

The Love of Forgiveness

11. a. Trinity, 23.8.2020. pastor Leif G. Jensen

Luke 7:36-50 *The Gospel is read during the sermon*

Grace be with you, and peace from God our Father and from Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Why invite a guest? Because they are interesting to talk to; because we want to honor them; or - if they have not visited us before – because we want to get acquainted with them. And then it's nice if they say YES and come.

Maybe you should invite a person who has not visited you before, make some nice food for a neighbor, or order sandwiches. Invite someone you have met a few times in the park or in the owner's association, fitness club or at the bakery or at church on Sundays and see what happens. Maybe he or she will wonder. But it does not matter. It kind of belongs with if it's the first time. And somebody has to be the first to invite. It might be you.

1. A man invites Jesus

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Jesus to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. Here it was a Pharisee who did so. He invited Jesus. Perhaps they had been together in the synagogue in Capernaum in the morning at the sabbath day. It is like we have been to church a Sunday morning, and invite him/her. Jesus and the pharisee probably met rather often, but did not share personally. Today the time had come. For Jesus was a special person. In the same chapter where we find today's Gospel Luke tells what Jesus had done in a neighboring town, Nain. A widow had lost her son. And Jesus called him back to life during the funeral. And the people praised God, saying, "A great prophet has appeared among us, and God has visited his people!" (Luke 7: 11-17). Jesus was considered a great prophet. We hear in the gospel that Simon said to himself, "If he were a prophet, he would not" Yes, Simon wanted to know Jesus better.

That is also why we must accept the invitation to go to church once a week to get to know Jesus better and to honor him! *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy!* God seriously invites you to go to church in the third commandment. And Jesus has promised to be present where his word is being read and preached, and where the sacraments are being shared. He will speak to us. And he gives us by baptism and communion unimaginably great things: * he clothes us with himself and cleanses us and forgives us all our sins, * and he gives us his own body and blood so that he is in us. In Sunday's service, it is not the pastor and choirmaster and organist who arranges. It is the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ. The servants of the church are only servants who - hopefully - do what Jesus says. And therefore everyone in the service can rejoice in listening to the great prophet who is with us on Sunday when God visits his people!

2. A woman is told that Jesus is there

37 And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume ...

What does Simon say when suddenly an unexpected guest shows up for his dinner with Jesus? She was not invited. She just came. This is how unexpected guests can sometimes come to the church, some we may not know; or we know them and become very astonished that such people can imagine going to church.

Simon this woman very well (at least he thought that he knew her!). He knew that she lived in sin. And that was true. Luke also mentions this! Perhaps she was one of the women who got money by selling her body to the men in the town, men, who did not take it so seriously with sin - and of course also came to worship in the synagogue. They satiated their sexual needs with this women outside of marriage in a hidden way. But the woman was known to be that kind. - Simon wondered that Jesus did not reject her. Because she lived in

sin. Simon knew what has been lost among many Christians today: We must not abuse our bodies sexually in porn or other ways.

But why did she come right into the lion's den? Because Jesus was in the cave. He was the Lamb of God, who carries the sins of the world. Jesus explains "Her many sins are forgiven!"

Perhaps she was one of those whom Jesus had been with at the dinners Luke has told of just before this account (Luke 7:34): *'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'* - Yes, that's how it went. Jesus has done something to her - and Jesus knows why she is coming! But Simon does not know. But he found out.

38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

That's how we go to church in the same way! We should not wait for other Christians to invite us. Actually we do not go to church because other Christians expect us to come. We should go to church Sundays because Jesus is present in the Divine service. He has invited you with his forgiveness, the remission of sins. He bought you with his blood. And maybe you bought a precious **alabaster vial of perfume**, a precious gift for the Church and for your Christ. And you come with tears. You want to sacrifice it to His church because you know Jesus is there and there to receive someone like you. You are affected. Not by alcohol, but by the grace and forgiveness you have met with Jesus. Jesus has forgiven you. You are happy and at the same time you are crying.

This woman came because she knew that Jesus would receive her and her gift of love.

3. The man's thoughts

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."

Simon saw what woman did for Jesus and that Jesus accepted her love. And then he was done with Jesus. A woman who lived in sin. But he knew neither Jesus nor the woman.

Like Simon we don't know other's motives for going to church and for loving Christ. We sometimes think thoughts that do not hold. Just as Simon was wrong regarding the woman and Jesus, so we can be wrong. But just as Jesus will help Simon out of his double mistake, so Jesus will also help us to see and understand something about our own thoughts about others and about ourselves and about him! And just as Jesus helped the woman to live in forgiveness with peace and accepted her thanks, so he also accepts your thanksgiving sacrifice and gives you peace again. When God does that to us in worship, it's wonderful to attend the Divine Service at church.

4. Jesus speaks to Simon

Jesus said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." He replied, "Say it, Master!" Jesus is very careful He does not attack him with his words. Likewise the servants of the Church should not come blabbering on with the gospel as a claim that we have to swallow raw and believe. Jesus even asks if he may say a word to us: *"Simon, I have something to say to you!"* Here we notice how careful Jesus is and how important it is for him that we listen. Simon answered, *"Say it master!"* And we also say that in the first prayer in the service: *"Lord, I have come into this your house to hear what you will say to me."*

And instead of saying it bluntly, Jesus says it in a parable and asks a question: ***41 "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"***

If there are two people who have both been forgiven, and let me use this example: one forgot to hand over a borrowed pen back to his spouse; the other has committed adultery. And they are both forgiven. So who would be most happy about their spouse's forgiveness? There is no doubt in Simon's mind: ***Simon answered, "The one he forgave most, I believe."***

5. Forgiveness and love

And now Jesus applies it to Simon and us: **44 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 wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. 46 "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.**

Simon's lack of love is revealed. Jesus says, "You have invited me to a nice dinner, and I'm glad. But you didn't give me water at my feet, you gave me no kiss, and you did not anoint my head with oil. But the woman did. And why?

The woman has indeed lived in sin, as you know and think. But I have forgiven her. And her love springs from forgiveness.

. 47 "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." Her love shows that she has been forgiven a lot. Forgiven. Not for having forgotten to hand over a pen to her spouse, but for having been the cause of several marriages here in the city being dishonored and destroyed when men lived out their lust in her arms. She has been forgiven. She has shown me great love with her tears, her ointment and her hair because she has been forgiven. Forgiveness is the greatest force in the world! But Simon did not understand until Jesus told him. But now he understood - maybe?

6. The woman and we listen and are receiving peace

The woman listened. And we listen. Whether you and I are the woman or Simon, we probably know best ourselves. We can't look into each other's hearts. But it does not matter so much which of them we are. What matters is that we listen to Jesus' words. For Jesus offers forgiveness for both of them. Jesus is offering Simon the same peace that the woman was given. **48 Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." 49 Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" 50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."**

Our divine services also end with Peace. "The Lord bless you and give you peace!" Hear it as a word just for you. Jesus said it personally to the woman and he says it personally to you. That is why we can go home from church today with a treasure so big, so big. And we ask our Lord and His church: What can I bring as a "thank you" next Sunday? For thanksgiving grows with forgiveness. Amen.