your soul? What do you need from the Lord 's Table? We do eat. We eat the bread and we drink a sip of juice. I encourage you to think every day about the hunger we all feel in our soul. Sadly most of us only feel the physical hunger. We do not partake in Holy Communion every day, but we do need God's presence, God's guidance and His living Word for every day.

I am still in progress to get that in place in my own household. But the awareness, willingness and the attempts are, for sure, in place. I believe it is God's work in all of us to be on a journey to be walking, not toward Him, but with Him. Let's bring Jesus at our tables. Let us come with the awareness He is present and He is willing to give us more than just a full stomach, but a life of fullness. Maybe it all starts at the table and we it should continue?

**Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire  
and lighten with celestial fire**

Today is a challenging story. It is for me. You know it is not easy to preach for me. Some days are more difficult than on other days. This Sunday is harder. It is not easy to stay faithful to what the Scripture is saying. It is not easy to bring afresh the old stories. It is not easy not to be boring and not to become just an entertainer. It is not easy to have a delicate balance between humor and very serious.

Today's passage does not lend itself easily to find an application to today's life. From the very beginning, I knew there is nothing in me what I would be able to give. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit. So, Holy Spirit, you are very welcome into my heart and words. I hope we all will welcome the Holy Spirit during the time of the interpreting Scripture.

**Wacky Wednesday**

This lesson in Luke's gospel starts I think of as a Wacky Wednesday. I am sure you all know the story. This time, instead of a tax collector like last week, it is a Pharisee who invited Jesus to eat with him. It is very different from last Sunday story, Jesus did not have to break in to invade his home, like he did with Zacchaeus. This is different.

A Pharisee is the person who does all right things. Right, but we have to praise this guy. He truly lived in a better way. He invited Jesus to eat with him. He is doubtless good and honest, as well as curious and open-minded enough to invite Jesus to dinner.

In those times large public dinners were customary. Oftentimes, these dinners between religious leaders and authorities were public. It was open. Probably it was set outside in the courtyard. This Pharisee invited the traveling rabbi for a conversation. I imagine he wanted to discuss some deep Scriptural truth. He might have thought it would be an interesting debate. After all, this Rabbi, named Jesus, is becoming more and more famous and is different from all other rabbis.

After he entered the home, Jesus took his place at the table. I would give just one more historical detail to you.

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This was the Jewish tradition when eating. So Jesus is reclined at a low table, propping himself up on his left elbow, eating with his right hand. His body was stretched out, his feet exposed. It was thought to be a mark of elegance to eat while reclining.

**It** Looks like everything is going well. But Wacky Wednesday is not getting any better. Things are not in place: Meanwhile, a woman from the city – a sinner – comes uninvited, with different agenda

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Was she hungry for a food? Was she looking for a place at the table? Was she longing for deep theological discussion and for learning more about Laws? Why did she come to Jesus? She did not say a word.

She brought perfumed oil and herself to the feet of Jesus. All she had. Standing behind him at his feet and weeping. The Greek word is ***klaio***. It means to sob, to wail out loud.

Imagine the scene. Public, well acknowledged elite, sitting, reclining at the tables, thinking to get some good discussions and good food... and this woman sobbing, loud crying, crying so loud, so much, washing Jesus feet with tears and wiping them with her hair... Aren't women supposed to cover their hair? Aren't women supposed not to touch, let alone, kiss other man?

It was customary to kiss a man's hand, cheek, or the edge of his garment. But this woman kissed his dirt-covered, stone-bruised *feet*... I can understand this woman. When you need Jesus, when you need God, more than anything else, when the need is so big, when you are on the edge of life and death, when the heart cries out for Savior... you find yourself weeping and at the feet of Jesus.

### **Was Jesus embarrassed?**

Jesus. I am certain, could easily have been embarrassed. Think of the woman. She is a sinner with one kind of reputation. Here she is, in public, kissing a man's feet. I would suspect he could nicely push her away or ask her to wait. Maybe he could quietly forgive her sin. Just finish this embarrassment as fast as you can. By all means do not make it the center of all the more important things.

### **Jesus is a mind reader**

Thoughts are dangerous. We think if we just think quietly, nobody hears, nobody knows. Wrong. "When the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw what was happening, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. He would know that she is a sinner".

Jesus heard it.

Notice, that the first time in the text we have this Pharisee name. Simon. Yes, Jesus has something to say to Simon. No longer a Pharisee. No longer a host.

"Simon, I have something to say to you."

Simon answered: "Speak Teacher". Jesus is a great teacher. He loves to teach. So Jesus gives him a lesson. We get what we ask for.

### **Jesus turned to the woman and spoke to Simon.**

The words that stand out for me for today are these: "Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon. That is a strange way to talk to somebody.

Jesus said: "DO YOU SEE THIS WOMAN?" What a bad question. Who did not see this woman? She was sobbing, doing crazy, inappropriate things. Everybody saw her. And, yes, Simon saw her very well. That's why he was annoyed and even disappointed with Jesus. Yes, he saw her. Simon saw her as a woman, a sinner, that kind of woman, he saw her on her outside, he saw her by her looks.

Simon immediately is very judgmental. Have you had people look at you noticing like what you have done, who you were, whom you lived with. We judge immediately. That's what we are good at.

### **The rebuke is rebuked.**

Something even more wacky happened. Suddenly the party crashed. Suddenly the bad woman becomes as an example and the good Pharisees is put down.

This woman, and not Simon, was the host, who offers Jesus the ironically appropriate hospitality. Simon neglected Jesus to the point of an insult. He does not know how to welcome Jesus into his home.

In the end, Simon the rebuker is rebuked, while the rebuked woman is named the perfect hostess and is forgiven her sins even though she seems never to have confessed them, at least not in words.

### **Come to the life giving table**

Simon did not think he needed Jesus as Messiah or Savior; he was just interested in what he'd say. Thus his hospitality, such as it is, is really all about Simon and Simon's interests.

The woman, needed a Savior. Simon sat at the table to eat and to discuss. She came to the table to have life. You are invited to this table to have life. Leave the table with Jesus words: "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."